

## Class for Nissan – Session 4

In this class we will go over the important symbols like matzo & Egypt and then give you a new spin on the 4 Questions as taught by Rabbi Asher Crispe.

### Questions

The most important thing to keep in mind is that the seder's main focus is to elicit questions, especially from the children, about the rituals we do. Remember the sefirah of Chochmah? It is at the top of the sefirot and the first place that the unlimited Light of Keter pours down into our consciousness. Chochmah can be translated as wisdom but when you divide it, it contains 2 words "Koach", meaning strength or power and "mah" meaning "what or how"? The power of the question. The power of an open mind. The power of the ability to receive something new – going beyond what you think you know and already know.

### The 4 Questions-be like children

Rabbi Crispe says that the main ritual of the seder, called "The Four Questions", enables us to get into this Chochma mindset. The ritual involves the youngest child in attendance to be able to read or sing, in Hebrew, these 4 questions. It's always an exciting moment for the youngest child when he or she gets to that point and is able to do this. It can be very cute. And what R. Crispe says is that at the seder, we have to be like children and be able to ask the deepest questions of G-d. (We also need to treat our inner children with curiosity rather than criticism.)

### Changing the Night

He suggests that the Hebrew word that starts each question, "Mah nishtanah", usually translated as "why is this night..." can really be translated, "Mah" How, "nishtanah" change: how is something changed. That the power of "what", the act of questioning is the beginning of any change. Question the reality. And specifically, the 4 questions begin with "why is this night so different from all other nights?" So Crispe says that "night" is really darkness and exile or confusion. What we are really asking during the seder is "what changes the night?" or "how does this night change darkness unlike all other nights?" The fact that we are questioning actually changes things itself. The question changes the state of not-knowing because it doesn't accept the not knowing.



### Talmud & Mah

The Talmud is full of questions and not knowing and differing opinions and the study of the Talmud involves having a study partner in order to debate different sides of an answer. The Talmud says that a human being is a "what", an

ability or desire to question. For example, the word for human, Adam, equals the gematria of 45, the same as the word, Mah, "what".

### **The Ari's 4 questions:**

So Crispe teaches us that the Arizal's ( Rabbi Isaac Luria – ancient Kabbalist) version of the 4 questions are the existential questions of mankind.

#### **4 Questions:**

1. Why us, why me? What's my role? Why was I created? - (Ari says that this is the first question. - why do we dip in the haroset? Referring to dipping into this world. Answer: you came before the world & the world exists for you, which means you can be a co-creator.) You were Chosen – have a calling, a mission – you were sent to earth to do something.
2. Why is there something rather than nothing? Why this world? - (why do we eat matzo)
3. Why is there the existence of evil? Why do certain things appear to be broken and require repair? – (why maror/bitter herbs?)
4. Why is this world not already been fixed? When will it be? – (why recline? This symbolizes that we are free – but we are not free.)

These questions are the beginning of any spiritual quest. And when we ask, we demonstrate that we have faith that there is an answer. By asking we will find the G-d within, we reveal the G-d that is hidden. Truth is discovered between us. Truth is revealed in the questions. Questions allow for growth. We get to infinity by the dialog between us and within us.

“There is some mysterious yearning within us that is convinced that we carry within us the answer which the very question of our life sets before us. And the beginning of the answer is already within the one who is wise enough to ask. We know it in the same way we know a dream we have dreamt and forgotten...” *Lawrence Kushner, “The River of Light”, 1981, pg. 87.*