

# IN THE HEART OF "THIS NIGHT"

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

How important is it to ask questions? It is apparently crucial enough that the entire Pesach Seder hinges on the asking of questions. Why? An anonymous philosopher once said, "There is nothing more relevant than the answer to a question that was never asked?" Shabbos is the answer to what question? Love is the answer to what question? We live in what is often called an "age of information". The question is, "What is the question that makes sense out of any or all of this information?" The sages in the Talmud were wise enough not to leave the sacred obligation of relating the exodus from Egypt and attaching ourselves and our children to Jewish history and destiny to one of those parental lectures: "When we were kids we had to walk ten miles to school in the snow up hill in both directions...". They too knew that asking the right question creates a vessel in which to receive an answer. What is the question that can help us get the most out of the Pesach Seder?

The story is told about a wealthy man with a beautiful daughter who wanted to find the best possible marriage candidate for his daughter. What did he do? He made the trek to a high level Yeshiva and proposed that whoever would be able to give the answer to a difficult Talmudic riddle would receive his daughter's hand in marriage. After presenting a complex question the students lined up. No one succeeded to deliver anything close to the correct answer. After what looked like a failed experiment, the wealthy business mounted his carriage, and headed for the city limits. Pausing at the crossroads by the main highway he detected a commotion behind him. There was a young man running madly and shouting desperately for him to please halt.

By the time the time the fellow reached the wagon he was out of breath and perspiring. The dust from the dirt road was caked on his face. Why had he chased so? What was the emergency? He composed himself and said, "OK! We didn't merit your daughter's hand in marriage! What's the answer to the question?" The wealthy businessman looked on in astonishment and declared, "You're the one I want for my daughter!"

More valuable than knowing answers, is possessing and being possessed by questions. The curiosity that sets one in hot pursuit of knowledge, for some reason, is more precious than an encyclopedic mind. No wonder wonderful Jewish parents are more excited when they are told by a teacher that their child asked a difficult or deep question even more than if they got a 100% on a spelling test. Why? It may well be that in other faiths if you ask questions you might be considered a heretic but in Judaism not asking questions is heresy, because the goal of education is not to teach "what" to think

"how" to think.

Avraham was distinguished by his ability to ask why and how so much so that he rose above the dust of idolatry that surrounded and buried the culture he was born into. He was able to discern the plan and purpose throughout the macro and micro universe. Eventually he was led to wonder, "What is the purpose of my being conscious of the purposefulness of everything?" His hyper-curious mind led him to unify the field of physics and spirits, and to put him in touch with ultimate truth.

Einstein, the iconic, albeit secular symbol of Jewish intellect and creativity had pithily said, "The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity." One might begin by asking, "What question burns deep **in the heart of this night?**"  
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