



## *The Pesach Perspective, Our Unanswered Questions*

*The Pesach Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Leah Mintche Bas Gittel and Shaul Ben Berta.*

*The Pesach Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

We are celebrating Pesach, the holiday of freedom. After cleaning our homes to near perfection, we eat ancient but spiritual bread, the Matzah; we drink four cups of wine in honor of our liberation. Most importantly, we remember, recall and relate the story of our exodus from Egypt.

One of the more notable parts of the Seder is asking the four questions, the Ma Nishtana. Typically, the youngest child at the table will recite the four questions, followed by the adults. If there were no children present, all the adults asked the four questions together.

The Ma Nishtana examines and describes some of the differences between the Seder night and the rest of the year. Beginning with **why do we dip not once but twice during the Seder? Why do we only eat Matzah during Pesach? Why do we specifically eat the Maror, bitter herbs? Lastly, why must we recline and lean back during the Seder night?**

Interestingly, we don't answer the specific questions; we give a generic response, "*for we were once slaves in Egypt?*" Furthermore, we do things at the Seder for the sole purpose that our children should ask, why? But our reply again is, "*for we were once slaves in Egypt.*" Why don't we give **specific answers** for each of the four questions or the many customs of the Seder?

Rabbi Sacks of blessed memory writes in his introduction to his Pesach Machzor (*a book with the Haggadah and the prayers for Pesach*) that freedom in the biblical sense is responsible self-restraint, which is entirely not natural.

**Because freedom is an individual duty with collective responsibility.** Contrary to the natural order in human societies, as is in the animal kingdom, the strong prey on and dominate the weak.

Nothing is more challenging to implement than a society with equal dignity for all. Just imagining it requires an immense detachment from our current world. We give a generic response rather than a specific answer because only through the historical experience of a nation born in slavery can true freedom reign.

The whole Seder experience is inherently contradictory, we eat Matzah, the bread of affliction, yet we **lean like kings**. We eat the Maror, bitter herbs, but we **drink wine as a tribute to our freedom**.

Truthfully, our entire existence is an enigma. We **are** and **have been** systemically persecuted for being Jewish, but **we have outlasted all who try to destroy us**. We total less than a percentage point of the world's population, yet **we lead the world in charity and philanthropy**.

### **We are G-d's unanswered question to the world!**

As Heinrich Heine, a German poet from the 18th century, puts it, "*since the Exodus, freedom has been spoken with a Hebrew accent.*" The Jewish people exist today only due to G-d's immense wisdom, love, and compassion for us. Hence, we teach all at the Seder table, "*in every generation, a person is obligated to feel as if they are leaving Egypt.*"

We can not just say the answers because it will not do justice. We must declare that everything that has or will happen stems from G-d leading us out of Egypt in direct defiance of world order, "*in those days and in these times!*"

***May we experience the ultimate redemption and celebrate in the third Temple!***

*Have a Joyful and meaningful Pesach!*  
*Rabbi Sholom Yemini*