

“Four Questions.”

[**The Childrens' Role on the Night of Passover** Children are assigned a special place of love and honor on Passover eve and that includes asking the “Four Questions.” The youngest child in the participants who is able to recite the Four Questions does so, in order that we might fulfill the Biblical injunction to tell our children about the flight from slavery to freedom redeemed by the hand of God; and, should the child not ask, we are told to give him the questions to ask, in order that we might tell him the answers. The normal pattern of eating and sitting at the table was changed in order to prompt questions from the children, encouraging them to note the difference between the normal and the Passover evening patterns. Such distinctions are noted in the various texts of the Four Questions. When a difference was historically no longer relevant, it was abandoned [e.g. the roasted flesh] and when other practices came into existence, they were added to the Seder liturgy reclining which was a post-Talmudic custom.]

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

Mah nishtanah ha-laylah hazeh mikol ha-leilot?

Why is this night of Passover different from all other nights of the year?

1. שְׁבֹכֵל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֲמִץ וּמֶצֶה. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כֻּלּוֹ מֶצֶה:

Sheb'chol ha-leilot anu och'lin chameitz umatzah. Ha-laylah hazeh kulo matzah.

On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened bread, why on this night do we eat only matzah?

2. שְׁבֹכֵל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יְרַקוֹת הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מְרוֹר:

Sheb'chol ha-leilot anu och'lin sh'ar y'rakot. Ha-laylah hazeh maror.

On all other nights, we eat vegetables of all kinds, why on this night must we eat bitter herbs?

3. שְׁבֹכֵל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבִּילִין אֶפִּילוּ פֶּעַם אַחַת. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְעָמִים:

Sheb'chol ha-leilot ein anu matbilin afilu pa-am echat. Ha-laylah hazeh sh'tei f'amim.

On all other nights, we do not dip vegetables even once, why on this night do we dip greens into salt water and bitter herbs into sweet haroset?

4. שְׁבֹכֵל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלָנוּ מְסֻבִּין:

Sheb'chol ha-leilot anu okhlim bein yoshvin uvein m'subin, halailah hazeh kulanu m'subin.

On all other nights, everyone sits up straight at the table, why on this night do we recline and eat at leisure?