

The Best Four Questions

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Why do we ask questions?

A Curious Tale

“At the heart of what it means to be a Jew is to ask questions,” says Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, a prominent American rabbi. Marcy would clearly agree! Judaism encourages us to engage with the world around us by being curious about it — and sometimes challenging it. The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) is filled with stories of people asking questions, and the Talmud (the core collection of rabbinic writings) is fueled by rabbis questioning both the texts and each other. The hero of the Passover story, Moses, even questioned God! So why do we ask these particular four questions at a seder (the ritual Passover meal)? Because the answers lead to a retelling of one of the most important stories of the Jewish people — and help us learn about ourselves.

Four Is a Magic Number

When you crack open a *Haggadah* (the guide to a seder), you’ll notice that lots of things come in groups of four. The Torah names four expressions of redemption in the Passover story — God brought us out of Egypt, rescued us, redeemed us, and made us the people of Israel. The seder itself involves four cups of wine or grape juice, four ways of explaining the story to different children, and of course, four questions! Maybe it’s also a subtle reminder of the four Jewish matriarchs — the biblical heroines Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. Jewish law looks to the mother to determine Jewish identity — and Passover is all about passing down knowledge to the next generation. To learn more visit pjlibrary.org/bestfourquestions.

Q&A

Marcy’s on to something. Real curiosity is born out of experience, not something recited from a script — right? But the Four Questions are really just prompts. Nothing says you have to stop there; at a seder, we are all free to ask any questions we like. In this story, Marcy’s family members validate her curiosity by taking her questions seriously, and in the end, she turns to her brother for help, leaving both of them feeling important in different ways. Funny thing about questions: If you don’t feel safe and respected, it’s hard to ask them. Marcy knows her questions will be met with a considerate audience, and that allows her to grow and learn.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

Why do you think Marcy wants to ask the Four Questions?

Why do you think Marcy’s brother doesn’t want to give up that role?

What questions would you ask at a seder?



HANDS ON!

Make a Question Catcher

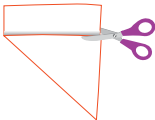


Want to encourage more questions at the seder table — or anytime? Download the PJ Library Question Catcher at pjlibrary.org/bestfourquestions, or learn to make your own.

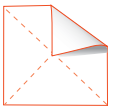
Supplies:

Paper, scissors, and markers

1 Start with a sheet of 8.5x11/A4 paper. Fold the bottom left corner up to the righthand side to make a triangle, then trim the leftover paper.



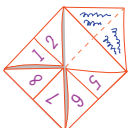
2 Open the paper back up; it will be creased diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. Fold the bottom right corner up to the top left; when you open it, you’ll have an x-shaped crease. Fold each corner in toward the middle.



3 Turn the paper over so that the folded edges are facedown, and now fold each corner in toward the middle again.



4 Write numbers 1 through 8 on each of the folded triangles, then lift the flaps and write questions underneath.



5 Flip it over and decorate the tops of the triangles with markers. Ask away!

