MAGID: TELL THE STORY

Four Questions

The Four Questions are actually only one question and that question is:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

Seder in Bnei Brak

The teachers in *Bnai Brak* were so engrossed in telling the *Passover* story that they did not notice that it was after sunrise.

REASON They may have been in a windowless room since they were risking their lives by celebrating *Passover*, against Roman law.

Like 70 Years Old

Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya says he is “like 70 years old” because even though he was only 18 years old, his hair turned white overnight as if God approved his appointment as *Sanhedrin* head.

Four Sons

Only three of the Four Sons' questions are mentioned in the *Torah* (which all related to the *Passover* sacrifice), since the fourth (smallest) child cannot ask questions. Regarding this child, the *hagada* says, "Aht p'tach lo" (in the feminine).

REASON The mother is supposed to be a child's primary teacher while the child is young.

There is a difference in attitude between the wise son and the evil son: The wise son says "Eloheinu" (OUR God); he is asking a question and seeking and answer. The evil son makes a statement (sort of a rhetorical question), instead of asking a question for which he seeks an answer.
Why is there a “wise” (chacham) son and not a “righteous” (*tzadik*) son, which would be the logical counterpart to the “evil” (rasha) son?
We don't know who is a *tzadik*. We cannot be sure by external appearance or even by seeing certain behaviors. We can tell who is a chacham by hearing him speak or by discussing *Torah* with him.
Yet, regardless of the sons' level of observance, it is a commandment to teach them about going out of Egypt.

Calculating the End (of Slavery)

God told *Avraham* (*Abraham*) that his children would be living in “lands not their own” and would be enslaved for 400 years, Yet the *Torah* states that the Israelites were in Egypt for 210 years. So we say God “calculated the end” (*chisheiv et ha'keitz*) of the enslavement: He started the counting from the birth of *Avraham's* son, *Yitzchak* (Isaac), until the *Exodus* (a total of 400 years), as follows:

Time from Birth of *Avraham's* Son to Going Down to Egypt

- *Yaakov* (Jacob) was born when *Yitzchak* was 60 years old.
- *Yaakov* told *Par'o* (Pharoah) (when he and the rest of his family entered Egypt) that he was 130 years old.
- 60 + 130= **190 years before going down to Egypt**

Time in Egypt

210 years in Egypt

Time from Birth of *Avraham's* Son to *Exodus*

190 Before going down to Egypt
+ 210 In Egypt
= **400 years from *Yitzchak's* birth to the *Exodus***.

NOTE *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov* did not yet "own" *Eretz Yisrael*. Since the Israelites were not given *Eretz Yisrael* until after the *Exodus*, *Avraham's* offspring were living in "lands not their own" for 400 years.

V'Hi She'Amda and Lefichach

When we lift up our wine cups at *v'hi she'amda* and at *lefichach*, we cover the *matza*.

REASON So the *matza* won't feel "embarrassed," since bread/*matza* is more important than wine.

Let Us Deal Cleverly (Hava Nitchakma)

Hava nitchakma (let us deal cleverly) was an attempt at a clever way to keep the Israelites as slaves.

REASON The Egyptians were afraid the Israelites might join the Egyptians' enemies in a war.

Ten Plagues

Each of the plagues was against one of the Egyptian gods, to show that they were actually powerless.

Spilling Drops of Wine

We spill 10 drops of wine when reading the list of plagues.

REASON Wine symbolizes happiness and so we drink less wine to show that we are sad that the Egyptians suffered.

D'Tzach-Adash-B'Achav

In "the plague of the first-borns" (*makat bechorot*), did the first-borns suffer by dying or did their families suffer more?
In *Rabbi Yehuda's* abbreviations of the ten plagues, *d'tzach-adash-b'achav*, the abbreviation ends with the *Hebrew* letter "vet" for *bechorot* (first-borns), implying that it was the families who suffered, since if it ended with a "mem" for *makat bechorot*, it would have been the first-borns who suffered.

Dayenu

In *dayenu*, we say that at each level of what God did for us, it would have been enough. Since we didn't get the *Torah* until one of the last stages, this seems incorrect, since of what value is money, wandering in the desert, and all of the other details if we don't have the *Torah*?
The answer is that we need to be grateful to God for each miracle that we received, and that at each stage, we owe praise and thanks to God.
Also, in one sense, we already had the *Torah* (in some version, even though not in the form in which Moses/Moshe wrote it later).

Pesach, Matza, and Maror

Pesach, *matza*, and *maror* should be read and explained with special attention.

REASON They are the main parts of the *seder* and of the commandment to have a *seder*.

In Every Generation

The *hagada* tells us that in every generation, a person must see himself as if he had personally gone out of Egypt. If so, why didn't our Sages suggest how to visualize or recreate the experience?

It is not possible to actually see ourselves as having left slavery. Rather, we should feel our obligation to do the *mitzvot* (commandments) as the Israelites felt when they left Egypt, as they switched from being slaves to serving *Hashem*. We can be freed (*b'nei chorin*) from physical or spiritual slavery.

Why Matza and Not Bread

Question: Why didn't the Israelites bake bread (the *Torah* says that they did not have time for the dough to rise)? They knew 14 days ahead of time (on *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*) that they would be leaving, and they knew it would be middle of night (since God said that is when they would leave).
Answer: The Israelites did not do anything to prepare, except what God told them to do: the *Passover offering* and putting blood on their doorposts.

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