



The "Four Sons" from Sefer Haminhagim (Amsterdam, 1768)

Pesah Questions

The Haggadah poses and answers a series of questions within its text which we reread each year of our lives. The Festival of Pesah raises many tangential questions to which the answers are not quite as familiar.

To enhance the enjoyment of your Pesah Seder, and as a means of stimulating additional discussion, (as the centerfold: it can be removed easily), we offer the following series of questions and answers for the leader to inject into the proceedings:

1. How many years were the Jewish people in Egypt?
2. What was the livelihood of the Hebrews before they were enslaved?
3. What was the first hostile act of the Egyptians which signalled that their attitude toward the Hebrews had changed?
4. What is made from bulrushes?
5. What were the names of the brother, sister, mother and father of Moses?
6. What was the name of the son of Moses, born during his exile from Egypt?
7. Of what tribe was Moses and how do we know he was not the oldest son?
8. What was the name of Pharaoh's daughter and why was she bathing in the Nile?
9. Is the name Moses Hebrew or Egyptian?

10. How many centuries separate us from Moses?
11. How was King David related to Moses?
12. Where did Moses find haven from Pharaoh after he slew the taskmaster, and how many years did he spend there?
13. From what type of bush did God first speak to Moses?

14. What brought Moses back to Egypt and how old was he when he first appeared before Pharaoh as the leader of the Hebrews?
15. By what name is the month of the Exodus identified in the Torah?
16. What Jewish ceremony for male children originated on the day of the Exodus?
17. Where are the major laws of Pesah to be found?
18. How many days are we required to eat matzot?
19. When are matzot first mentioned by name in the Torah?
20. What is the average amount of matzah eaten by a Jew during Pesah?
21. Are our matzot identical in appearance to those eaten throughout the Jewish centuries?
22. What is the actual weight of an Omer and when do we hear about it during Pesah?
23. What is the origin of the word Afikoman?
24. What were the prohibitions on Pesah wine during the Middle Ages?
25. How many times and in what context is the number 4 used in the Haggadah?

Pesah Answers

1. Approximately 400 years . . . if we assume that Joseph was there for fifty, it is no surprise that over 300 years later, a pharaoh assumed the throne who did not have knowledge of Joseph (who had been in office hundreds of years earlier).
2. According to Genesis, 46.31-34, they were shepherds and herdsmen. The Hertz Commentary (p. 394) indicates that at the time of their enslavement, they were a "free and independent shepherd folk."
3. According to the Mishnah, it was "to deprive them of their fields, their vineyards and the gifts that Joseph had lavished upon his brethren."
4. Paper is made from bulrushes . . . it is an Egyptian "loan-word" in the Bible denoting paper-reed or papyrus,

which grows 10 to 12 feet high.

5. Aaron, Miriam, Yochebed and Amram.
6. Gershom . . . "because I was a stranger in a strange land."
7. Of Levi, the priestly tribe, and we know he was not the first-born because Aaron was the High Priest rather than Moses (and was succeeded by his son Eleazar, and he by his son, Pinhas).
8. Her Egyptian name was Thermutis . . . but the Jews later referred to her as Bithia (or Batya), a daughter of God because she saved Moses. According to Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer, she was bathing in the Nile because she had leprosy and was not able to bathe in hot water in the palace . . . legend has it that when she put forth her hand to the basket and lifted Moses from it, her leprosy was instantly healed!

(please turn to page 20)

