

# Three Questions, Three Answers

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Source: Velveteen Rabbi, <http://velveteenrabbi.blogspot.com/blog/2008/04/three-questions.html>

There's a Sefardic custom – Iraqi or Afghani, by most accounts -- of asking these three questions at the start of the seder: either to one participant who's shouldered a pack and is orbiting the table, or each person to the person sitting beside them.

Who are you? *I am Yisrael.*

Where are you coming from? *I am coming from Mitzrayim.*

Where are you going? *I am going to Yerushalayim.*

Who are you?

I'm Yisrael. I'm a God-wrestler. I'm someone who wrestles with the holy, with the Source of All Being, with my understanding of ultimate reality, and I expect God to wrestle back. I dance with God. I waltz with Torah. I stay up all night grappling with angels, and even if I come away limping, I know I come away blessed. I'm a wandering Aramean, and I'm wearing my traveling shoes. I'm a child of the house of Israel, and my community and I -- and anyone else who hears freedom's call -- are walking into the wilderness together.

Where are you coming from?

I'm coming from Mitzrayim. From the narrow place. From slavery. From constriction. From the birth canal. I'm coming from hard labor. I'm coming from the surfeit of sweetness that lulls me into forgetting the world's imperfections. I've been settling for what hurts, too fearful to risk something new. I'm coming from suffering and isolation. I'm coming from addiction to my work, addiction to success, addiction to separation. I'm coming from "if I stopped working, I'm not even sure who I'd be."

Where are you going?

I'm going to Yerushalayim. I'm going to Ir Shalem, the city of wholeness. I'm going to Ir Shalom, the city of peace. I'm going where talking to God is a local call. I'm heading toward my best imaginings of community and connection. I'm clicking my ruby slippers with fervent kavanah and moving toward the meaning of home. Maybe I'm going to a place; maybe I'm going to a state of mind. Maybe it's an asymptotic progression toward something that can't be reached. Maybe it's the journey that defines me.

Run that by me again?

I am Yisrael. I am coming from Mitzrayim. And the moon is almost full: tomorrow night, as soon as Shabbat is over, we're packing our bags. Grabbing the flatbread. And setting out. It's time to go.