The Four Jews

Contributed by Hillel at UCLA

Source:

In today's world, Jews may identify themselves in a variety of ways. One may be ritually, culturally, or intellectually oriented or disconnected. And yet, however modified one's Judaism may be, there is still some level of concern about the Jewish people that causes Jews to at least ask the questions about the Exodus from Egypt. We must answer them, and enable them to learn.

The ritual Jew asks: "What are the laws that God commanded us? " This Jew defines herself by the rituals, the laws and guidelines of Pesach. We call on her to seek the meaning that underlies all of these acts, so that they have relevance for all of us today.

The disconnected Jew asks: "What does this ritual mean to you?" This Jew feels alienated from the Jewish community and finds it difficult to identify with the rituals, perhaps because of his upbringing or experiences. Yet we recognize that he is still interested, if only because he asks these questions, and we call on him to see these rituals as a way of affirming the universal beliefs that gave rise to them.

The cultural Jew asks: "What is this all about?" She shows little concern with the ritual or psychological ramifications of the Exodus, even while embracing this reenactment of our ancestors; flight from Egypt. We call on her to recognize that it was a deep sense of faith that enabled these rituals to transcend the generations. It was belief in a vision of future freedom that caused us to celebrate our first Exodus and hear the echo of the prophets' call: "Let all people go!"

The intellectual Jew refrains from asking direct questions because he doesn't lean in any direction, preferring instead to let the text speak for itself. We call on him to understand that true freedom can only be obtained when we question authority and challenge power, even if that power be God Himself. It is our responsibility to question not only the text but the status quo too, and share this message of freedom with all people everywhere.