

WHAT SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE KNOW



Why did Isidor Rabi, the winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, become a scientist?



Isidore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize for physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied: "My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, 'What did you learn today?' But my mother used to say, 'Izzy, did you ask a good question today?' That made the difference. Asking good questions made me into a scientist."

TALMUD SANHEDRIN 93B

THE TALMUD RECOUNTS THE SPECIAL BLESSINGS GIVEN TO KING DAVID:

The blessings of King David are that he is musical, a courageous warrior, very wise, good looking, and one who Hashem is with.	דוד - דכתיב (שמואל א' ט"ז) ויען אחד מהנערים ויאמר הנה ראיתי בן לישי בית הלחמי ידע נגן וגבור חיל ואיש מלחמה ונבון דבר ואיש תאר וה' עמו וגו'.
What does it mean that David knows how to play musical instruments? This alludes to his ability to ask incisive questions.	... ידע נגן - שיודע לישאל
What does it mean that David was courageous? This alludes to his ability to answer difficult questions.	... גבור - שיודע להשיב



What is the connection between a beautiful song heard for the first time and a courageous warrior?

MAHARAL, BER HAGOLAH, 2:9
WITH COMMENTARY BY RABBI YEHOShUA HARTMAN

ומה שאמר "יודע נגן" - 'יודע לשאול', פירוש, מי ש"יודע נגן" והשואל מדה אחת להם. לפי שהתורה משמח לב האדם, וכאשר ישאל אדם הוא משמח לב השומע, ופותח את לבו עד ששמח, כמו שעושה מי שיודע נגן. והתשובה שמשיב לו דומה ל"גבור חיל", מנצח את השואל, וזה "גבור חיל". הרי ראינו שעיקר שמחת התורה שייך יותר לשאלה מאשר לתשובה.

The Talmud says that questioning is like music. How? Because music and questioning have the same characteristics. Just as music gives a sense of happiness to the listener, so too, asking a good question brings about a sense of joy to the questioner. That's why the Talmud referred to King David as both a musician and one who asked questions.

WHY DOES A GREAT QUESTION BRING MORE JOY THAN AN ANSWER?

SHEMOS CHAPTER 12

WHY IS QUESTIONING SUCH A CENTRAL PART OF JUDAISM AND PASSOVER?

When your children say to you, "What is this service to you?"	(כו) והיה כי יאמרו אליכם בניכם מה העבדה הזאת לכם:
Say to them, "It is a pesach offering to Hashem, Who passed over the houses of the Children in Israel in Egypt."	(כז) ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא ליקוק אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל

The holiday of Passover is the only holiday that is introduced in the Torah with people asking questions. There are many holidays in the Torah, but only one is described with the anticipated question of children, "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?
*How is this night different
from all other nights?*

QUESTIONS AS A CENTRAL ASPECT OF JUDAISM

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



Judaism is a religion of questions. The greatest prophets asked questions of G-d. The Book of Job, the most searching of all explorations of human suffering, is a book of questions asked by man, to which G-d replies with a string of questions of His own.

The scientist asks, the believer just believes, so the stereotype runs. What is the asking of a question if not itself a profound expression of faith in the intelligibility of the universe and the meaningfulness of human life? To ask is to believe that somewhere there is an answer. The fact that throughout history people have devoted their lives to extending the frontiers of knowledge is a moving demonstration of the restlessness of the human spirit and its constant desire to transcend, to climb. Life is not chance. That, I suspect, is why Judaism encourages questions.

On the phrase: "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness", Rashi, the 11th-century biblical commentator, says: "This means, with the power to understand and to discern." Critical intelligence is the gift G-d gave humanity. To use it in the cause of human dignity and insight is one of the great ways of serving G-d. When faith suppresses questions, it dies.

When I left university and went to Israel to study in a rabbinical seminary, I was stunned by the sheer intensity with which the students grappled with texts. Once in a while the teacher's face would light up at a comment from the class. "Du fregst a gutte kashe," he would say (you raise a good objection). This was his highest form of praise.

Religious faith has suffered hugely in the modern world by being cast as naive. blind.