

The Four Children

Translations based on “A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices” by Mishael Zion and Noam Zion

The Wise Child:

What does the wise child say?

“What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws which Adonai our God has commanded you?” (from Deuteronomy 6:20)

So, you teach the child all of the laws of Pesach (Passover), up through the last one: “We do not conclude the eating at the Passover Seder with the afikoman.”

(Note: Now traditional seders DO conclude with the eating of the afikoman - the piece of matzah hidden earlier during the seder. This did not used to be the case.)

- What is motivating the way the child asks (or doesn't ask) the question?
- What is behind the parents' reactions?
- In what ways might you act similarly or differently to this child?

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The Wicked Child:

What does the wicked child say?

“Whatever does this service [meaning, the seder] mean to you?” (from Exodus 12:26)

This child emphasized “you” and not “us.” Since the child excludes themselves from the community and rejects a major principle of faith, you should set their teeth on edge and say:

“It is because of that which God did for me when I went free from Egypt.” (from Exodus 13:8)

“Me” and not that one over there! Had that one been there, they would not have been redeemed.

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The Simple Child:

What does the simple child ask?

“What is this?” (from Exodus 13:14)

And you say to that child:

[Let me tell you an awesome tale.] “With a mighty hand God brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” (from Exodus 13:14)

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The Child Who Does Not Know How to Ask:

And for the child who does not know how to ask, you should prompt (literally: open for them).

The Torah says: “You shall tell your child on that day.” [Don’t wait for the child to take the initiative. Start the story, your story, and hopefully this silent child will listen, absorb and identify with you.]

“It is because of that which God did for me when I went free from Egypt.”
[from Exodus 13:8]

- What is motivating the way the child asks (or doesn’t ask) the question?
- What is behind the parents’ reactions?
- In what ways might you act similarly or differently to this child?