

The Haggadah's Four Children

כְּנִגַּד אַרְבָּעָה בָּנִים דִּבְרָה תוֹרָה. אֶחָד חָכָם וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע וְאֶחָד תָּם
וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לִשְׁאֹל.

The Torah speaks about four children—one who is wise, one who is wicked, one who is simple, and one who does not know how to ask.

חָכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲדוּת וְהַחֲקִים וְהַמְשָׁפְטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם? וְאִי אֶתָּה אָמַר לוֹ כְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח עַד: וְאִין מִפְּטִירִין אַחֵר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוֹמָן.

What does the wise child say? *What is the meaning of the decrees, the statutes and ordinances which the Lord your God has commanded you* (Deuteronomy 6:20)? You should tell him some of the laws of Passover including that one should not go to any “afikoman/dessert” gatherings after the Passover ritual is concluded.

רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם? לָכֶם וְלֹא לוֹ. וְלִפִּי שְׁהוֹצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכָּלל כְּפָר בַּעֲקָר. וְאִי אֶתָּה הִקְהָה אֶת שְׁנֵינוּ וְאָמַר לוֹ: בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם. לִי וְלֹא לוֹ. אֱלֹו הָיָה שָׁם, לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל.

What does the wicked child say? *What does this rite mean to you* (Exodus 12:26)? To you and not to him. By taking himself out of the community he has violated the basic principle. You should set his teeth on edge by saying to him: *It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt* (Exodus 13:8). For me and not for him. If he had been there, he would not have been redeemed.

תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה זֹאת? וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו: בְּחִזְק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים.

What does the simple child say? *What does this mean?* You shall say to him, *It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out of Egypt from slavery* (Exodus 13:14).

וְשְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לִשְׁאֹל, אֶת פֶּתַח לוֹ. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם.

As for the one who does not know how to ask, you should begin. As it says: *And you shall tell your child on that day, it is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt* (Exodus 13:8).