

Four Parents

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Some scholars believe there are four kinds of parents as well.

The Wise Parent is an utter bore. "Listen closely, because you are younger than I am," says the Wise Parent, "and I will go on and on about Jewish history, based on some foggy memories of my own religious upbringing, as well as an article in a Jewish journal I have recently skimmed." The Wise Parent must be faced with a small smile of dim interest.

The Wicked Parent tries to cram the story of our liberation into a set of narrow opinions about the world. "The Lord led us out of Egypt," the Wicked Parent says, "which is why I support a bloodthirsty foreign policy and am tired of certain types of people causing problems." The Wicked Parent should be told in a firm voice, "With a strong hand God rescued the Jews from bondage, but it was my own clumsy hand that spilled hot soup in your lap."

The Simple Parent does not grasp the concept of freedom. "There will be no macaroons until you eat all your brisket," says the Simple Parent, at a dinner honoring the liberation of oppressed peoples. "Also, stop slouching at the table." In answer to such statements, the Wise Child will roll his eyes in the direction of the ceiling and declare, "Let my people go!"

The Parent Who Is Unable to Inquire has had too much wine, and should be excused from the table.