

## CHILDREN

# Why This Night: Four Children and Five Rabbis

Contributed by [Trisha Arlin](#)

Source: <http://triganza.blogspot.com/>

So this is Maggid,

The part of the seder where we tell the story

Of leaving Egypt.

Actually,

We spend more time talking about talking about the story

Then telling the actual story.

Very meta is our haggadah,

With many numbers,

Lots of fours:

Four questions

Four cups of wine

Four children,

Four ways of asking,

Why is this night different from all other nights?

The first child,

Book smart.

The wise child

Knows all the rules.

He's direct,

No messin' around,

This is what you do on Pesach:

Tell the story

Dip the herbs

Recline

Drink four cups

Don't eat leavened bread

Ask the questions

Know the answers.

It's obvious.

Duh.

The second child,

A smart ass,

Smart and an ass.

Doesn't care about the rules

Unless she knows what they're for,

She wants meaning

And is kind of obnoxious about it

Because sometimes it's hard to ask the next logical question

Without annoying someone.

What does this story mean to you? she asks.

And it comes off as a challenge, but it's not.

She really wants to know:

What does it mean?

So you tell her,

Freedom to be who you are,

To make choices, to seek God whether you find God or not,

To become a person and then a people,

To ask questions.

The third child,

A beginner,

Doesn't know what to do

Doesn't know why we're doing it

Doesn't know that he doesn't know.

A baby!

So you say to him,

We tell a really good story

With a beginning middle and end

And a hero

And a villain

And miracles and dancing and bugs and dead cows and blood,

You'll love it!

And this is why we tell the story:

So we don't forget we were slaves,

So we don't forget what God did for us,

So we don't forget Torah,

And the seder is what we do to remember.

And because we remember

We don't enslave others.

We bask in God's presence.

We study Torah

And we tell stories.

And then there's the child who doesn't even know that she can ask a question.

Is it because she doesn't care?

Doesn't have a context?

Too assimilated to know how interesting it all is?

Or perhaps no one will let her talk

So she doesn't even try?

Sitting in the back of the bus,

Not allowed to study Torah,

Married at 17,

Popping out babies at 18.

So let's not wait for either of them to say something.

Let's hold out our hands and say,

We were slaves

And now we're not.

And there is so much to know and do

And you can know and do it

And we will help you.

You are inspired,

You just don't know it yet.

Okay.

Contrast these four children

With the Five Rabbis sitting around talking

In Bnai Brak.

Each of them knows the direct meaning.

All of them plumb the depths of the hidden and symbolic.

Any one of them can tell a tale that bridges a gap.

Five out of five are inspired by God's revelations.

They know the rules and the meaning and the stories

And oh my God, are they empowered to talk.

They stay up all night

And talk and talk and talk!

Each one smarter than the other

But in the morning when their students come in,

They still haven't prayed.

Because they can't stop talking.

Hey you guys, say the students,

Shema!

Listen!

Why is this night different from all other nights?