

ONE FAMILY: THE FOUR CHILDREN AND THE DISPARITY OF WEALTH

Contributed by [TAMAR FOX](#)

Source: JewishRecon.org for Pesakh 2014

THE ONE WHO IS CONTENT

The one who is content asks: "What can I contribute?" This child lives the teaching of Ben Zoma (a second-century scholar), who answers the question "Who is rich?" with the response "The one who is content with her portion." This child studies the teachings of tzedakah and understands the blessings and responsibilities of her privilege because she is part of an interrelated, interacting system that values community.

Table Conversation: In what ways are you satisfied with your portion? How do you understand tzedakah as part of justice in an interrelated community?

THE ONE WHO IS GREEDY

The one who is greedy asks: "That should be mine, shouldn't it?" already knowing the answer. He lives in fear that there will never be enough and that to avoid scarcity he must acquire everything first and fastest. His connection to community is only through coveting what others have, which keeps him separate from others and unaware of his dynamics with his community. His self-esteem is wrapped up in possessions and his understanding of power is material.

Table Conversation: We can all relate to the fear of this child at some point in our lives. How do you answer the questions: "How much material wealth is enough?" and "How do you know when enough is enough?"

THE ONE WHO IS UNAWARE OF PRIVILEGE

The one who is unaware of privilege asks herself: "Doesn't everyone have that?" Often she makes assumptions that reveal her unfamiliarity with others' identities and origins, which are different from hers. This child has an unexamined entitlement which—when challenged—can make her feel uncomfortable and defensive. Often committed to doing good for others, her contributions are more about feeling good about herself than doing what is just. This child cares about community despite these blind spots. Thus, with patience and exposure to a gentle teaching presence, this child is open to learning about the disparities and deprivations of others. With awareness, her unrecognized privilege can be transformed into a deep understanding of herself and can spark responsible speech and action.

Table Conversation: In what ways does your understanding of privilege inform your responsibilities to others?

THE ONE WHO IS IN NEED

The one who is in need is often silent because he is overwhelmed by what he lacks. When he does ask "Can I have some too?" we often do not hear him because we turn away, or he is rendered invisible or disposable by our society. Filled with fear or lack of self-worth, this child is often blamed for his own need. But if we listen, we hear that this child is truly hungry.

Table Conversation: Passover is the holiday when we proclaim "All who are hungry come

and eat!" What will you do to live this mandate and ensure that we all have enough?

Developed by Rabbi Joshua Lesser, RRC '99, and Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, RRC '85

©2014 Reconstructionist Rabbinical College 1299 Church Road, Wyncote, PA 19095
P: 215.576.0800 F: 215.576.6143 jewishrecon@rrc.edu