

The Questions of the Four Children

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Source: Image by Getty Images. Text adaptation by Brandi Ullian



As we tell the story of Pesach, we think about it from all angles. Our tradition speaks of four different types of children who might react differently to the Passover Seder. It is our job to make our story accessible to all the members of our community, so we think about how we might best reach each type of child:

What does the wise child say?

The wise child asks, "What are the testimonies, statutes, and judgments we learn through the Passover story?"

Discuss with that child the order and meaning of the Seder, and teach this child the rules of observing the holiday of Passover.

What does the thoughtless child say?

The thoughtless child asks, "What does this service mean to you?"

By using the word "you" and not "us," the child is not including him or herself in the community. Because he takes himself out of the community and misses the point, say to this child: "This service helps *us* remember and learn from *our* people's

journey to freedom.”

The simple child asks, "What is this?"

To this child, answer plainly: “This is the story of the ancient Jewish people's journey to freedom.”

What about the child who doesn't know how to ask a question?

Help this child by telling the story of when the Jews went forth from Egypt.

Some say that The Four Children is a metaphor for the four different attitudes toward tradition, toward belonging and toward being active or passive in the face of injustice. Some say it is about stages of life, from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood (and, potentially, back again toward old age).

In the spirit of telling the story of Exodus, and different attitudes that one might take to one's communal and global responsibilities, let us think about our relationship to our own traditions, the people from whom or the place from which we come and the events taking place there, and ask *ourselves* these four questions:

- *How does the Passover story apply to the present day?*
- *How can I relate the story of Pesach to me and/or my community?*
- *What is something I can do every day to help others attain freedom and liberty?*
- *How can I encourage others to inspire change?*