

The Ballad of the Four Sons

Contributed by [Jill Maller-Kesselman](#)

Source: Written by Ben Aronin in 1948

The Four Sons of the Haggadah



The Wise Son

חכם



The Wicked Son

רשע



The Simple Son

תם



The Son Who Does Not Know How To Ask

שאינו יודע לשאול

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(Sung to the tune of Clemantine)

Said the father to his children,

"At the seder you will dine,

You will eat your fill of matzah,

You will drink four cups of wine."

Now this father had no daughters,

But his sons they numbered four.

One was wise and one was wicked,

One was simple and a bore.

And the fourth was sweet and winsome,

he was young and he was small.

While his brothers asked the questions

he could scarcely speak at all.

Said the wise one to his father
"Would you please explain the laws?
Of the customs of the seder
Will you please explain the cause?"
And the father proudly answered,
"As our fathers ate in speed,
Ate the paschal lamb 'ere midnight
And from slavery were freed."
So we follow their example
And 'ere midnight must complete
All the seder and we should not
After 12 remain to eat.
Then did sneer the son so wicked
"What does all this mean to you?"
And the father's voice was bitter
As his grief and anger grew.
"If you yourself don't consider
As son of Israel,
Then for you this has no meaning
You could be a slave as well."
Then the simple son said simply
"What is this," and quietly
The good father told his offspring
"We were freed from slavery."
But the youngest son was silent
For he could not ask at all.
His bright eyes were bright with wonder
As his father told him all.
My dear children, heed the lesson
and remember evermore
What the father told his children
Told his sons that numbered four.