

The Four Archetypal Children

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Source:

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Jewish tradition speaks of four types of people who react differently to the themes of a Passover Seder. Historically these are children, but we know many of these types as adults. It's like a Jewish Myers-Briggs test!

What does the wise child say?

The wise child asks, *What are the teachings given to us for how to live as a community in freedom?*

This child or adult is responsive to guidelines for how to observe the holiday of Passover and make it meaningful.

What does the alienated or confused child say?

The alienated or confused child asks, *What does this whole thing mean to you?*

Notice that the alienated or confused child does not include herself or himself in the question. One traditional, but problematic Jewish response is to say, "It is because of what God did for me in taking me out of Egypt. Me, not you. Had you been there, you would have been left behind." But this only drives an alienated or confused child even further away. This child or adult is indirectly asking for compassion, not shaming or blaming. What would be another, kinder response to this child's alienation or confusion?

What does the simple child say?

The simple child asks, *What is this?*

To this child, answer plainly: "When we were slaves in Egypt, we were helped and redeemed by a force beyond our comprehension." (Hat-tip to the Jewish theology of Star Wars.)

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

Help this child ask, by offering stories and listening to their own.

Start telling the story:

"Once we were slaves, and now we are free."

Do you see yourself in any of these children? Which archetype resonates with you, and why?