

Four Generations of American Jews

Contributed by [Noemie Rosner](#)

Source:



Rabbi Shlomo Riskin cites an interpretation ascribed to Joseph Isaac Schneerson, a former Lubavitcher rebbe: The Four Children represent the four generations of the American experience.

The Wise Child represents the European roots, the generation of the grandparents who came to America with beard and earlocks, dressed inshtreimel and kapote, steeped in piety, with a love for learning and profound knowledge of the Jewish tradition.

Their progeny (the Wicked Child), brought up within the American “melting pot,” rejected his parent’s customs and ways of thought ... Turning his back on the glories of the Jewish tradition, this child often became successful in business but was cynical in his outlook.

The third generation, the Simple Child, is confused. He watched his grandfather making Kiddush on Friday night and his father standing by silently, perhaps resentfully, impatient to prepare for business on Saturday morning ...

The fourth generation, the Child Who Does Not Know How to Ask, offspring of the Simple Child, is the greatest tragedy of all. He was born after his great-grandparents had died. He knows only his totally assimilated grandfather (Wicked Child) and his religiously confused father ...

Riskin adds that there is also a fifth generation, so far removed from Judaism that it is unaware that it is Passover.

