

The Modern Four Sons

Contributed by [JewBelong](http://www.jewbelong.com)

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Following is a new interpretation of The Four Sons that illustrates the journey of many Jews living in America. We're not judging here, just witnessing. Besides, what better time to talk about choices and change than Passover?

THE FIRST (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE WISE) SON

Let's call him Irving. He came to America in the early 1900s, not only because his family had a terribly poor existence in Poland, but mostly because they were running for their lives to escape the pogroms (vicious riots when gangs of Russian Cossacks went into Jewish shtetls, or villages, and raped and killed thousands of Jews). Irving, and thousands like him, came to America. They came with nothing, but at least America gave them safety and freedom. Irving flourished. As a boy, he spoke Yiddish and went to yeshiva (an orthodox school). When he arrived in America, he learned English. His family remained observant, continuing to follow kosher rules, celebrating Shabbat each week and living a traditional Jewish life. Irving's commitment to Judaism was unshakable.

THE SECOND (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE WICKED) SON

Irving's son, David, is the second generation. David grew up in America with a strong Jewish identity. He's comfortable in his mom and dad's home, which is filled with Jewish traditions and values, but his own home and family are let's just say, more American. David experienced some antisemitism, but never felt he had to run for his life. His goal was to be a successful business executive, and if that meant working on Shabbat, something that Irving would never do, David did it. He became so successful that he was one of the first Jews to be accepted into his local country club that would never allow Jews before. David took his family to Paris and Rome but forgot to take them to Israel. He did a great job of assimilating, but sort of a lackluster job of teaching his son, Josh, who you will meet below, about Judaism.

THE THIRD (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE SIMPLE) SON

Meet David's son, Josh. He's the third generation of Jews in America. Josh is like, well, lots of us. He considers himself culturally Jewish. Josh may have had a Seder at his grandfather Irving's house, but Josh, who by the way, is an excellent soccer player, never really concentrated on his Judaism. He felt very little antisemitism growing up; he quit Hebrew school because it conflicted with soccer practice, and he went to Hillel a couple of times at Duke, (see, told you Josh wasn't simple) but it felt too Jewish for him. Josh did go on Birthright but that was a few years ago. David is bummed that Josh doesn't have a stronger connection to Judaism, but what are you gonna do? By the way, Josh is married to Shannon, who is Protestant but would like to learn about Judaism. Unfortunately, Josh doesn't feel like he knows enough to teach her.

THE FOURTH (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE SON WHO DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO ASK A QUESTION) SON

Finally, meet Josh and Shannon's son, Luke. Of course, he knows his dad is Jewish, and actually loves seeing old photographs of Irving, but other than that, he has little connection to Judaism. We really miss and need all Lukes! Let's work together to invite everyone who is disengaged from their Judaism, back to our sometimes dysfunctional, often confusing, but always loving community.