

JOSEPH IN THE SARAJEVO HAGGADAH



Joseph Sold To Ishmaelites



Joseph's Brothers Bow To Him

The Sarajevo Haggadah is one of the oldest manuscript Haggadahs in the world. It is believed to have been created in Northern Spain, around the year 1350. Carried out of Spain during the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, it changed hands many times over the next several centuries. In 1894, in Sarajevo, a child whose family was in difficult financial circumstances because his father had died brought the Haggadah to school to barter for tuition. The teacher recognized it as a manuscript of remarkable beauty and extraordinary historical value.

Among the most impressive features of the Haggadah is a series of 69 illustrations depicting the stories of Genesis which serve as a prelude to the experience in Egypt and the Exodus. Fascinatingly, 17 of the illustrations focus on the story of Joseph, nearly a quarter of the pictures. *Two of them appear above.*

Over the years, a number of scholars have been puzzled by this disproportionate emphasis on the story of Joseph. How would you explain it? Why would the Jews of Medieval Spain be so drawn to the story of Joseph? Could it be that they identified with him for some reason? These are questions you might consider discussing at your Seder. Pass the pictures around. What do you notice about the artwork? Does it provide any insight or answers to the questions?

ITEMS TO CONSIDER IN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS:

Joseph was sold to Ishmaelites, the ancestors of the Arabs who ruled Spain for many years and under whom Jews rose to prominent positions; when the Sarajevo Haggadah was created, Christians had taken control of Spain; the clothing worn by Joseph and his brothers is typical of the period; Joseph was one of the first of our ancestors to become assimilated into a culture different from his own, in dress, language, marriage and even the names he gave his children.

On Passover we celebrate freedom from slavery, but could it be that freedom itself poses powerful challenges to Jewish identity?

What does the story of Joseph add to our understanding of the Seder?

WE CAN CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION AT SERVICES ON THE FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER.

HAG PESAH SAMEAH! - RABBI LINDEMANN

TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM PASSOVER 5775

One of the most compelling parts of the Passover *Seder* is the *midrash* of the four children – one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know how to ask. Each child poses a question, and we are left, with the Haggadah's guidance, to respond. What is so wonderful about this section is that, like *Mah Nishtana*, it encourages dialogue, for that's how we learn. This *midrash* recognizes that we all learn differently, and sometimes different people require different responses. In education today this is called differentiated instruction, and it is at the heart of how the rabbis envisioned the Passover Seder 2,000 years ago.

We could also see this motif of the four sons as representing different aspects of ourselves. We each hold within us wisdom, wickedness, innocence and ignorance. The Seder seeks to address all of these traits, and engage us with its songs, smells, and tastes to see ourselves as if we were the ones who left Egypt. By doing this we rediscover our connection to God, to our history, and to our people.

This provocative *midrash* of the four children has led to many creative artistic renderings over the years. Here are three, with brief explanations and questions, for you to ponder at your Seder.

-RABBI MICAH PELTZ



"THE FOUR CHILDREN"

THE LOVELL HAGGADAH BY RABBI MATT BERKOWITZ

Rabbi Berkowitz, who visited TBS a few years ago, represents the four children each with a biblical character. The wise child is Deborah, a judge and prophetess who led the Israelites bravely in the book of Judges. The wicked child is King Ahav, a deceitful King of Israel described in the first book of Kings, who cheated his Jewish subjects and defied God's commandments. The simple child is Lot, Abraham's nephew who chose to settle in Sodom and Gemorrah before its destruction because he thought the land looked more appealing. And finally there is Adam and Eve, who were childlike in their innocence in the Garden of Eden.

Do you think that these biblical characters fit as the four children?

What other biblical characters would you suggest to represent each child?

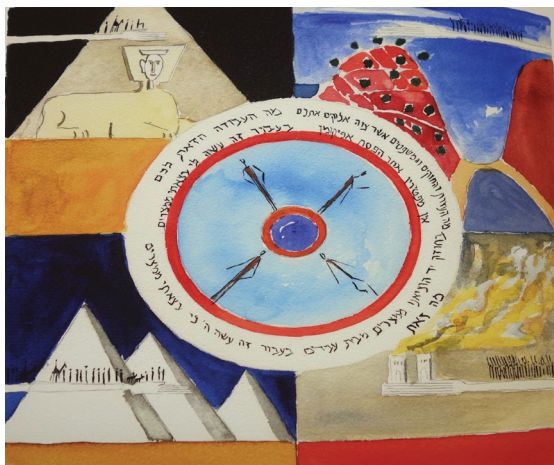
"THE FOUR DAUGHTERS"

A DIFFERENT NIGHT HAGGADAH BY MICHEL KICHKA

Israeli artist Michel Kichka presents a modern take on the four children.

Does representing the children as daughters affect your understanding of this section? How so?

*Which trait is represented by which daughter? Why?
To which daughter do you most relate?*



"THE FOUR SONS"

THE MORIAH HAGGADAH BY AVNER MORIAH

Israeli artist Avner Moriah presents this beautiful and unique illustration of the four sons. Instead of depicting the different children, he chooses to illustrate the question that each child asks.

Which question goes with which image?

How does this visual midrash help you understand the children's questions?

*How would you visually depict each question?
What colors would you use, what images?*