

## The four sons

### Haggadah

-The Torah refers to four sons: One wise, one wicked, one simple and one who does not know how to ask a question. What does the wise son say? "What are the testimonials, statutes and laws Hashem our God commanded you?" You should tell him about the laws of Pesach, that one may eat no dessert after eating the Pesach offering.

-What does the wicked son say? "What does this drudgery mean to you?" To you and not to him. Since he excludes himself from the community, he has denied a basic principle of Judaism. You should blunt his teeth by saying to him: "It is for the sake of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt. For me and not for him. If he was there he would not have been redeemed."

-What does the simple son say? "What's this?" You should say to him "With a strong hand Hashem took me out of Egypt, from the house of servitude."

-And the one who does not know how to ask, you start for him, as the Torah says: "And you should tell your son on that day, saying 'It is for the sake of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt.'"

### Discussion

1. If the 'wise' son is the opposite of the 'wicked' son, why isn't he called 'good'? Why 'wise'?

Ben Zoma in Pirkei Avot: 'Who is wise? He who learns from every person'. Wisdom is asking questions and learning. We don't know that the wise son is good: He just asked questions. Wisdom is knowing what questions to ask and knowing who might have the answers.

Goodness is determined by what you do with the answers.

Sephardic rabbis and the Sages in the Talmud are called chachamin, or "wise ones". They ask questions.

So why is 'wicked' here taken to be the opposite of 'wise'? Because the wicked doesn't ask questions. (His question is rhetorical.) He thinks he knows everything and has no need to learn or participate.

2. Rabbi Uziel Milevsky's take:

Wise son: Immigrant generation, religious

Wicked son: Second generation, rebel

Simple son: Third generation, knows a few things

Son who doesn't know how to ask: Fourth generation, knows he's Jewish and that's it.

WARNING: There is no fifth son, no fifth generation. That's the lesson of the Haggadah story.

He says: "Indeed, what have they to ask? Their father knows next to nothing, their grandfather is the rebel, and they don't remember their great-grandfather. All they know is that they are Jewish, but they have no inkling of what it means to be a Jew. The Haggadah warns that this fourth generation is the last generation -- there is no Fifth Son, for the children of the Son Who Does Not Know to Ask no longer exist from a Jewish perspective. If a Jew knows nothing more than that he is Jewish, his children will not know even that."