

ESSAYS FROM THE RASHI WEBSITE

Volume 1, Number 3 Jul 2026

© 2026, Dr. Russell Jay Hendel, DSJS

THE FOUR SONS (Student Types) RUSSELL JAY HENDEL

ABSTRACT: We examine all Rashi comments on the four biblical passages dealing with the four types of sons taught on Passover; more precisely we should refer to these as the four learner-types. This famous 4-son passage occurs prominently in the Haggadah. However, these four learner types are more properly called four learner typologies or approaches; every person's learning style is defined by their unique mixture of these four approaches. In examining the four learner types we have the opportunity to critically compare 3 Midrashic sources on which Rashi based himself though sometimes deviated from: The Yalkut, The Mechiltah, and the Jerushalmi. Besides explaining all Rashi comments, we explain several other items important for exegesis, such as the casuistic nature of biblical law, that is, its tendency to teach by examples rather than abstract formulations, the issue of Rashi manuscripts, and the justification Rashi used to deviate from original Midrashic sources.

BACKGROUND AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Dt06-20 begins the Torah narrative on the question of the so-called wise son, one of the four sons – *wise, wicked, simple, can't ask* – that the Torah speaks about and which Orthodox Jews recite annually in the Haggadah on the Passover holiday. Yet curiously, there is no Rashi comment on this passage (except an explanation that the word *tomorrow* in the verse *when your son asks you tomorrow* means *in the future* and so the passage should be translated *when your son asks you in the future*. The use of the word *tomorrow* to indicate a *future* time is an example of the synecdoche figure of speech method, since just as *honey* can refer to anything *sweet* because *honey* is a good example of *sweetness*, so too, *tomorrow* can mean *at a future time* or *in the future* since *tomorrow* is a good example of a *future time*. Naming something by a good example of it is called *synecdoche*. This Rashi on *tomorrow* meaning the *future* is repeated at both **Ex13-14b** and **Dt06-20a**.

However, except for this isolated Rashi, not really having anything to do with the content of the *wise son's inquiry* there are no Rashi comments on the passage at this location. However, Rashi comments on this passage at **Ex13-14b**. An important principle when reading Rashi is to gather all places addressing a situation since some Rashi comments are placed in different texts and you would not be aware of them unless you looked at all the passages.

Therefore, in this essay, we review all Rashi comments on all biblical narratives dealing with the 4 sons mentioned in the Passover Haggadah. The Passover Haggadah did not create the 4-sons compilation but rather borrowed it from 3 other sources: . Throughout the paper we refer to the three Midrashic texts as J,Y, and M respectively standing for the Biblical exegesis found in the Jerusalem Talmud (Pesachim 70b, 10:4), the Yalkut Shimoni (Bo ,225) and the Mechiltah (Ex. 12:14). Where convenient we will use the notation JYM to refer to all 3 texts collectively.

By way of acknowledgement, this paper was initially written in 2010 as a project paper for a course in Talmudic Methodology given by Professor Barry Wimpfheimer at Spertus college; it was one of the courses I completed in obtaining my DSJS degree (Doctor of Science in Jewish Studies) from the Spertus Institute in 2022.

A TEXT-NEUTRAL DESCRIPTION AND NAMING OF THE FOUR SONS

Prior to studying Rashi comments, we need the collection of biblical passages on which he is commenting. To do so we create a database query that seeks all biblical passages containing the following three items:

- a. Reference to *children*
- b. Verbs of communication such as *telling, saying*, etc.
- c. Reference to *Egypt*

A query requesting passages with the word for children (*ben*) followed by the word *Egypt* but excluding the phrase "*children of Israel*" yields less than 3 dozen passages. Only four of these passages involve verbs of communication such as *telling, saying*. These 4 passages form the biblical basis for the four-sons concept. The four passages are as follows (Throughout the passages we underline terms; we will explain these underlines afterwards.)

(Ex12-25:28) When your children say to you, “What is this service for you” Say [in response] This is a Passover Offering to God who passed-over the Jewish Houses in Egypt when he attacked the Egyptian houses but saved ours

(Ex13-08:10) _____ Tell your son on that day [Passover] as follows: “because of this, God did for me when I left Egypt” It will be a symbol for you on your hand and a commemorative between your eyes [on your face] in order that talk about the Torah be on your chats, because with a strong hand God took us out of Egypt. Watch this statue annually.

(Ex13-14:16) When your son will ask you in the future as follows, “What is this?” Say to him [in response] “With a strong hand God took us out of Egypt. When Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, God killed all firstborn in Egypt from the firstborn of people to the firstborn of animals; therefore, I offer to God all womb openers of animals, and all firstborn of my sons I redeem. “ This will be a symbol on your hand and a talk-opener between your eyes (on your face), that through a strong hand God took us out of Egypt

(Dt06-20:25) When your son asks you in the future as follows: “What are the commemoratives, statutes, and civil laws, that God our Lord commanded us. Say [in response] to your son: “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; God took us out of Egypt with a strong hand. God performed big, horrible signs and miracles in Egypt, in Pharaoh, and in his household, in front of us. But we, He took out of there, in order to bring us to the land that he swore to our fathers. God commanded us to do all these statutes, in order we should revere God, in order to be good for us all the time, in order to achieve the life like the one we have now. It will be charity for us when we watch to do this entire set of commandments before God as He commanded us

On each such passage we focused on two issues which we emphasized through underlines:

- What word of inquiry is used? (We see that the words, *say*, *ask*, occur about questions; one passage has no question)
- What level of descriptive detail does the inquirer use? (We see the following terms used: *this*, *service*, *commemoratives-statutes-civil-laws*).

To illustrate this, note that Ex. 12:26-27 states, “When your children *say* to you what is this *service*,” the verse uses the word “*say*” to indicate inquiry and describes an inquiry about “*service*”. The word “*service*” gives descriptive detail as understood by the inquirer. (By contrast the *simple* son who “asks what is this?” does not use descriptive detail and his inquiry is described as *asked* rather than *say*.).

We can therefore *neutrally* name each of the four biblical categories using a 2-phrase name, one word indicating the question type and the other word indicating the level of detail. The results are presented in Table 1 which also includes in the last column some alternate names or descriptions of these sons. These descriptions came from a lecture of Rabbi Doctor Joseph B Soloveitchick. As we will see below, Rashi also engaged in renaming the sons since the names given by JYM aren’t the primary names; rather the neutral-names given by the biblical narrative itself is what is determinative.

Biblical Passage	Detailed inquiry?	Inquiry verb	Neutral Name	JYM Name	Name [1]
Deut. 6:20-25	Yes - <i>testimonials, statutes and civil laws</i>	Ask	Ask-Details	Wise	Wise
Ex.12:26-27	Yes – <i>service</i>	Say	Say-Details	Wicked	Cynical
Ex. 13:14-16	No - "What is <i>this</i> "	Ask	Ask-No Details	Simple / Thick-headed	Simple
Ex.13:8-10	No		No Ask - No Details	Can't ask	Apathetic

Table 1: The four biblical passages which are the source for the 4 sons and why they are so named.

THE FOUR SONS AS FOUR STUDENT TYPES

An important principle of Jewish Biblical law is its casuistic nature. Rashi, Pesachim 6a, explicitly states, “All biblical statutory law is casuistic and should be generalized unless the Bible explicitly uses a style-form - for example, a general-detail style form- which requires restrictive interpretation.” Deut. 25:04, *do not muzzle an ox while it is threshing* nicely illustrates this principle of Rashi, since the three words in Deut. 25:04 (after the word ‘do not’) are generalized. The accepted statutory reading of Deut. 25:04 (1) prohibits muzzling any animal, not just “ox”, (2) prohibits any physical interference with eating, not just “muzzling”, and (3) prohibits muzzling (i.e. interfering with eating) during any work performance typical of the given animal, not just “threshing” (Rambam, *Sechiruth* 13). This principle of the casuistic nature of Jewish law is in fact a classical application of the Rabbi Ishmael *Generalization* rule which says that passages are *examples* which should be generalized.

Rabbi Doctor Soloveitchick applied this principle to the four-sons which should be more broadly interpreted as four learner types. Every learner, independent of age, is understood as a mixture of the four categories of learning approach, *with wisdom, with disrespect, with apathy, and with simplicity*. [2]

One can also see this generalization of *son* to *learner types* in the JYM descriptions as well as what Rashi adds. **J** describes the four passages as “wise son, wicked son...” while **YM** uses “one wise, one wicked.” Rashi not only deliberately avoids the issue by dropping both the words “one” and “son” but startlingly introduces the word “infant” not found in *any* of JYM (Rashi describes the simpleton as a *thickheaded infant*).

Thus, Rashi refuses to see an exegetical interpretation using the word “sons” as being restrictive and literal. Rather the word “son” is a typical example. Consistent with the examples presented in Table 1, Rashi might argue that “The Bible simply used typical casuistic examples without restrictively requiring these attributes as prerequisites.” To clarify further, Rashi sees the Bible as speaking *generally* about education of *people*. The education of *sons* is simply a good typical example. However, the actual laws in these four biblical passages apply to adults as well as infants, not just to sons. Rambam and all other Rishonim (without exception) see the Passover Haggadah laws as requirements for adults not just for teaching children.

Therefore, for the rest of the paper we will speak about the four learner types. These four learner types are simply components of each and every learner. To summarize our discussion, the perception of *sons* as *types* is consistent with the casuistic interpretation of biblical passages which sees the Bible as teaching general cases using typical examples.

A COMPARISON: HOW JYM REFERS TO THESE FOUR SONS

Having established, in Table 1, a neutral naming of the four sons, we explore and compare these neutral names with the names given by JYM. An important consequence of the casuistic flavor of the biblical statutory text is that the appellations of the four sons introduced by JYM are not intended restrictively. This point is critical in understanding the JYM differences. We illustrate the broad reading of the appellations with several examples.

JYM uniformly call the inquirer described in Ex. 12:26-27, the “*wicked son*.” Our neutral name, “*Detail-Saying*” is consistent with this appellation since the son cynically *says* his question vs. *asking* it. One could also call this son the *cynical* or *disrespectful* son. The reason for this is that all three terms – *wicked*, *cynical*, *disrespectful* – are consistent with the neutral name *detail-saying*. In fact, in terms of the original biblical text, the appellation *wicked* is overly specific.

JYM uniformly call the inquirer described in Deut. 6:20-25, *wise*. This is consistent with the neutral name, “*Detail-Asking*.” This inquirer *asks* vs. *says* his questions showing a certain degree of respect. This inquirer uses descriptive detail in his question – *testimonials, statutes, and civil laws*. The uniform *interpretation* by JYM that *detail* indicates *wisdom* reflects the biblical idea that acquisition of knowledge is the “hard part” of learning while conceptual analysis is “easier” (Hirsch Commentary, Gen. 41:39).

One traditional translation of Ex. 13:08-10, is *the son who can't ask*. But that would identify Ex. 13:8-10, *the son who can't ask*, with Ex. 13:14-16, *the simple son*. For this reason, Soloveitchick called the inquirer of Ex. 13:8-10, *apathetic*, translating the JYM phraseology, *she-ay-no yo-day-ah lish-ol* as meaning *who doesn't care to ask*, consistent with the biblical translation of the Hebrew root *yadah* as meaning *caring*. Here the driving force of translation is the database query underlying Table 1 which prefers distinct names for each row of the Table 2. [3]

YJ refers to the inquirer described at Ex13-14:16 as *ti-pesh* while M refers to this learner type as *Tam*. The translation of *Tam* is well known; it means *simple*. A classical verse illustrating this usage is Gen. 25:27 “And the boys grew; and Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; while Jacob was a simple man, living in tents.” The word *tipesh* is more challenging to translate. The underlying root *ti-pesh* occurs once in the Bible, at Ps. 119:70, *Their hearts are as tipesh as fat*.” Rashi is silent on this verse; Ibn Ezra simply states, “There is no similar word in Scripture.” However, Radack in his book *Roots* explains, “It means fat. Similarly, the Aramaic translation translates the biblical ‘fatten’ as ‘tipesh.’ And

because of this they [the Talmud] *ti-pesh* call a person without intelligence, a *ti-pesh*.” The standard English translation of *ti-pesh* would be stupid or foolish. Following the Radaack, I prefer the English idiom thick-headed which has obvious analogies with *tipesh* translated as *fat*. The English idiom thick-headed refers to a person set in his ways who can’t or won’t change. This translation enhances the contrast found at Ps. 119:70: “Although their hearts/feelings are as set [] as fat, I, play with your Torah.” Such a translation contrasts a thick-headed set approach to Torah with an exploratory, innovative, playful approach.

This paper seeks to find the root of all translations in Table 1: And indeed, both appellations, *simple* and *thick-headed*, are consistent with the parameters of “lack of detail” and respectful “asking”. Consequently, we see JYM as complementing each other in their statutory reading of the biblical text. That is Ex. 13:14-16, a passage of inquiry using the verb “ask” and lacking “details” equally applies to a simple as well as a thick-headed person, since both these people ask respectfully and do not have a developed vocabulary with which to inquire.

A remarkable support for this position, that the exegeses should be perceived as complementary vs. divisive, is made explicit by Rashi on Ex. 13:14:

This is a thick-headed infant who cannot inquire deeply and in a closed manner and without details asks, ‘What is this?’ And another verse states ‘What are the testimonials....’ The Torah speaks concerning 4 sons: simple, wicked, apathetic, and one who asks in a wise way.”

By using multiple phrases – *thick headed*, *infant*, *without details* – Rashi explains that the names given by JYM are not final absolute descriptions but rather useful approximations by which to understand the biblical text as presented in Table 1.

SHARED DIMENSIONS OF THE FOUR LEARNER TYPES |

An examination of Table 1 shows that the *wicked* and *wise* son share the attribute of “details” or wisdom, the *wicked* and *apathetic* son share the attribute of disrespect, the *wise* and *simple* share the attribute of respect, and the *simple* and *apathetic* son shared the attribute of lack of wisdom. This sharing of attributes is crucial to understanding JYM differences and is summarized in Table 2.

Details (Wisdom)	Non-Details (Non wisdom)	Respectful	Disrespectful
Wise, Wicked	Simple, apathetic	Wise, Simple	Wicked, apathetic

Table 2: Commonalities in pairs of learner types.

RASHI COMMENTS ON THE 4 SONS---ISSUE OF MANUSCRIPTS

Before presenting the Rashi comments on the four sons, we make an important point about manuscripts of Rashi. It is incorrectly thought that a full meaningful understanding of Rashi comments can only take place with the most accurate of manuscripts. This is partially true, but not completely so, because Rashi does not always state his comments on the verses targeted for his comments. For example, the Rashi comment on the wise learner type passage beginning in Dt06-20 is however found in this commentary on Ex13-14b dealing with the simple learner type. Similarly, the Rashi comments on the wicked cynical learner type found at Ex12-27 are found mostly at Ex13-14b and Ex13-05d which address the simple and apathetic learner types. Even the best Rashi manuscripts could not avoid this problem that Rashi’s comments on a verse might be found only on another verse. Moreover, the hidden nuances in Rashi’s comments on the wicked son at Ex13-27a can only be properly understood using Table 1 which is not found in any Rashi but is implicit in his comment at Ex13-14b.

These anomalies show that full meaningful understanding of Rashi comments requires much more than accurate manuscripts; it requires a careful reading of biblical passages, noting their paragraph and narrative grammar, the underlying parallelisms, as well as the theory of figures of speech. In other words, to properly and fully understand Rashi we must use techniques outside of the Rashi text. This will be illustrated several times in our explanation of the list on the 10 Rashi comments on the four learner types. Consequently, knowledge of parallelism, grammar, and figures of speech is much more important than manuscripts in understanding Rashi. Moreover, as will be shown with the four sons, Rashi may deliberately ignore exact phraseology of Midrashic sources in favor of a theory-based reading. Taken together, we conclude that full understanding of Rashi comments may be accomplished without reference to manuscripts.

This is not to totally belittle use of manuscripts; rather, it is to make their use secondary. For example, Gn32-05, *I stayed over by Laban (for 20 years, amassed wealth, married two women, and had 12 children)* yields a Rashi comment because of the use of *stayed over* vs. *resides*, on a person well established, implying uncomfortableness in Jacob’s stay with Laban, reasonably happening because of their different life -styles. Thus, this Rashi insight is based on the synonym method comparing the nuances of *reside* vs. *stayed over*. However, manuscript analysis is needed to fully confirm that the word play we have in Rashi equating the sum of the numerical values of the letters of *stayed over* which equals 613 the number of biblical commandments, is in fact something added for marketing purposes by a printer (We can show this, by

manuscript analysis since the word-letter sums do not appear in Rashi manuscripts till a certain printing).[4]

Bottom line: If you want to understand Rashi you must use your knowledge of parallelism, grammar, and figures of speech; this is much more important than use of manuscripts. Furthermore, and based on numerous Rashi comments, Rashi will frequently reject exact Midrashic wording if the theory tools justifying his comments do not give rise to these phrases.

RASHI COMMENTS ON THE 4 SONS

We now analyze all Rashi comments on the four sons which are scattered throughout several biblical passages.

Parallelism: Ex13-14b: This Rashi is the main Rashi text on the four sons. Rashi basically produces Table 1; however, while we used two parameters in Table 1, *respect, level of detail*, Rashi only addressed the *level of detail*. His exact comment on the verse *when you son asks you what is this* is *this refers to a thick-headed infant who cannot ask deeply and so asks generally what is this?* Here, Rashi combines the language found in JYM, *thick headed, simple* and adds *infant*, showing that he doesn't attach significance to the exact phrases found in the original Midrashim. Instead, Rashi refers to the original derivation based on the biblical parallelism *cannot ask with details* and, in fact, Rashi also cites Dt06-20, the wise-learner-type passage, who asks *what are these commemoratives, statutes, and civil laws*.

Support for this approach that Rashi directly used the original derivation based on biblical parallelism is found in how Rashi lists the four learner types; *simple, wicked, apathetic, and someone who asks in a wise way*. By using the action *asks in a wise way* rather than by calling him by his name *wise*, Rashi shows that the true issue are the attributes of the passages, *respect, level of detail*. This motivated our Soloveitchick developing his own nomenclature *cynical, apathetic, simple and wise*.

Paragraphs: Ex12-27a: At the conclusion of the cynical-wicked learner-type passage Rashi explains *the nation bowed (in thanx)* to refer to the entirety of content of **Ex12-01:27**, namely, *the redemption from Egypt (smiting of first born), the promise to enter Israel* (Ex12-25), and adds, *and the promise of children* referring to the dialogue between the cynical learner type and his parents. Without Table 1 we may miss the nuance here. The learner type at Ex12-25 is cynical. Among all the children, his question is phrased by the bible in the plural, implying that he got involved with the wrong group of peers. It might be thought that these children are lost (say to intermarriage and apostasy). But the Torah explains how to respond (how to raise) this cynical child, so he doesn't leave Judaism. In other words, we see a promise that besides coming to the Land of Israel we will not lose children to intermarriage. This is why Rashi lists *the good news about retaining children* in what the Jews thanked for. Use of Table 1 is crucial at understanding this Rashi.

Paragraphs: Ex13-05d, Ex13-08a: The underlined word used in Ex13-05d *when you come to Israel do this service* echoes the word *service* used by the cynical-wicked learner type at Ex12-25. But Ex13-05 is about the apathetic learner type, not the cynical learner type. This can be explained by Table 2 showing that the cynical-wicked apathetic learner share disrespect: Just as it is disrespectful to snap at a person *Why are you doing this work?* so too, it is disrespectful to ignore and be silent. Rashi explains that the apathetic chapter adds a teaching strategy to the disrespectful learner-type in the specific case where the learner is apathetic: *Open up to him with stories which entice interest*. This theme of story-telling is continued in Rashi's commentary on **Ex13-08a** where Rashi explains that the word *this* in *because of this God did for me when I left Egypt* refers to the symbols present: *Matzoh, Marror, Pesach* (matzoh, bitter herbs, and the Passover barbecue.) Thus, the emphasis in the answer is to provide lots of symbols to the apathetic learner type encouraging him/her to ask.

This teaching technique of the Torah presented at Ex13-08a, that symbols are a good way of creating a conversation opener to apathetic learners, is a technique, very skillfully used in modern times by the Chabad movement which emphasized the symbolic such as Chanukah menorahs.

Parallelism Ex13-08b: This Rashi comment is the basis for our analysis on why the Haggadah mixes the biblical answers to the four learner types: because the Torah itself already did so. To understand this, we analyze the parallelism between the cynical and apathetic learner types presented in Table 3 showing use of the *plural* by the cynical-wicked learner type but use of the *singular* by the apathetic learner type.

Verse	Son	Passage	
Ex12-26	Cynical wicked	When your <u>sons</u> say to you	
Ex13-08	Apathetic; doesn't care to ask	When your son says to <u>you</u>	Because of this God did for <u>me</u>

Table 3: The cynical passage is in the plural while the apathetic passage is in the singular.

Table 3 implies that a learner does not become cynical by him/herself. Rather they belong or get involved in a group (plural) and it is the group that instigates them. This then constitutes one response to the cynical-wicked: *you belong to a group; if you separate and re-become an individual then you would merit God's protection and deliverance*. This idea is hinted at in the response to the apathetic son: *because of this God did for me when I left Egypt* which hints (Rashi's

language), or more precisely contrasts, with the cynical learner type who got involved in the wrong group. This emphasis on being worthy of God's redemption by being an individual is also found in the parallelism of Table 4 and will be discussed there.

Figure of speech - synecdoche: Ex13-14a, Dt06-20a: We have already explained above that *tomorrow* can synecdochally refer to the *future*.

Parallelism Ex13-25a: The need to interpret *tomorrow* based on figures of speech is based on **Ex13-25a** *when you come to the land that God swore to the patriarchs to give to you, you should watch this (Passover) service*. Rashi explains that there are numerous Torah commandments beginning *when you come to the land* and the obligation to follow those commandments only started when the Jews got into Israel. Even today certain commandments are only fully observed in Israel.

Cross Reference Ex13-25b Rashi explains that *coming to Israel* as part of the *redemption* process was already made explicit in the cross-referenced verse Ex06-08 which is part of the paragraph Ex06-02:08 in which God promises to take the Jews out of Egypt, save the Jews from their slavery, redeem them, adopt them as a nation, be their God, bring them to Israel, and give it to them as an inheritance.

Parallelism Ex13-09a, Ex13-09b, Ex13-09c: The requirement to wear Tefillin which contain the biblical chapters commemorating Egypt is stated in both the biblical passages addressing the apathetic (Ex13-09) and the simpleton learner-types (Ex13-16). A parallel comparison of the two passages is presented in Table 4.

Ex13-09	It will be <u>for you</u> a symbol on your <u>hand</u>	And a <u>commemorative</u> on your face (lit. between your eyes)	In order that the Torah, be a <u>constant topic of discussion</u>
Ex13-16	It will be _____ a symbol on your <u>handd</u>	And to <u>chatter ornaments</u> on your face (lit. between your eyes).	

Table 4: Comparison of the requirement to wear Tefillin in two biblical passages.

We have underlined three differences between these parallel passages:

- Ex13-09 emphasizes *the symbol will be for you*. This echoes the individual-group difference between the apathetic and cynical-wicked learner types. For the apathetic *you* especially emphasize the personal benefits of doing God's commandments.
- The Hebrew word for *handd* in Ex13-16 is spelled with a feminine ending, the Hebrew letter *hey*, (which we have mimicked in English with the double *d*) . Rashi explains that the *tefillin is worn on the left hand which is indicated by the feminine (weaker) form*. [We note that it sounds like Rashi is making a pun when he says *yadchah = yad cayhah*. This however is a pun in the *form* of the Rashi comment. The actual *reason* for the Rashi comment however is the feminine suffix of *hay* with the feminine indicating *weaker*.]
- At Ex13-09 the head tefillin is called a commemorative to assure that the Torah is a constant topic of discussion while at Ex13-16 the head tefillin is called *totafoth* which, Rashi, citing the grammarian Menachem, explains as also indicating *daily chatter* from the Hebrew word *tatifun to chatter*. This alignment of *commemorative for topics on discussions* with *chatter ornament* seems quite natural and points to the etymological derivation of *totafoth*. While Rashi does cite an alternative multi-linguistic explanation for *totafoth* given in the Talmud, it is his first explanation, which as we have explained throughout this website is typically rejected by Rashi in favor of his 2nd explanation.

At **Ex13-09a** and **E13-09b** Rashi simply explains the mechanics of putting on tefillin: They are box like objects with Torah narrative portions in them which are worn on the arm and face.

COMPARISON OF TEACHING METHODS TO FOUR LEARNER TYPES :HAGGADAH vs BIBLICAL TEXT

As indicated above the Torah describes four learner types: For each learner type, the Torah indicates the types of questions asked by the learner as well as suggested responses. When comparing the biblical suggested response with the response written in the Passover Haggadah, in certain cases, there are differences presented in Table 5.

Learner Type	Apathetic	Simple	Wicked-cynical	Wise
Biblical response	Because of this [1], God did for me when I left Egypt	With a strong hand God took us out of Egypt	This is a Passover barbecue for God [celebrating that] God passed over Jewish houses in Egypt when he attacked Egypt and saved our houses	5 sentence response (We were slaves in Egypt; God punished them with miracles; God took us out; God commanded observance for our good; it will be charity for us when we observe the commandments)
Haggadah Answer	The same	The same	[2] Biblical response given to apathetic [3]	(2) Explain to him the laws of Passover for example one doesn't eat food after eating the afikomen (4)

Table 5: A comparison of the Bible and Haggadah on the proposed responses to the four learner types

NOTES: (1) As we explained above, *this* refers to the symbolic commandments of Matzoh, Marror, and the Passover. The Haggadah explicitly says, “Perform conversation openers with him with stories and symbols that motivate

(2) When the Passover Haggadah differed in its proposed response to the biblical proposed response it introduces its proposed response with the Hebrew phrase *af attah* (roughly translated *you also*). This two-word phrase is a semantic marker indicating that what follows is different than what is in the Bible.

(3) While the proposed response to the cynical and apathetic learner-type both begin by citing the same verse *because of this God did for me when I left Egypt* the two proposed responses are developed differently. To the apathetic son there is an emphasis on the word *this*, which the Haggadah explains *use symbols as conversation openers*; contrastively, to the wicked the emphasis is on *God did for me* with an exclusionary nuance to *me*. God did this for *me* not for *you*; if you had been there you wouldn't have been redeemed. Interestingly, the *me-you* difference is actually found in the biblical proposed response to the cynical: the cynical son asks *what benefit is this service to you* to which the proposed answer *...when God attacked the Egyptian houses but saved ours*. Thus, we already see this *me-you* nuance in the cynical son passage. However, as Table 2 shows, the cynical and apathetic share the dimension of disrespect so that Rashi's comments that the apathetic son cross references the cynical son is fully justified by Table 1 showing this commonality.

(4) This is a cute pun. All the learners use the term *mah* (*what*) in the sense of *what is this you are doing? Why are you doing it?* But *mah* (*what*) not only means *why* but also means *what* in the sense of *how*. The Haggadah is of the opinion that after finding out *why* we observe Passover, the wise son wants to know *how to observe it?* The Passover Haggadah infers this from the wise son's detailed questions: *what are these commemoratives, statutes, and civil laws*; both the interpretations *why* and *what* are appropriate here. So, the Haggadah adds to the biblical answer by pointing this out.

CONCLUSION

This essay has reviewed the Rashi comments on the four biblical learner types. The essay showed that crucial to understanding these comments, even more important than original Rashi manuscripts or Midrashic sources, are applications of parallelism, casuistic interpretation, and results of database queries. While the immediate goal was to explain the 10 Rashi comments on the four learner types, the methodology to approach Rashi gleaned from this example is equally important. Finally, this paper has advocated a 2-dimensional Briggs-Meyer type personality evaluation of workers, students, and staff: The manager or teacher must ask two fundamental questions, “Are they respectful in their pursuit of knowledge?” and “Do they possess an adequate vocabulary to assimilate the material?”

NOTES

[1] Russell Jay Hendel, *The Educational Pedagogy of the Four Sons*, **Shofar**, 22(4), pp. 94-106, 2004.

[2] Hendel, *The Educational Pedagogy*...

[3] Hendel, *The Educational Pedagogy*...

[4] H. Mack, *I stayed with Laban and Remained till now. From the school of R. Moshe HaDarshan to Rashi's Commentary on the Pentateuch*, **Tarbiz** ,65, 251—261, 1996.