

## ***Passover Issue - One Pager Series***

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- **The (Cynical) Wicked son: Biblical Text: Ex12-25:28** Your sons<sup>(1)</sup>, when they<sup>(1)</sup> say<sup>(2)</sup> to you, “What is this service to you”

- Key points: (2) The wicked son says his question; other children ask their question.

We have here tone: *Saying a question* connotes cynicism. In fact, *the cynical son* might be a better translation

- (1): Note the plural (*They, sons*). In the questions of other children mentioned in the Bible, questions are singular

This is a crucial point for children who go off the path. Their problems are not intellectual. Rather their problem is their plurality. They have joined the wrong groups.

- **The Apathetic son: Biblical Text: Ex13-1:10** Tell<sup>(1)</sup> your son on that<sup>(2)</sup> day as follows: Because of this<sup>(2)</sup> God saved me from Egypt. And it will be for you a symbol<sup>(2)</sup> on your hands and an ornament on your head.

- Key points: (1) Every other biblical paragraph with children begins with a question (or a statement in the case of the cynical son). This paragraph has no opening question. Therefore, this text describes the apathetic son who doesn't care to ask

- The translation *apathetic* is due to my teacher, Rabbi Soloveitchick, the Rav. The Rav pointed out that

- *There are not just 4 sons; there are a rich variety of sons; the four sons mentioned in the four biblical texts are typologies which mix in each individual to give their unique personality. Since the 4 sons are 4 types you can't call this son, who can't ask, because that would make him identical with the simple son. Also, it is well known that the Biblical verb to know means to feel and experience (biblical know). Hence, we translate the biblical text as the son who doesn't care to ask!*

- (2) Emphasis in the response to apathy is a symbolic experiential approach (not cognitive). You reach out with symbols which are tangible and there: they are done on that day and are physically present because of this.

- **The Simple/Wise son: Biblical Text: Ex13-14:16 versus Dt06-20:25**

- The questions of these two children are differently formulated

- The simple son says what is this<sup>(1)</sup>

- The wise son says what are these testimonials, statutes, and civil laws<sup>(1)</sup>
- Key points: (1) A known principle of artificial intelligence is that human intelligence is recognized by a superior and more detailed vocabulary:
  - The wise son has at his command words for many types of laws: testimonials which commemorate historical events, statutory laws, and civil laws (for example the laws that house staff must rest on holidays)
  - Contrastively, the simple son can only ask and point (what is this) He doesn't yet have a vocabulary

### Haggadah formulation of the four sons. Why does the Haggadah mix up responses to the sons?

The four sons are understood as manifesting extremes of two dimensions: Wisdom (detailed vocabulary) and respect. The following table summarizes (Hendel, *The Educational Pedagogy of the Four Sons*, **Shofar**, 22.4, (2004)).

Respect \ Vocabulary	<b>Rich vocabulary</b> (testimonials, civil laws)	<b>Weak vocabulary</b> (this)
<b>Respect</b> (Respectfully asks)	<b>Wise</b> – What are the testimonials...	<b>Simple</b> – what is this
<b>Cynical</b> (Says questions)	<b>Wicked</b> – cynically says what is this?!	<b>Apathetic</b> – not concerned; doesn't ask

**#Haggadah mix-up of the Biblical wicked and wise (both in the high vocabulary column):** The Haggadah answers the wise son's question with the biblical answer to the wicked son – “*It is a Passover offering to God*” (Ex12-26), *teach him the laws of Passover*. The Haggadah indicates that this is not the real answer with the opening statement *af attah* (You also...) which is used when the text from that son spoken about is not cited. Here, the mix-up is made because both the wise and wicked son are in the same column. They both have a richer vocabulary and therefore the combined answers to each of them applies to both of them

**#Haggadah mix-up of the Biblical wicked and apathetic (both in the lack of respect row):** The Haggadah answers the wicked son's question with the biblical answer to the apathetic son – “Because of this God took me out of Egypt”. The Haggadah indicates that this is not the real answer with the opening statement *af attah* (You also...) which is used when the text from that son is not cited. Here, the mix-up is made because both the wicked and apathetic son are in the same row. They both lack respect and therefore the combined answers to each of them applies to both of them