

THE TORAH SPEAKS OF FOUR SONS

Activity format for Grades 4-5

This format deals with the Midrash of the four sons. The format includes an introduction to the text from the Passover tractates, and their interpretation by various artists on the subject. By dealing with the text and the artworks the students will be exposed to the characteristics of each character and they will learn what a Midrash is. The format sharpens the logic existing in society and the need to give a different answer to different kinds of people.

The format also enables the students to examine themselves, with which character they identify.

Lesson 1 – the story of the four sons

Introduction to the Passover tractates, characterization of the characters, and the way they are referred to.

Lesson 2 – a question of perception – the four sons quiz

The characters of the four sons in the creations of various artists. The students are required to identify which is which and via the quiz to understand the similar and the different in the interpretation of the artists.

Lesson 3 – the four sons in each of us

Presentation of the stories of the four sons relating to the stages in development and the different parts of their personalities. We will examine with which of the characters do I connect? When am I wise, wicked, simple or do not know how to ask?

Lesson 4 – Personal creation

Each of us will create his own four sons. Who is clever in his eyes, who is evil, who is innocent and who does not know how to ask?

LESSON 1 – ABOUT THE FOUR SONS

Objectives

- The student shall learn about the four sons, and diverse interpretations.
- The student will understand that the Passover Haggadah (in general) and the story of the four sons (in particular) are a symbol that can be given several interpretations pursuant to a certain ethical perception,
- The student will understand that society is diverse and get to know the importance of the reference to different needs of various parts of it.

The Torah speaks of four children: One is wise, one is wicked, one is simple and one does not know how to ask.

The wise one, what does he say? What are the testimonies, the statutes and the laws which the L-rd, our G-d, has commanded you? You, in turn, shall say to him: with a strong hand G-d took us out of the Egypt from the house of bondage.'

The wicked one, what does he say? What is this work to you? Why are you bothering with this and making us do it year after year? He says 'to you,' but not to him! By thus excluding himself from the community he has denied that which is fundamental. You say to him: It is because of this that the L-rd did for me when I left Egypt"; 'for me' - but not for him! If he had been there, he would never have been redeemed from there

The simpleton, what does he say? "What is this?" Thus you shall say to him: No-one is excluded from Passover and the afikoman, so that he shall not go from one community to another.

As for the one who does not know how to ask, you must initiate him, as it is said: "Remember my son that we were slaves in Egypt.

According to the Jerusalem Talmud Passover Tractates Page 70/6 – Kibbutz Haggadah

Reading the text and interpretation (it is possible to do this by exposure in stages)

1. Wise, wicked, simple and does not know how to ask – what characterizes each of them? What would you expect from each of them?

2. What does each of them say and what answer is given to them? What is the connection between the question and the answer?
 - What testifies to wisdom in the wise son's question? (knowledge of details, he is part of everyone)
 - What testifies to wickedness in the wicked son's question? (contempt, he is not part of everyone)
 - What testifies to the innocence of the simple son's question? (Asks without knowledge)
3. What is the difference between the questions and the answers?
4. Why is it important to present the four characters? Why are they all sons? What message is transferred in the Haggadah?



Chagim Center

Home for the holidays

LESSON 2 – A QUESTION OF PERSPECTIVE – A QUIZ ABOUT THE FOUR SONS

- Characterize the character - each student receives a picture of one son and is asked to characterize the son in regard to his clothing, items, profession, and facial expression.
- The four sons quiz – Each student receives a picture with a version of the four sons, he has to guess which one is which and give his reasons. Thereafter, each of them presents his guess:

Guidelines:

Look at the picture that you have received

Describe each of the figures of the sons:

- What is he wearing? Is he wearing a hat/skullcap/head covering? Which?
- Which items does he have? What is he doing with them?
- Which figure or profession or social group does he remind you of?
- What facial expression does he have?

According to the characteristics think whether the one you have received is the wise son, the wicked son, the simple son, or the son who does not know how to ask?

- Discussion
 - Which symbols characterize each character? Which symbols are repeated (owl=wisdom, lamb=innocence, book = wisdom).
 - Which things have been in dispute? To what do the differences testify?
Religious characteristics (Kodor v. Schick or Hapoel/Hechalutz (Livne v. Schick)
 - What is the interpretation of Kishke in the four girls and the four generations? How is it difference from the rest of the interpretations (not different parts in society but rather different generations, stages of development).

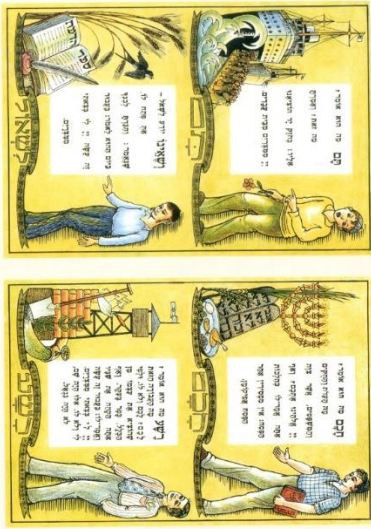




Chagim Center

Home for the holidays

Zvi Livne 1955



Arthur Schick 1939



The four Marx brothers by Richard Kodor 1981



Michel Kishke – the four daughters



The Four Marx Brothers by Richard Kodor 1981

The Marx Brothers were a comedy team of Jewish American brothers who appeared in vaudeville theatre, the movies and on television in the United States in the 20th century. The team included a varying number of members however at its end, when it had gained huge success, both commercially and artistically, it was consolidated into three – Groucho – the cynical one, who smoked a cigar with striking moustache and eyebrows, Harpo the mute, who played the harp, and Chico with the Italian accent, who played the piano.

Between 1926 and 1957 the brothers made several movies with a unique style, which notwithstanding the decades that have since passed they can still make the contemporary viewer laugh. Amongst their classic films “Duck Soup”, an anarchic, anti war piece which makes you laugh until you cry from 1933 “A night in Casablanca” (1946) the brothers’ nod to the film “Casablanca” and “Night at the Opera” (1935) which is remembered due to the scene in which the brothers pushed 13 people into a small cabin on a ship, the name of which was used for one of Queen’s albums . Many such as Woody Allen, found the films of the Marx Brothers inspiring and significant, and John Lennon once said that he was a “Marxist Lennonist” who supports John Lennon and the Marx brothers.



LESSON 3 – THE FOUR SONS IN EACH OF US

The Stages Midrash: there is a midrash that interprets the four sons as four stages in the development: the one who doesn't know how to ask – baby, simple – a child, wicked – an adolescent (rebellion), wise – adult.

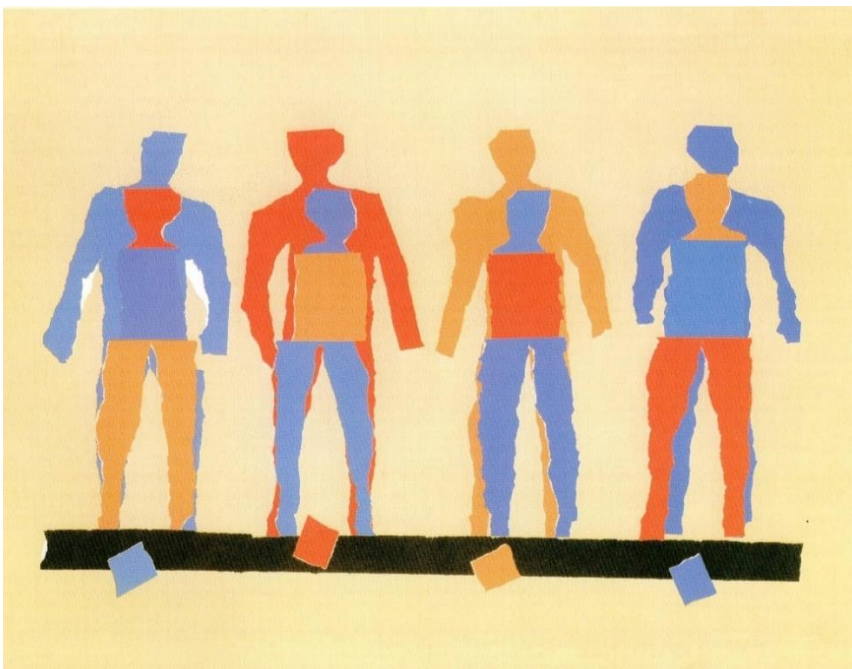
Ask:

- According to this interpretation with which character do you identify?
- Why is the adolescent the wicked one? What happens during adolescence which causes us to be wicked? How should the adults respond to this rebellion? Is the response in the Haggadah the correct response?

The Stages Midrash in personalities: there are interpretations that claim that all the four sons are in each of us (you can show the picture of Dan Reiziger presenting this)

- Do you agree with this interpretation?
- In which cases or areas am I wise/wicked/simple/do not know how to ask?

The four sons – parts of personality – Dan Reizinger 1982



LESSON 4 – PERSONAL CREATION

Each student creates his own four sons. Who is wise in his opinion, who is wicked, who is simple and who does not know how to ask?