

PASSOVER EDUCATION GUIDE

The Four Children

Pesach is the festival of telling our story of redemption from slavery to freedom. We do this on the first night of Pesach, Seder night (this year, it is a Saturday night). We use the Haggadah to tell the story. It interweaves Biblical and Talmudic texts with a festive meal that includes foods that remind us of the Exodus from Egypt.

One of the main themes of the Haggadah is education. Parents are commanded to retell the story of the Exodus to their children. The Rabbis who edited the Haggadah understood that not every child is the same, and therefore, each child should be told the story in a way that is suitable for that individual child. The Haggadah does this by presenting four stereotypical children: the wise child, the wicked child, the simple child, and the child who does not know how to ask. Each child, according to their needs, is told the story of our ancestors in a way that is appropriate for them.

For centuries, different illustrated Haggadahs have re-imagined the stereotype of the four children through art.

This session will examine some of these artistic impressions of the four children.

METHOD:

Print out the images in color on separate pages. Present each of the pictures together with the following prompts and questions:

- Identify each of the different children in the picture.
- What makes the different children wise, wicked, etc.?
- How does the image reflect when and where the Haggadah was published?
- What is the message of each illustration?

After examining the pictures, ask participants which and why they liked or disliked the most. If you are not running your session on Shabbat, you can ask participants to draw their own 2025 versions of the four children. Alternatively, find images from the internet that could represent the four children. Each participant should present their pictures, explaining who each child is and why.

NOTES ON EACH IMAGE FOR EDUCATOR

Image 1	The wise child has a Haggadah open on his lap.
Image 2	This image reflects the challenges of immigrating to the USA at the end of the 19th Century. Only the wise child covers his head, and the wicked child leans back and smokes at the Seder table.
Image 3	The artist was from the Bezalel school and reflects the combining of Western and Eastern styles. An animal represents each child.
Image 4	The artist was an immigrant from Poland who moved to London.
Image 5	The artist reflects on Jewish life in the USA during World War Two. The "Wicked Child" is red and wants to set the world on fire with his ideology.
Image 6	The "Wicked Child" depicts Leon Trotsky, a Russian Bolshevik leader, raising an axe against the Ten Commandments. The simple child smokes a cigar and is a sports fan.
Image 7	In this Haggadah from the early years of the State of Israel, the "Wise Child" is a Kibbutznik, the "Wicked Child" is a capitalist, the "Simple Child" is an immigrant, and the "Child Who Cannot Ask" is Ultra-Orthodox.
Image 8	Only the "Wicked Child" is distinct and represents the Communist regime's destruction of Jewish education and identity.
Image 9	A part of the four children is found in all four children.
Image 10	This represents survivors' varied relationships with Judaism after the Holocaust.
Image 11	The four sons are represented by four daughters in the 1990s.
Image 12	Again, the sons are portrayed as women. They represent four generations of Israeli women. The first generation is religious, the second is secular but reads Israeli literature, and the next generation reads the newspaper.

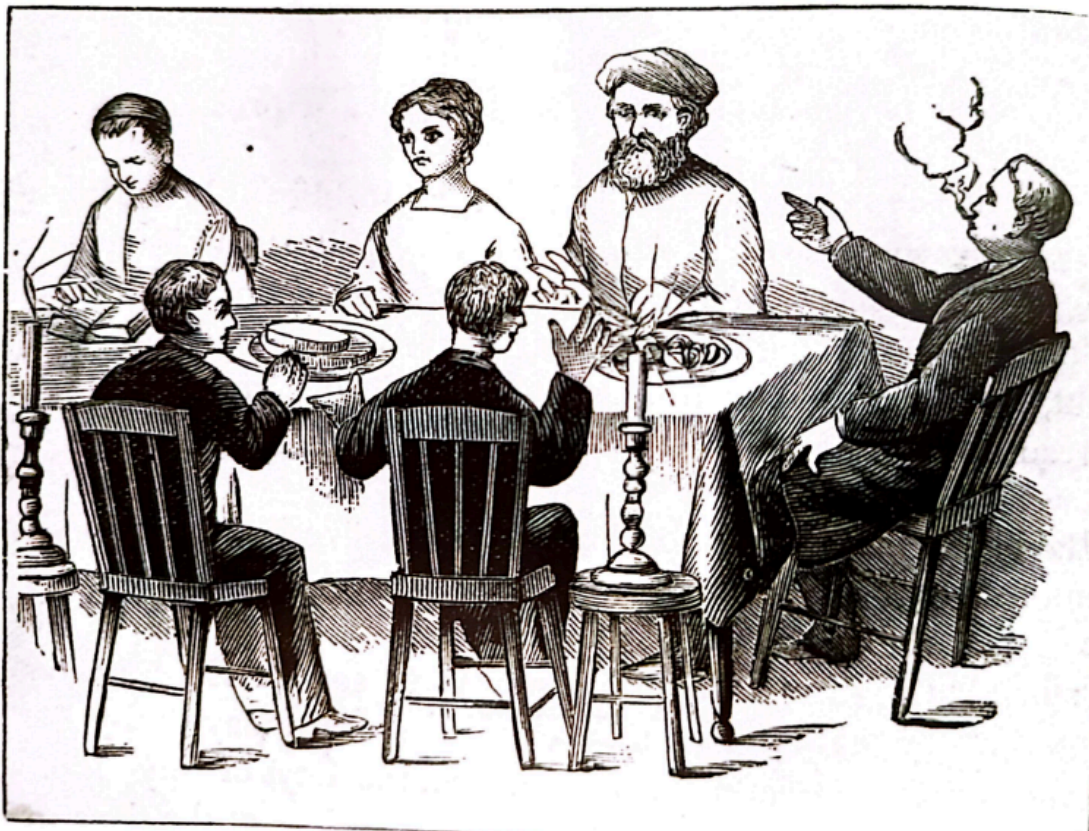
(All images taken from *The Schechter Haggadah*, 2024)

Image 1



The Joseph ben David of Leipnick Haggadah, 1738. (Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Special Collections, University Library UvA, Hs, Ros. 382, fol. 9).

Image 2



Services for the Passover with new illustrations, edited by Rev. Hayim Liberman, 1879.

Image 3



Haggadah Shel Pesach, illustrated by Ze'ev Raban, Jerusalem, 1925.

Image 4



The Haggadah, by Arthur Szyk, London, 1940.

Image 5



*Sefer Haggadah Shel Pesach, translated by
Abraham Regelson, illustrated by Siegmund
Forst, New York 1941.*

Image 6



*Sefer Haggadah Shel Pesach, translated by Abraham Regelson,
illustrated by Siegmund Forst, New York 1949.*

Image 7



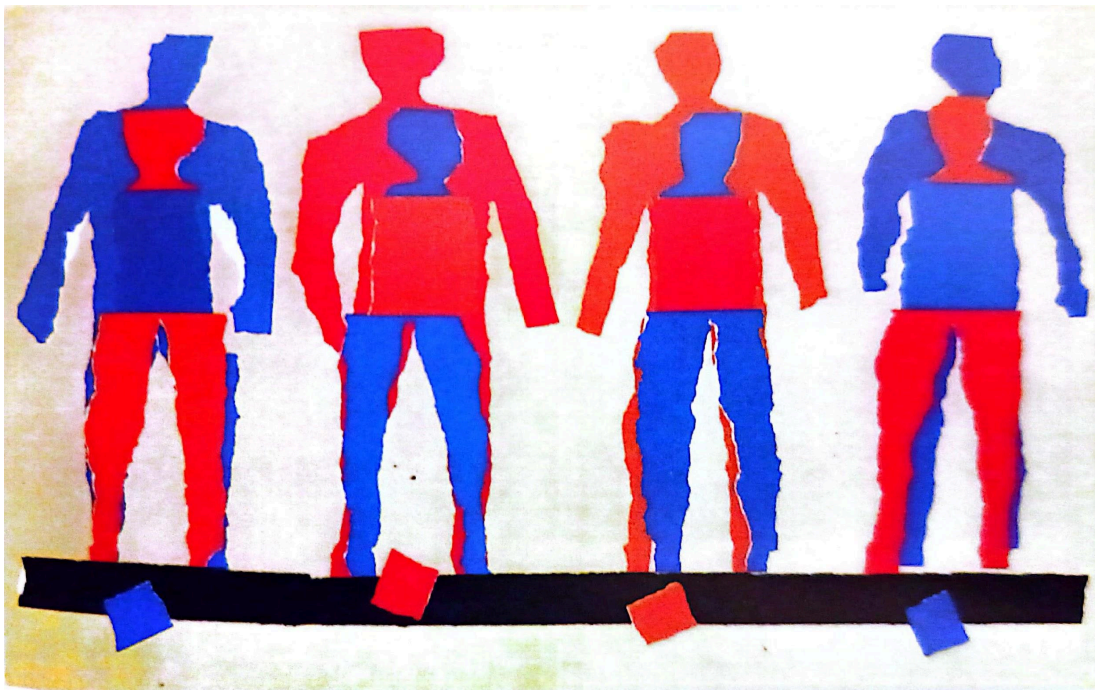
Haggadah Shel Pesach, edited by Shlomo Sakolsky, illustrated by Tzvi Livni, Tel Aviv, 1955.

Image 8



Let My People Go: A Haggadah, illustrated by Mark Podwal, New York, 1972.

Image 9



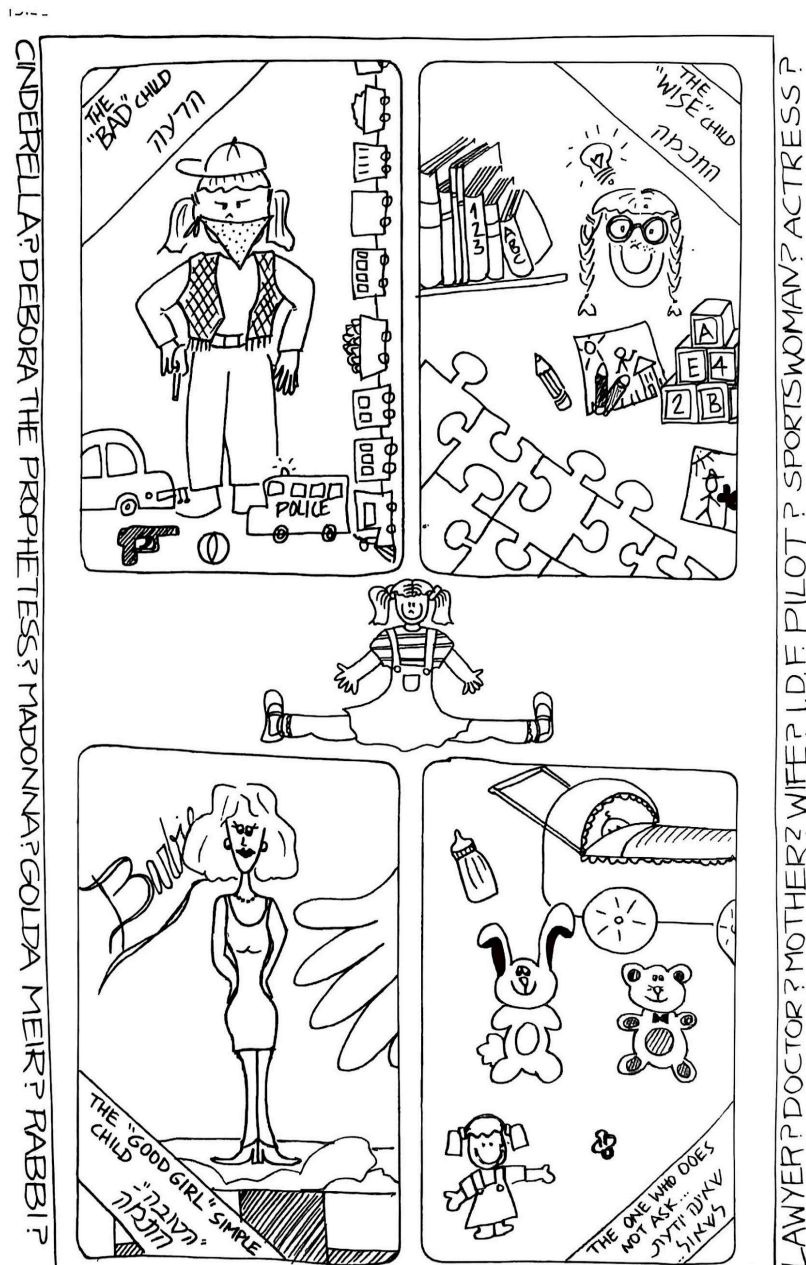
Passover Haggadah: The Feast of Freedom, edited by Rachel Anne Rabinowicz, illustrated by Dan Reisinger, New York, 1982.

Image 10



The Wolloch Haggadah: Pessach Haggadah in Memory of the Holocaust, illustrated by David Wander, calligraphy by Yonah Weinrib, Haifa, 1988.

Image 11



A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah, edited by Noam Zion and David Dishon, Jerusalem, 1997. "The Ideal Girl" by Tanya Zion, 1996.

Image 12



HaLaila Hazeh: Haggadah Yisraelit Laila Hazeh: Haggadah Yisraelit by Mishael Zion and Noam Zion, illustrated by Michele Kishke, 2004.