



חֲכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר ? מָה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר  
צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתֶכֶם. וְאִיךָ אֶתָּה אָמֹר לוֹ כִּהְלָכוֹת הַפֶּסַח :  
אֵין מִפְּטִירִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֶפִיקוֹמָן.

What does the wise [son] say? “What are these testimonies, statutes and judgments that the Lord our God commanded you?’ ([Deuteronomy 6:20](#))” And accordingly you will say to him, as per the laws of the Pesach sacrifice, “We may not eat an afikoman [a dessert or other foods eaten after the meal] after [we are finished eating] the Pesach sacrifice ([Mishnah Pesachim 10:8](#)).”



רָשַׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם. לָכֶם – וְלֹא לוֹ.  
וּלְפִי שְׁהוֹצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכָּלל כְּפֶר בְּעֶקֶר. וְאַף אַתָּה  
הִקְהֵה אֶת שְׁנָיו וְאַמּוֹר לוֹ: “בְּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי  
מִמִּצְרַיִם.” לִי וְלֹא-לוֹ. אֱלוֹ הִיָּה שָׁם, לֹא הִיָּה נִגְאָל.

What does the evil [son] say? “What is this worship to you?” ([Exodus 12:26](#))” ‘To you’ and not ‘to him.’ And since he excluded himself from the collective, he denied a principle [of the Jewish faith]. And accordingly, you will blunt his teeth and say to him, “For the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for *me* in my going out of Egypt’ ([Exodus 13:8](#)).” ‘For me’ and not ‘for him.’ If he had been there, he would not have been saved.

תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר ? מָה זֹאת ?  
וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו "בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ  
ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֶבְדִּים."

What does the innocent [son] say?  
"What is this?" ([Exodus 13:14](#))" And  
you will say to him, "With the  
strength of [His] hand did the Lord  
take us out from Egypt, from the  
house of slaves' ([Exodus 13:14](#))."





וְשִׂאֵינוּ יוֹדַעַ לְשֹׂאֹל – אַתָּה פֹּתַח לוֹ, שְׁנֹאֲמֵר,  
וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעֵבֹר זֶה  
עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם.

And [regarding] the one who doesn't know to ask, you will open [the conversation] for him. As it is stated ([Exodus 13:8](#)), “And you will speak to your son on that day saying, for the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me in my going out of Egypt.”



We find discussed four sons: a Wise Son, a Wicked Son, a Simple Son, and a Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask. What does the Wise Son say: "What is meant by these testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord, our God, has commanded us?" You, too, must tell him all the detailed regulations of Passover, for instance, that we do not partake of any dessert after eating the paschal lamb. What does the Wicked Son say: "What is this service of yours?" Meaning you, and not himself. Since he excludes himself from the community, showing that he rejects the main principle of faith, you should also make him feel uncomfortable by citing: "This is done because of that which the Lord did to me when I came out of Egypt." Me and not him! If he had been there, he would not have been saved. What does the Simple Son say: "What is this?" You shall say to him, "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." As for the Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask, you should prompt him, as it states: "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, this is because of what the Lord did to me when I came out of Egypt." Alternatively: "What is meant by these testimonies and the statutes?" Rabbi Eliezer says: From where is it derived that a group of scholars or students must engage in the laws of Passover until midnight? That is why [the Torah] states: "What is meant by these testimonies."

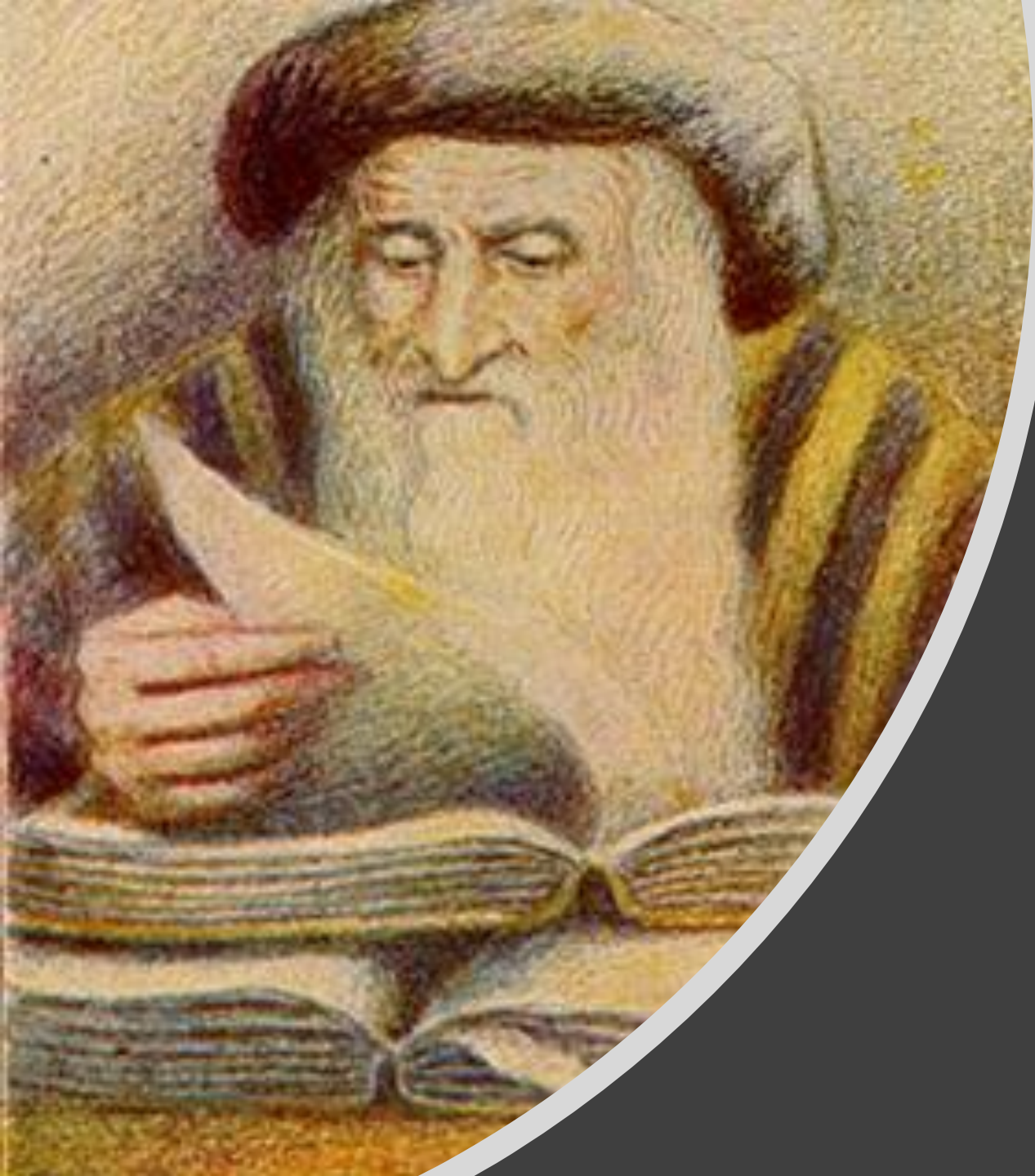
## מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל, בא פ' י"ח

נמצאת אומר ארבעה בנים הם: אחד חכם ואחד רשע ואחד תם ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול. חכם מה הוא אומר (ואתחנן ו:כ): מה העדות והחוקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אותנו? אף אתה פתח לו בהלכות הפסח אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן. רשע מה הוא אומר (בא יב:כו): מה העבודה הזאת לכם? לכם ולא לו ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל וכפר בעיקר, אף אתה הקהה את שיניו ואמור לו (בא יג:ח) בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים לי ולא לך אלו היית שם לא היית נגאל. תם מה הוא אומר (בא יג:יד): מה זאת? ואמרת אליו (בא יג:יד) בחוזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים. ושאינו יודע לשאול את פתח לו שנאמר (בא יג:ח): והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא וגו'. דבר אחר (ואתחנן ו:כ): מה העדות והחוקים ר' אליעזר אומר מנין אתה אומר שאם היתה תבורה של חכמים או של תלמידים שצריכים לעסוק בהלכות פסח עד חצות לכך נאמר מה העדות וגו'.

Rabbi Hayia taught: the Torah discusses four sons: a Wise Son, a Wicked Son, a Smallminded Son and a Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask. What does the Wise Son say: “What is meant by these testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord, our God, has commanded us?” You, too, must tell him: “By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” What does the Wicked Son say: “What is this service of yours?” What is the [reason] for this busyness that you worry yourselves about all year? Since he excludes himself from the community, you should also cite: “This is done because of that which the Lord did to me when I came out of Egypt.” Me and not this one! If he had been there, he would not have never been worthy of saving. What does the Smallminded Son say: “What is this?” For him you shall teach the laws of Passover, for instance, that we do not partake of any dessert after eating the paschal lamb. This, so he does not join one group and then another. You shall prompt the Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask.

## תלמוד ירושלמי, פסחים י:ד

תני ר' חיייה כנגד ארבעה בנים דיברה תורה: בן חכם בן רשע בן טיפש בן שאינו יודע לשאול. בן חכם מהו אומר (ואתחנן ו:כ): מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אותנו? אף אתה אמור לו (בא יג:יד): **בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים**. בן רשע מהו אומר (בא יב:כו): מה העבודה הזאת לכם מה הטורח הזה שאתם מטריחין עלינו בכל שנה ושנה? מכיון שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל אף אתה אמור לו (בא יג:ח): בעבור זה עשה ה' לי, לי עשה לאותו האיש לא עשה. אילו היה אותו האיש במצרים לא היה ראוי להגאל משם לעולם. טיפש מהו אומר (בא יג:יד): מה זאת? אף את למדו הלכות הפסח שאין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן שלא יהא עומד מחבורה זו ונכנס לחבורה אחרת. בן שאינו יודע לשאול את פתח לו תחילה.

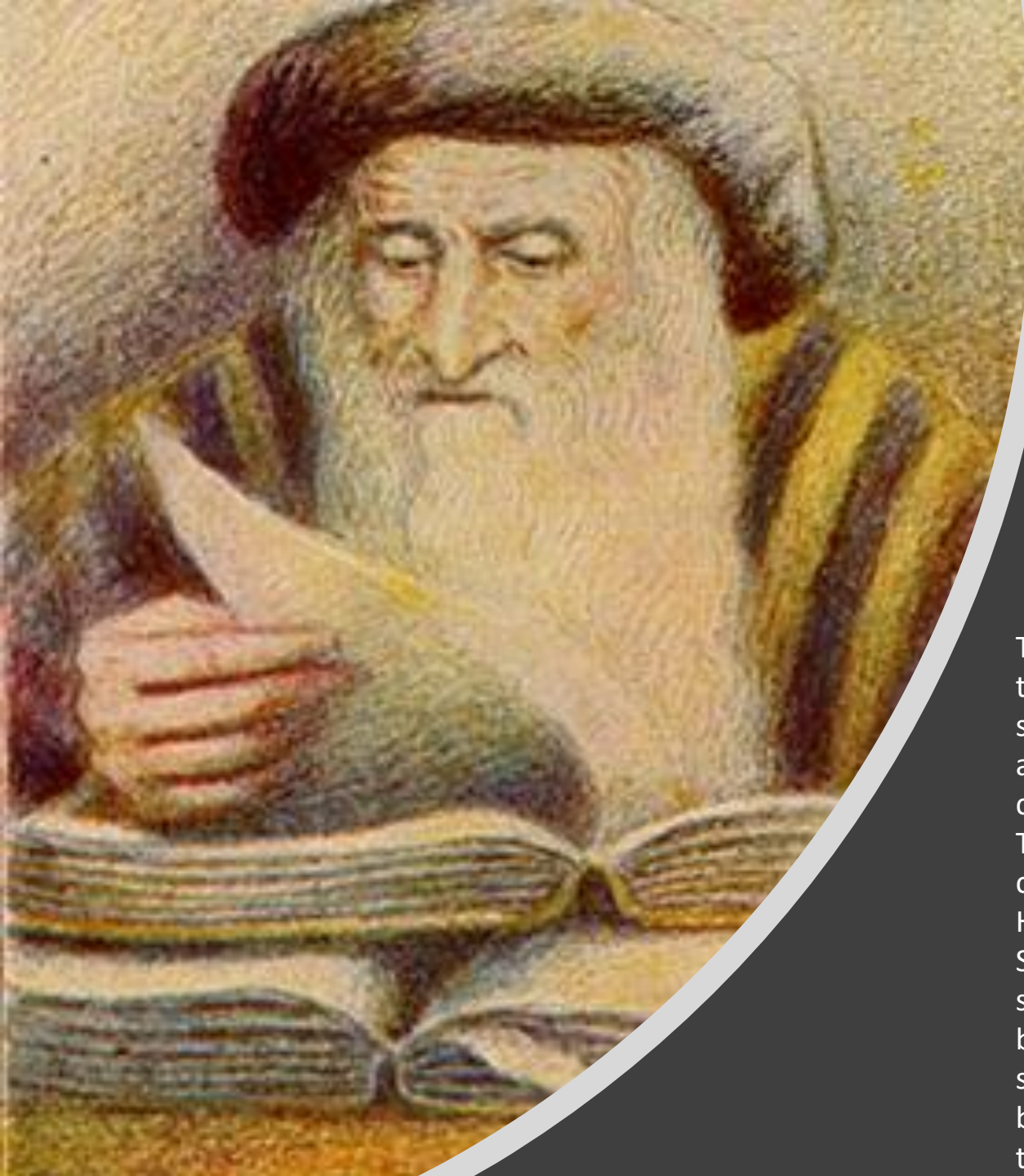


## רש"י, פ' בא יג:יד

מה זאת: זה תינוק טפש שאינו יודע להעמיק שאלתו וסותם ושואל "מה זאת", ובמקום אחר הוא אומר (ואתחנן ו:כ) מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים וגו', הרי זאת שאלת בן חכם. דברה תורה כנגד ארבעה בנים: רשע, ושאינו יודע לשאול, והשואל דרך סתומה, והשואל דרך חכמה.

"What is this?" This is a smallminded young son who cannot comprehend the question. He is bolixed and asks, therefore: "What is this?" In another places it states: "What is meant by these testimonies, and the statutes?" This is the Wise Son's question. The Torah addresses four sons: a Wicked Son, a Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask, one who asks in a bolixed manner and one who asks in a wise manner.



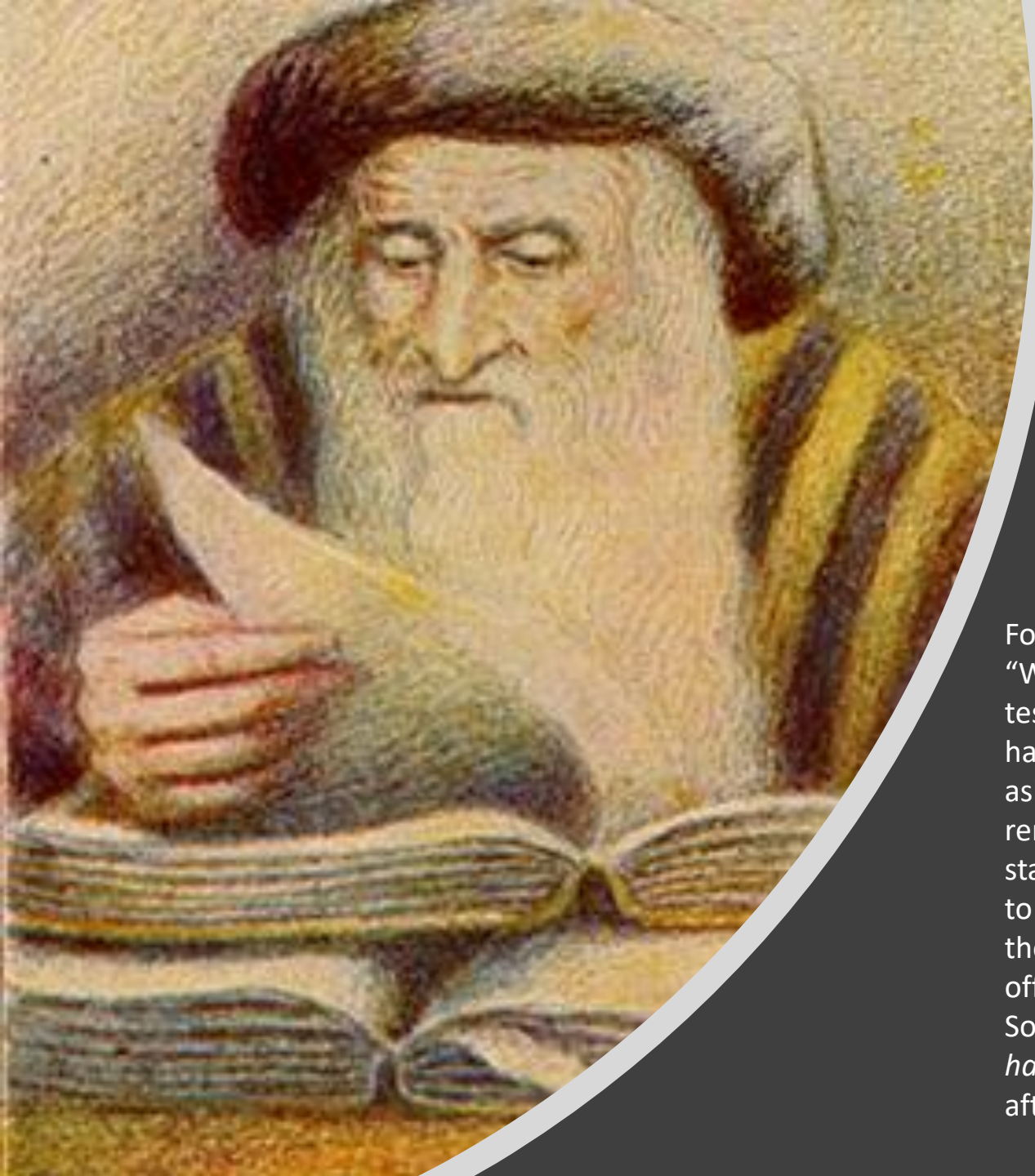


## סידור רש"י ס' שצ"א

כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה, מד' מקראות הכתובים בפרשה בד' מקומות, ובכולן אתה למד שלא דברה תורה אלא כנגד ד' בנים. חכם מה הוא אומר בסדר ואתחנן כתיב (ו:כ): כי ישאלך בנך מחר לאמר, מה העדות והחוקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אתכם? הרי בנך חכם אמור שיודע לדבר לשאול בלשון נכונה, ואין כאן לומר הרי הוציא את עצמו מן הכלל דכתיב "אתכם", דהא כתיב "ה' אלקינו". ומה "אתכם", כלומר אתם שיצאתם ממצרים שהיה הדבר עליכם. וכן החכם שואל מה העדות החוקים והמשפטים. כלומר למה אנו אוכלין החגיגה קודם לפסח הלא הפסח עיקר? אף אתה אמור לו כהלכות הפסח שלפיכך אנו אוכלים החגיגה קודם והפסח באחרונה שאין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן.

The Torah discusses four sons in four different locations. In each, we find that there are exactly four types of sons. What does the Wise Son say: "When your son asks you in time to come, saying: "What is meant by these testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord, our God, has commanded you?" The Wise Son knows how to speak and ask questions. Therefore, we ought not say that his question removes him from the community, though it says "you." After all, it [also] states "Hashem our Lord." He uses "you" in reference to the Exodus in order to speak with [the others]. Similarly, the Wise Son asks: "What is meant by these testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances." He asks about consuming the *hagigah* offering before the paschal lamb, even though the latter is more essential. So you should rehearse with him the laws of Passover; that we consume the *hagigah* before the paschal lamb since we do not partake of any dessert after eating the paschal lamb.





## מחזור ויטרי, הל' פסח ס' צ"ה

הדא למד שלא דברה תורה אלא כנגד ד' בנים: חכם מה הוא אומר כו'. בסדר ואתחנן כתוב (ו:כ): כי ישאלך בנך מחר לאמר מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אתכם. הרי בכך חכם הכתוב מדבר שיודע לדבר ולשאל בלשון חכמה. ואין כאן לומר שהוציא עצמו. דכתיב "אתכם". דהא כתוב "ה' אלקינו". ומה "אתכם"? כלומר אתם שיצאתם ממצרים שהיה הדבר אליכם. וכך החכם שואל. מה העדות והחוקים? כלומר למה אנו אוכלין החגיגה קודם לפסח הלא הפסח עיקר. ואף אתה אמור לו כהילכות הפסח. שלפיכך אנו אוכלין החגיגה קודם לפסח והפסח אחרון לפי שאין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן.

For one thing, the Torah discusses four sons. In *Ve-Ethanan* it is stated: "When your son asks you in time to come, saying: "What is meant by these testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord, our God, has commanded you?" This addresses the Wise Son who how to speak and ask questions with wisdom. Therefore, we ought not say that his question removes him from the community, though it says "you." After all, it [also] states "Hashem our Lord." He uses "you" in reference to the Exodus in order to speak with [the others]. Similarly, the Wise Son asks: "What is meant by these testimonies and the statutes." He asks about consuming the *hagigah* offering before the paschal lamb, even though the latter is more essential. So you should rehearse with him the laws of Passover; that we consume the *hagigah* before the paschal lamb since we do not partake of any dessert after eating the paschal lamb.

הרב דוד צבי האפפמאן, "מאמר בקורת בהגדה של פסח",

בית ועד לחכמים ח"ג (תרס"ב): 15

אחרי חורבן המקדש כאשר לא היה עוד כל פסח אז במקום להשיב זבח פסח הוא, היו צריכין לשנן הלכות הפסח. כן לא יכלו עוד לשאול: מה העבודה הזאת, אחרי כי לא היתה עוד כל עבודה.

After the destruction of the Temple when there was no longer a paschal lamb and—perforce, no need to respond directly about the paschal slaughter—we needed to instead teach the laws of Passover. Similarly, the [Wise Son] could no longer ask: “What is this service?” as there was no service.



בנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה, אחד  
הבנים, ואחד רשע, ואחד חסד, ואחד  
שאינו יודע לשאול.



מה הוא אומר?

מה העדת והחקים והמטעמים אשר  
צוה יי אלהים אתכם, ואף אשה אצלו  
לו בחלכות הפסח אין מעטידין אלו

הפסח אפי' קומין

וְהָיָה

מה הוא אומר?

מה העבודה הולאת לכם, לכם ולא לך  
ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל ופסח  
בעקבו, ואף אשה הקרה את שמה ולא



Zim Haggadah: The Four Sons (Tel Aviv, 1952)

A Hungarian Haggadah (Budapest, 1924)



# There Were Four Sons - - - -

Original drawings reprinted by courtesy of the distinguished artist, Arthur Szyk.

Everyone is familiar with the Biblical story of the festival of Passover — the anniversary of the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Passover Haggadah which recounts this story also gives us the parable of four sons of different character and how they react to the story of our redemption. They are the wise son, the indifferent or simple son, the wicked son, and the uninformed son who has not even the capacity to ask "what all the shooting is about."

In these days of universal trial it is fitting, especially during the Passover season to turn to the history of our people for wisdom and guidance. When the whole Jewish people is enduring the ordeal of fire, the parable of the four sons, made significant for our day, can be a source of strength and inspiration.

The uninformed son of Israel, in this day and age, is a problem to the rest of Israel. He who has not even a close

enough tie to his heritage to be able to seek information about it is a maladjusted individual and

ties he becomes a less worthy citizen of this church-going republic. If he has not been forced into the actual fighting of this war he is the thoughtless one at home who is ready neither to contribute time nor give money nor share his blood with those fighting his battle. Thank the Lord he represents a very tiny minority, and even he must be answered on Passover. He must be set straight wherever possible. The inspiring Passover story must be brought to his attention, to prove to him that tyranny must always perish, that right must eventually triumph, and that sacrifices made for worthy causes are ultimately rewarded.

The simple or indifferent son does not deliberately sabotage the cause for which his brothers are fighting, but at the same

time he does not throw himself with any enthusiasm or conviction into the fight. Being an indifferent Jew, he is slow to realize the danger to himself as well



## In the Jewish World

Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah, and the outstanding woman Zionist, died on February 13th at the age of 84 in Jerusalem. Her accomplishments were numerous and included her pioneering in medical work in Palestine which resulted in the construction of hospitals in the Holy Land. She became the director of the movement which brought and is still bringing Jewish children to Palestine from Nazi persecuted lands. The world, as well as the Jewish people, have suffered a great loss in the passing of Miss Szold.

There is talk of establishing an American-Jewish University where there would be no quotas for Jew or Gentile.

The Jewish Brigade, recently authorized by the British government is already partially in action. Commanded by Brigadier Ernest Frank Benjamin, 44, Toronto born, the Jewish Brigade includes men from 53 countries, all speak Hebrew and are all either Palestinians or stateless as a result of the war. They eat only kosher food. Their banner is a white flag with two horizontal blue stripes with a blue Star of David in the center. Brigadier Benjamin said of his men: "They are all anxious to do what, according to them, is the only serious duty of any fit Jew—kill Nazis."

We listen to a fine radio program Sundays at noon that is recommended by all critics including Variety and Mrs. Roosevelt. It is the only dramatized religious program on the air and presents stories of famous com-



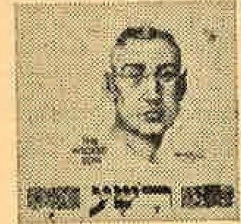
As for the wise son, to him belongs the world of the future. He fights the current battle as an American and as a Jew. He knows what he is fighting for in both instances. He does not enjoy the fight but he knows that in fighting for freedom and democracy he is fighting for life itself.



He is a modern Moses, daring all to lead the world out of its wilderness of ignorant, hate, and mistrust. He knows his time, his earthly goods, his very life itself may have to be used to accomplish the goal of freedom, and yet he is willing. He has learned that only in the freedom of ALL people—Jews, Chinese, Negroes, Indians—can there be assurance of freedom for ANY people. He has learned that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance and abounding faith. He has learned the Passover lesson.

The lesson of the four sons is a lesson for all ages. The choice as to which son he will be lies in each man's hands. Which son are you—the uninformed, the wicked, the indifferent, or the wise? It is best to be the wise.

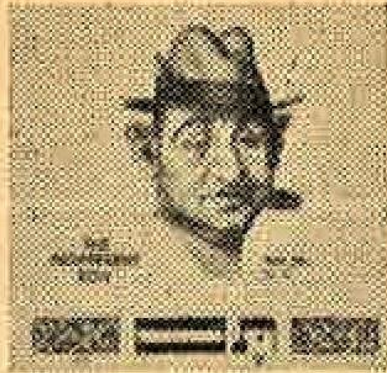
The wicked son is difficult to talk to or to influence. If he has been forced into the present conflict he goes about his duties unconvinced. He sees no good coming out of all the sacrifice and the toll. He has no pride in being a Jew and sees no future in it. The slanders against us he is ready to believe and he can even partially justify the crimes committed against us. He believes that in being less of a Jew he becomes more of an American, whereas in reality, in relinquishing his religious



ties he becomes a less worthy citizen of this church-going republic. If he has not been forced into the actual fighting of this war he is the thoughtless one at home who is ready neither to contribute time nor give money nor share his blood with those fighting his battle. Thank the Lord he represents a very tiny minority, and even he must be answered on Passover. He must be set straight wherever possible. The inspiring Passover story must be brought to his attention, to prove to him that tyranny must always perish, that right must eventually triumph, and that sacrifices made for worthy causes are ultimately rewarded.



The simple or indifferent son does not deliberately sabotage the cause for which his brothers are fighting, but at the same



time he does not throw himself with any enthusiasm or conviction into the fight. Being an indifferent Jew, he is slow to realize the danger to himself as well as to his fellow

Jews when rabble rousers malign the members of his faith, when the world looks on in indifference while his people are exterminated, and when solemn promises to restore Palestine to the Jews are casually broken. It is his informed brother's duty to rouse the indifferent son to a positive, alert attitude, by repeating to him at Passover time the story of Pharaoh and the Israelites — how we freed ourselves from bondage and made ourselves into a self-respecting people.

about."

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The uninformed son of Israel, in this day and age, is a problem to the rest of Israel. He who has not even a close



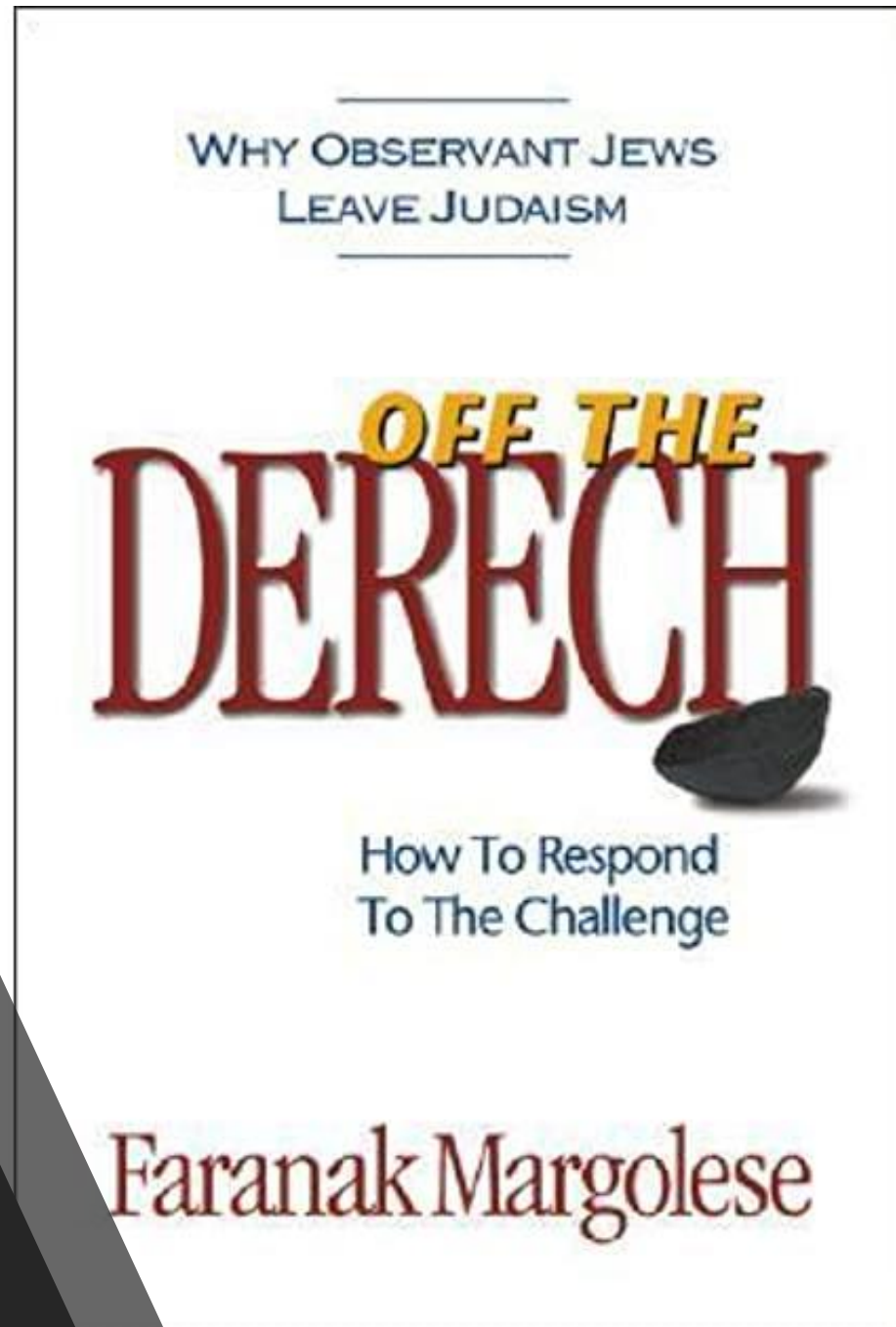
enough tie to his heritage to be able to seek information about it is a maladjusted individual and a menace to the rest of us. For him, says the Haggadah, the

only solution is to make him aware of the problems and then answer them for him. We must make him aware of the precarious position of the remnant of our people who survive in Europe. We must point to the historical identification of the Jewish people with the land of Palestine and then show what forces still lie in the path of our building a Jewish commonwealth there. We must disabuse him of the notion that the current war is a war of retribution for the wrongs committed against the Jewish people, and show him the enslavement of all mankind has been the issue at stake, that democracy and equality and freedom are not meaningless catch-phrases but living goals which this current struggle may yet achieve for the human race. The uninformed son of Israel may be self-conscious, self-hating, troubled man, and Passover is the time to remind him of his glorious past and his equally promising future, which is bound up so intimately with the success of the United Nations cause.



The process is reflected in an interpretation of the Four Sons of the Passover *Hagaddah*. One interpretation views these sons not as individual children but as generations. The first generation is wise, so to speak. He is committed to *halachic* Judaism; the second rebels and moves away. The third generation is “simple,” confused between the parent who does not observe and the grandparents who do. The fourth generation is so far removed, it does not even know how to ask a question. And the fifth son, his generation is no longer at the Passover *seder* at all. He has totally assimilated.

Faranak Margolese, *Off the Derech*, 24.





**Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, *The Passover Haggadah* (New York: Ktav, 1983), 61**

According to a delightful interpretation ascribed to the former Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn (1880-1950), the Four Children represent the four generations of the American experience. **The Wise Child represents the European roots, the generation of the grandparents who came to America with beard and earlocks, dressed in *streimel* and *kapote*, steeped in piety, with a love for learning and profound knowledge of the Jewish tradition.**

**Their progeny (the Wicked Child), brought up within the American “melting pot,” rejected his parent’s customs and ways of thought.** He thought of himself as being in a new country with new ways of thinking and acting. To him, the parents were terribly old-fashioned and a bit foolish for not immediately adopting the new ways, which seemed more easygoing and profitable. Turning his back on the glories of the Jewish tradition, this child often became successful in business but was cynical in his outlook.

The third generation, the Simple Child is confused. **He watched his grandfather making Kiddush on Friday night and his father standing by silently, perhaps resentfully, impatient to prepare for business on Saturday morning.** The memory of this grandfather, though strong at one time, is fading, and so the confused Simple Child can only ask "מה זאת" -- caught as he is in the conflict between his grandfather and his father.

The fourth generation, the Child Who Does Not Know How to Ask, offspring of the Simple Child, is the greatest tragedy of all. **He was born after his great-grandparents had died.** He knows only his totally assimilated grandfather, the *rasha*, and his religiously confused father. He does not even know how to ask questions. This is our mute American generation, the generation of the child who thought it was someone’s birthday when she saw her great-grandmother lighting the festival candles. The only time this child has seen candles being lit was on birthdays. She did not even know how to ask. We are now being challenged to open our great heritage to this generation which lost it without ever knowing what it had possessed.

**Philip R. Alstat, "Passover in Our Time," *Jewish Week* (March 29, 1975): 15**

The Wise Son in the Haggadah is a person who possesses an open mind and great natural intelligence but is wholly uninformed about the significance of Passover and the ritual prescribed for its celebration ... Fortunately, the solution suggested in the Haggadah. "do thou inform him," is proving to be efficacious. **The Jewish intellectuals who have visited Israel**—the Jewish scientists attending congresses at the Weizmann Institute of Science, Jewish professors lecturing at Israel's universities, Jewish medical specialists demonstrating at the Hadassah Hospital, our musical virtuosi concertizing before Israeli audiences—have all come away Jewishly inspired and transformed. **The lingering Jewish spark within their souls, long dormant, is beginning to glow again with ever increasing intensity.**

The Wicked Son in the Haggadah is pictured as a person who is skeptical, cynical and resistant to the ideal of national redemption ... **His modern counterparts should be recognized instantly as the American Council for Judaism whose psycho-pathology has been diagnosed as a complex of self-hate.** Its spokesmen act more wicked than their prototype in the Haggadah

...

The Simple Son, as portrayed in the Haggadah, is neither cynical nor hostile but merely uninformed ... His modern counterparts are unsophisticated Jewish masses whose workaday chores leave them no time or energy for involvement in any of the conflicting "isms." **But, be it said to their credit, that their simplicity is coupled with common sense and unerring intuition, so that when Israel is in need of material and moral support they respond with enthusiasm and generosity.**

One Too Young to Inquire obviously refers to a child. For a son of this age the author of the Haggadah urged that his father or elders take the initiative, as enjoined in the Torah (Exodus 13:8). "And thou shalt tell thy son." How this should be done was demonstrated by Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845-1934) who will go down in Jewish history as the *Nadiv Ha-yodua* (the noted philanthropist) who fathered and supported the first Jewish settlements and industries in Palestine.

