



⁹The Torah refers to four children: one wise; one wicked; one simple; and one who does not know how to ask a question.

What does the wise one say? What are the terms and the statutes and the laws with which the LORD our God has charged you? (Deut. 6:20). ¹⁰And so you should tell him as in the laws of Passover, “one may not partake of the *afikoman* after the Passover meal.”

9 The Torah refers to four children. The *baraita* of the Four Children presents four models of education, which derive from the four passages in the Torah that depict parent-child exchanges regarding the Exodus (Exod. 12:26–27; 13:8,14–15; and Deut. 6:20–25). The Haggadah draws on these four biblical passages in its rendering of the children’s questions but cites only two of the verses in its presentation of the parents’ responses. Notably, the Haggadah does not cite the response that corresponds to the wicked child’s question in the Torah (Exod. 13:14). Instead, the response given to the wicked child is the same as that given to the child who does not know how to ask: “[And you shall tell your son (*ve-higadeta le-binkha*) on that day, saying,] ‘For the sake of what the LORD did for me when I went out of Egypt’” (Exod. 13:8). In this manner, the Haggadah highlights a basic similarity between these two archetypes: neither asks a question. Although the wicked child presents his comment as an inquiry, the Haggadah understands it to be fundamentally a statement of rejection: the wicked child is not interested in an answer. Hence, neither the wicked child nor the child who does not know how to ask are answered; they are simply “told” (*ve-higadeta*). In this manner, the *baraita* of the Four Children touches upon a fundamental aspect of the seder-night obligation to tell the Exodus story. The mitzvah to tell—*le-saper*—requires answering questions, but it also necessitates engaging and involving those who seem uninterested.

10 And so you should tell him as in the laws of Passover. The parent’s detailed response to the wise child is the only one of the four responses in this *baraita* that is not based on any biblical source, despite the fact that the Torah does provide such an answer, which appears elsewhere in the Haggadah as the answer to the *Mah Nishtanah* questions: “Slaves were we to Pharaoh in Egypt . . .” (6:21). Why does the Haggadah craft an original response to the wise child’s query, rather than citing the Torah’s answer?

In its biblical context, the question assigned the wise child is not particular to Passover: it is a general question about the meaning of the Torah. And the parent’s answer is that our redemption from slavery in Egypt was the fulfillment of a divine promise that binds us covenantally to God and obligates us to fulfill divine commands. In replacing the Torah’s response to this general question with a very specific answer, the Haggadah suggests that the laws of Pesach are essentially equivalent

כְּנִגְד אַרְבַּעַה בְּנִים דְּבָרָה תוֹרָה. אֶחָד חָכָם, וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע, וְאֶחָד תָּם, וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשַׁאֵל.

חָכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתָכֶם? (דְּבָרִים ו:כ). ¹⁰וְאִף אֲתָה אָמַר לוֹ כְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח: אֵין מִפְּטִירִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוֹמָן.



convinced anyone that the Exodus should be mentioned at night until Ben Zoma expounded it from a verse, as it says: so that you will remember the day of your going out from Egypt all the days of your life (Deut. 16:3); the days of your life—daytimes; all the days of your life—nights. But the Sages say: the days of your life—this world; all the days of your life—to include the world to come.

Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He. Blessed is the One who gave the Torah to His people, Israel, blessed is He.

mitzvah to tell the story (*sippur*) of leaving Egypt. However, the mitzvah about eating the Passover offering together with matzah on seder night combines the two mitzvot:

וְיָמִים תֹּאכַל עִלְיוֹ מִצּוֹת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בַּחֲפוּזִין יֵצְאֶתָּה יוֹם יְצִאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

You shall not eat unleavened stuff with it [i.e. the Passover eat it with flatcakes, poverty’s bread [lehem oni], for in haste you went out of Egypt; so that you will remember the day of your going out of life. (Deut. 16:2–3)

Strikingly, in this passage, the one-time Passover offering, which is eaten on the night of the seder, generates both a seven-day observance marked by the eating of matzah and remembering the Exodus on a daily basis. Although the seder night is primarily about retelling the Exodus, the use of this verse from Deuteronomy in the Haggadah emphasize that remembering and ritualizing the Exodus is a daily obligation.

(The citation of Deut. 16:2–3 at this point in the seder night is noted earlier, this is the passage upon which the *Ha lahma* is recited. See the *Ha lahma* section of this volume.)