

BILVAVI

4 SONS
WISE SON



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ROOTS OF THE FOUR CHILDREN

The Hagaddah says that the Torah is speaking to 4 sons – the wise son, wicked son, simple son, and the child who does not know how to ask. The Arizal says that they are all “children to Hashem your G-d”, and the Torah spells Hashem’s Name here as *Havayah*. The name of Havayah is equal to 26, which is 52 when doubled, and 52 is equal to the word *ben* (child). When we left Egypt we received the status of *banim*, children, to Hashem.

These 4 sons were first rooted in the children of Noach. Noach had Shem (a wise son), Cham (a child who did not know how to ask) and Yefes (a simple son). Cham’s son Canaan castrated Noach, making Canaan into a ‘fourth’ son that affected Noach – a “wicked son”.

Later, this process (of three good children with a 4th bad child) would be repaired through Yitzchok. The 400 years of Egypt began with the birth of Yitzchok, and this is the root of the 4 children which the Torah is speaking about. The *Megaleh Amukos* says that Pharaoh had three advisors, Bilaam, Iyov and Yisro. Pharaoh himself was like the child who did not know how to ask. Yisro was like the wise son, Bilaam was like the wicked son, and Iyov was like the simple son. We went out of Egypt with four expressions of *Geulah*. The name of *Havayah* is equal to two times the amount of the word *ben* (son, which equals 52), meaning that there are four children (2 times 2). And, by extension, every time there is a concept of four in the Torah, the root of it is in the four children.

This is a very broad matter and it cannot be covered fully here. That was a general outline of the concept of the 4 children in general.

QUESTIONS OF THE WISE SON & WICKED SON

Now let us analyze the first son, the *chochom* (wise son).

The wise son asks, “What are these laws?” We answer him about that we do not eat anything after the *korbon pesach*, which we remember today by eating the *afikoman*. The *Rishonim* ask: How does the wise son’s question differ from the wicked son’s question (“What is this avodah to you?”), when the wise son is also asking about what the laws are? The questions of the wise son

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and the wicked son seem very similar. The *Rishonim* answer that the wise son states in his question in a way that shows he how he is including himself with the *tzaddikim*, whereas the *rasha* is excluding himself in his question.

THE WISE SON & THE NUMBER THREE

The wise son asks, “What are these *eidus*, (testimonies), *chukim* (laws), and *mishpatim* (justice)?” He is asking about three different levels of *mitzvos* – the laws that are illogical (*chukim*) and the laws which make logical sense (*mishpatim*), such as the monetary laws of the Torah. His question divides the *mitzvos* into three different parts.

three is a significant number. Moshe asked Pharaoh if he can take the nation out of Egypt for just three days, in order to receive the Torah on the threerd day and serve Hashem by the mountain. The Maharal explains that he asked for only three days, because three days of leaving would be enough to enable them to disconnect from their previous state of Egypt and prepare to receive the Torah. And when we left Egypt, we left with three *mitzvos* – to eat the *korbon pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*. So leaving Egypt is on the level of the number three.

THE FOURTH CHILD – DOVID VS. ESAV

But the number 4 is also connected with leaving Egypt. There are 4 expressions of Geulah, 4 cups, and 4 children which the Torah is speaking to with these *mitzvos*. The *Arizal* says that three of the 4 children are connected with holiness – this includes the wise son, the simple son, and the child who does not how to ask - whereas the wicked son is excluded from holiness. The wicked son, in his question, is removing himself from the *klal*, from the unit of *Klal Yisrael*. We find that the *klal* is comprised of three. There are three *Avos* which comprised the unit of *Klal Yisrael*. The wicked son is excluding himself from that unit.

Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov are the three children who comprise the *klal*, the unit of *Klal Yisrael*. But there is also a fourth holy son who became added to that unit – Dovid HaMelech. Dovid came from Leah, who added herself on to the unit of *Klal Yisrael* because she wasn't originally supposed to be part of *Klal Yisrael*. Furthermore, Dovid descends from Yehudah, and Yehudah was born after Leah had stopped giving birth. Dovid is called the “root of converts” -

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for he brought himself into *Klal Yisrael*, just as all converts can join with *Klal Yisrael* and enter into the Jewish people. [Unlike the fourth “wicked son”, who removes himself from *Klal Yisrael*, Dovid was the fourth holy son who added himself to the unit of *Klal Yisrael*].

When we received the Torah, the commandment were carved onto the Luchos, and the word carved is *charus*, an acronym for *chacham, rasha, v'shaino yodea lish'ol, tam* (the wise son, wicked son, child who does not how to ask, and wicked son - all 4 children), and the *Megaleh Amukos* says that this is because all 4 children, even the wicked son, are included in receiving the Torah. But in Egypt, those who were on the level of the wicked son were all those who perished in the plague of darkness, who weren't on the level of being redeemed from Egypt.

So there are really only three genuine children out of the 4 children. The wise son is therefore asking about three different levels of mitzvos, because it is the number three which primarily comprises the unit of *Klal Yisrael*. In the understanding of the wise son, there are only three genuine kinds of children who are included in *Klal Yisrael*.

Indeed, the wicked son separates himself from the unit of *Klal Yisrael*. But the wicked son is able to be repaired. We find this concept in the fact that Yitzchok wanted to repair Esav. The word Yitzchok is equal to 4 times the amount of the word *ben* (4 times 52), implying that Yitzchok's view is that there are indeed 4 children. The Gemara calls Esav a *yisrael mumar*, an “apostate Jew.” Yitzchok wanted to bless Esav, and precisely on Pesach – so that he could include even the fourth son who is wicked. Yitzchok wanted to repair the wicked son, Esav, and to include him in Pesach.

THE DEPTH OF ANSWERING THE WISE SON ABOUT THE AFIKOMAN

The wise son asks about the three levels of *mitzvos* – hinting to the three children, and excluding the wicked son.

We answer the wise son's question by telling him that we don't eat anything after the *afikoman*, so that we can remain the entire night with the taste of the *korbon pesach*, through the *afikoman*. Why must we remain with the taste of only the *afikoman*? It is because, on a deeper level, the *matzah, maror* and *pesach* are not simply three separate *mitzvos*, but they all have to be eaten

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together, especially according to the view of Hillel, who requires all three of them to be eaten together. These three mitzvos are really one unit, not three separate aspects. So we are answering the wise son (who is inquiring about three separate levels of mitzvos, and the three primary children) that all three of these foods are eaten only so that we will remain with one single taste from all of it, to come to one level – the *afikoman*, which remembers the *korbon pesach*.

REPAIRING THE WICKED SON

Though there are three *mitzvos* according to the Torah on Pesach night of eating *matzah*, *maror*, and *pesach*, there is also a 4th *mitzvah* according to the Torah - to recall the story of the exodus from Egypt. The wicked son separates himself from the unit – from the three *mitzvos* of eating *matzah*, *maror* and *pesach*. But he is still included in the 4th *mitzvah*, corresponding to the 4th son, the wicked son – the *mitzvah* to retell the story of the exodus.

The *Arizal* says that the *rasha*, the wicked son, is placed after the *chochom*, the wise son, so that the *rasha* can get fixed by the *chochom*. Simply speaking, there are three children, while the wicked son excludes himself and isn't included with them. However in our answer to the wise son, we are hinting that the wicked son is not truly separated. We tell him about the *afikoman* and that we cannot eat anything after it so that we can linger with its taste the whole night. But we do continue to drink the 4 cups even after eating the *afikoman* – there another 2 remaining cups to drink. So the drinking of the 4 cups remains with us even after we eat the *afikoman* and we are not allowed to eat anything now. The 4 cups corresponding to the 4 children, including the wicked son. So we are hinting to the wise son with what happens after the *afikoman* that there's not really three children (unlike the simple perspective which is that there are only three genuine children here), there are really 4 children.

Going deeper, it is the 4th child which connects all three children together into one unit. The Gemara says that in the place where *baalei teshuvah* stand, the *tzaddikim* cannot reach. The wicked son is able to reach even higher than the *tzaddikim* - if he does *teshuvah*. And if he does *teshuvah*, he brings all of them to the level of being one unit.

The answer to the wise son, on a deeper level, is that we are trying to repair the wicked son, to include him in the children.

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In summary, the first and simple approach of how we are answering the wise son is that all three *mitzvos* of matzah, maror and Pesach are really in order to come to one point, the taste of the afikoman. But the deeper way to understand the answer is that on Pesach night, we are really repairing the wicked son.

The wicked son thus has the potential to return all three children to one unit [if he does *teshuvah*]. Yitzchok was the root of the concept of repairing the wicked son, for he tried to repair Esav.

On Pesach, it is well-known that there is *gadlus mochin* (expanded spiritual consciousness), followed by *katnus mochin* (minimized spiritual consciousness) after the night of Pesach leaves. Thus the order on Pesach is greatness followed by smallness. Esav was born hairy showed signs of maturity already since he was a baby, and Chazal say he was born “made and complete”, fully grown. Esav had potential for greatness. Esav showed signs for potential greatness and maturity even when he was a child, and this was the root of the concept that even during *katnus* (being on a lower level) there can be *gadlus*, greatness. And that is also the depth of why the head of Esav – symbolizing his potential greatness - was buried together with the *Avos*. Thus, because of the potential greatness of the wicked son, Yitzchok wanted to bless Esav, and precisely on the night of Pesach, when greatness comes before smallness, mirroring Esav, who was mature as a child. This is the depth behind why we include the wicked son with the rest of the children.

Thus, on Pesach there are 4 children corresponding to 4 expressions of *Geulah*. We connect the wicked son with the wise son. We answer the wise son that the Torah’s mitzvos of Pesach night are speaking to 4 children, even the wicked son.

ELIYAHU - THE LEVEL OF THE FUTURE REDEMPTION

There is also a higher level above even this (repairing the wicked son), and that is the level of the fifth cup, the cup of Eliyahu. The name Eliyahu is equal to 52, the amount of the word *ben* (child), implying that there is a fifth child who comes after the level of the 4 children and the redemption from Egypt, corresponding to the level of the future and complete Redemption. It is explained that Eliyahu represents the Ten *Havayos*, the 10 levels of the name of *Havayah*, and this will only be revealed in the future at the complete *Geulah*.

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However, we do not tell even this to the wise son, because it hasn't yet been revealed. We simply answer the wise son that the Torah is speaking to all 4 children, even the wicked son. The most we can understand now is that we can repair the wicked son and that he is included in the 4 children and that he can even connect all the other three children together, but the level beyond this – the return of everyone to the 10 names of *Hayavah* – is a concept that cannot be understood yet in our current times, for it is currently hidden.

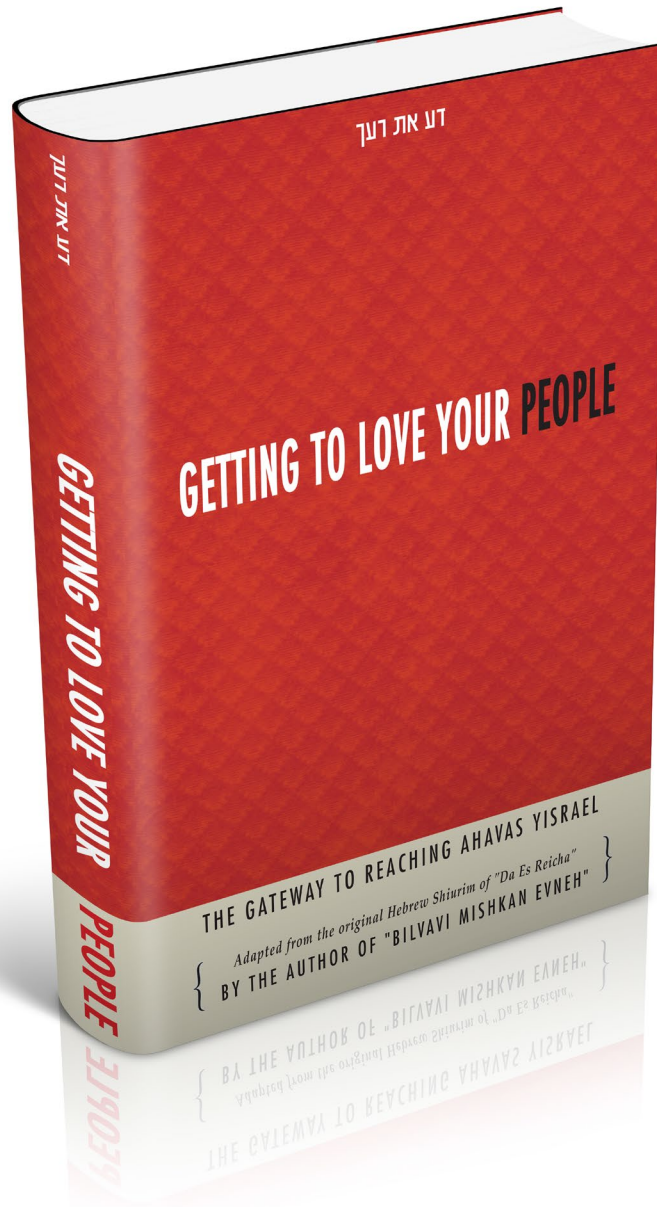


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