

Words We Don't Say on Pessach

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The Fifth Question, the Fifth Son, and the Fifth Cup

The 5th Question

The Pesach story in the Haggadah starts with a short Aramaic introduction to the Mazzot, and the famous four questions asked by a child: *Mah nishtanah*. The child (or whoever) reads the questions from the Haggadah:

"Why do we normally eat any kind of bread, but tonight only unleavened?"

"Why do we normally eat all kinds of greens, but tonight only bitter?"

"Why do we normally not even dip once, but tonight twice?"

"Why do we normally eat in any manner we like, but tonight reclining?"

If you look into the Mishnah where these questions come from (Pesachim 10:4), you may be surprised. In the Mishnah one finds the child asking:

*Shebechol haleilot annu ochlin
basar tzali shalug umevushal,
halailah baseb kulo tzali.*

"Why, on all nights, do we eat roasted, boiled or cooked meat, but tonight only roasted?"

What happened to this 5th question? Why has it become unsaid words?

The 5th Son

According to the Haggadah, "the Torah speaks of four types of children: one who is wise (*chacham*) and one who is contrary (*rashah*); one who is simple (*tam*) and one who does not even know how to ask a question (*she'eno yodea lish'ol*)." This is wrong! The Torah actually speaks of five children.

The Haggadah offers a verse (or set of verses) for each child, in each case taking verses where we are instructed to teach children the story of the Exodus. Let's find the four according to the order of their appearance in the Torah. The first appears in Exodus 12:26-27:

"And when your children say to you (*a-m-r*, say, not *sh-l*, ask!): 'What do you mean by this rite? (*mah ba'avodah hazot?*)', you shall say: 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord...'. This verse is attributed to the wicked son (*rashah*) in the Haggadah.

The Torah continues in Exodus 13:8: "And you shall explain to your child on that day: 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.'" The Haggadah attributes this verse to the child who can't ask, as in the Torah this verse is not given as a response to a child's question, but as an injunction pure and simple.

The third child (the simple one in the Haggadah) gets Exodus 13:14-16: "And when, in time to come, your son asks, saying: 'What does this mean? (*mah zot?*)', you shall say to him: 'It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt...'"

The fourth child (*chacham* in the Haggadah) appears in Deut 6:20: "When in time to come, your children ask you: 'What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the Lord our God has enjoined upon you?' you shall say to your children: *Avadim hayyinu ...* We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt...".

But there is another occasion on which the Torah speaks about children and enjoins us to teach them about the Exodus. This can be found in Exodus 10:1-2: "The Lord said to Moses: 'Go to pharaoh. For I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his courtiers, in order that I may display these my signs among them, and that you may recount into the ears of your children and of your grand-

children how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I displayed my signs among them, in order that you may know that I am the Lord.'"

What happened to this 5th child? Why don't we mention the teaching for this one? (Or is it that we actually do remember this child by making a lot of fun about the plagues, using toys, plastic frogs, plague kits, etc.?)

The 5th Cup

This is actually something that was corrected in medieval times; since the 16th century we have a 5th cup at the seder, at least on our tables. We drink four cups of wine during our seder according to the five (!) promises that God made to Israel:

(1) I am the Lord. I will free you from the labours of the Egyptians

(2) I will deliver you from their bondage.

(3) I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements.

(4) I will take you to be my people and I will be your God.

(5) I will bring you into the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and I will give it to you for a possession, I the Lord. (Exodus 6:6-8)

Why was the 5th cup added in the 16th century? The resolution was to put it on the table and leave open the question of whether we should drink it. One day, Eliyahu Hanaviah will come and solve all open questions in messianic times. ■■■

