

Listen to the Wicked Child: Hearing the Ugly and the Amazing at the Pesah Seder
Sulam Texts: Pesah 2017/5777

1. Pesah Haggadah: The Four Children.

<p>רשע מה הוא אומר: מה העבודה הזאת לכם, לכם ולא לו, ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל כפר בעיקר, אף אתה הקהה את שניו ואמור לו בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים, לי ולא לו, ואילו היה שם לא היה נגאל.</p>	<p>What does the Wicked Child say? “What is this service <i>to you</i>?” (Shemot 12:26). <i>To you</i> and not to him. And since he has excluded himself from the community, he has denied the fundamental principle. So you should blunt his teeth and say to him, “For the sake of what the Lord did for me when I went out of Egypt” (13:8). <i>For me</i> and not for him--if he had been there he would not have been redeemed.</p>
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- *Why do you think the Wicked Child's question evokes the response made by the father?*

2. Rabbi David Silber, *A Passover Haggadah: Go Forth and Learn*, 14.

The Wicked Child does not merit a genuine answer, only a harsh rebuke, because the Haggadah understands the Wicked Child to be scoffing and rejecting the tradition rather than inquiring sincerely. But the Wicked Child’s question--“What is this service to you?”--is, in fact, the most basic of religious queries and the very question that the Haggadah as a whole is designed to answer: what is the relevance of the Exodus to our faith and our practice?

- *What reason does Rabbi David Silber provide about why the Haggadah feels that the Wicked Child's question deserves a harsh response?*
- *Why does Silber question whether or not the father truly understands the deeper meaning behind the Wicked Child's question?*

3. Rabbi Norman Lamm, “The Second Son,” *The Jewish Center, New York City, Pesah 5719 (April 24, 1959)*.

There are those who, in their zeal for Torah, are ready to exclude the Second Son from the Jewish family...Such misguided zeal is doomed to well-deserved failure...One commentator on the Haggadah explained it as follows: the passage on the Four Sons is preceded by the statement *Barukh Ha-Makom*...Four times do we say *Barukh* or "blessed" — corresponding to each of the Four Sons. There is a blessing to be found in each of the four types of Jew — including the *Rasha*.

- *What does Rabbi Norman Lamm argue about the relative value of the Wicked Child's question?*
- *How might leaders use this interpretation as a model of listening to questions we may not want to hear in a community conversation?*

4. Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*, 226.

...realism must capture both the ugly *and* the amazing in our lives, unvarnished. To interrogate reality unflinchingly takes courage. The cynical brand of realism, which assumes the worst will happen, is a way of protecting yourself by lowering your aspirations so that you will never be disappointed. But if you never expect anything to work out, you’re never surprised, and, more to the point, you never have to experience frustration.

- *Why do Heifetz and Linsky argue that leadership involves balancing both the “ugly and the amazing”?*
- *What is the connection between what Heifetz and Linsky argue and the importance of hearing the voice of the “Wicked Child”?*

Final Question: What is a question your leadership team may not want to hear but needs to take seriously and explore as a community this Pesah season?