



REBBE RESPONSA

The Rebbe's English Letters

The Four Sons: Ensuring that Every Jew
is Present at the Pesach Seder

Issue 99
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Editor@RebbeResponsa.com

ב"ה

A Word from the Publishers

Dear reader,

We hereby present **Issue 99** of *Rebbe Responsa*, a compilation of letters originally authored by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in English.

This week's edition focuses on the "four sons" of the *Haggadah*. Through these letters, the Rebbe emphasizes our collective responsibility to welcome every Jew to the Passover seder—whether they embody the archetype of the Wise, Wicked, Simple, or Unable to Ask Questions—and to guide each toward becoming the "Wise Son."

The Rebbe further emphasizes that our responsibility extends beyond the "four sons". We must reach out to the unaffiliated or disassociated Jew who would otherwise be absent at the seder table altogether, ensuring that no Jewish child is forgotten about or given up on.

All footnotes titles and summaries have been added by the publishers.

* * *

The Rebbe's English letters represent a little-known facet of the Rebbe's Torah, containing profound wisdom and practical guidance expressed in clear, accessible language. We encourage you to download the Rebbe Responsa app, which offers the only comprehensive collection of the Rebbe's English letters available to date. With over 5,000 organized by both topic and date, the app makes finding the Rebbe's guidance and opinion simple and accessible.

The Rebbe Responsa Team

1

The "Fifth Son" of the Lost Generation

We must ensure that every Jewish child is by the Seder; the responsibility to reach the "lost" generation; the failure of assimilation as a survival strategy; every Jew can return

Excerpt from Passover Message Free Translation

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Nissan, 5717
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

The Festival of Pesach is inaugurated by the central theme: "When thy son will ask thee,"¹ and the Haggadah is based on the commandment of the Torah: "Then shalt thou tell thy son."²

There are various ways of asking questions and formulating the answers, depending upon whether the son belongs to the category of the "Wise," the "Wicked," the "Simple," or "The One Who Knows Not How to Ask."³

While the "Four Sons" differ from one another in their reaction to the Seder Service, they have one thing in common: they are all present at the Seder Service. Even the so-called "Wicked" son is there, taking an active, though rebellious, interest in what is going on in Jewish life around him. This, at least, justifies the hope that some day also the "Wicked" one will become wise, and all Jewish

Source: Photocopy of the original. Although this letter is titled "*Free Translation*," translations sent on the Rebbe's stationery were looked over (and often edited) by the Rebbe. The Yiddish original of this letter is printed in in *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 15, letter 5,357.

¹ *Shemos* 13:14; *Devarim* 6:20.

² *Shemos* 13:8.

³ See *Yerushalmi Pesachim* 10:4; *Mechilta* on *Shemos* 13:14.

children attending the Seder will become conscientious, Torah-and-Mitzvoth-observing Jews.

Unfortunately, there is, in our time of confusion and obscurity, another kind of a Jewish child: the child who is conspicuous by his absence from the Seder Service; the one who has no interest whatsoever in Torah and Mitzvoth, laws and customs; who is not even aware of the Seder-shel-Pesach, of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent Revelation at Sinai.

This presents a grave challenge, which should command our attention long before Passover and the Seder-night. For no Jewish child should be forgotten and given up. We must make every effort to save also that "lost" child, and bring the absentee to the Seder table. Determined to do so, and driven by a deep sense of compassion and responsibility, we need have no fear of failure.

* * *

In order to remedy an undesirable situation of any kind, it is necessary to attack the roots of the evil. The same is true in this case.

The regrettable truth is that the blame for the above-mentioned "lost generation" lies squarely on the shoulders of the parents.

It is the result of an erroneous psychology and misguided policy on the part of some immigrants arriving in a new and strange environment. Finding themselves a small minority and encountering certain difficulties, which are largely unavoidable in all cases of resettlement, some parents had the mistaken notion, which they injected also into their children, that the way to overcome these difficulties is to become quickly assimilated with the new environment, by discarding the heritage of their forefathers and abandoning the Jewish way of life. Finding the ensuing process somewhat distasteful, as such a course is bound to be full of spiritual conflict, some parents were resolved that their children would be spared the conflict altogether. In order to justify their desertion and appease their injured conscience, it was necessary for them to devise some rationale, and they deluded themselves, and deluded their children, by the claim that in their new surroundings the Jewish way of life, with the observance of the Torah and Mitzvoth did not fit. They looked for, and therefore also "found," faults with the true Jewish way of life, while in their non-Jewish environment everything seemed to them only good and attractive.

By this attitude the said parents hoped to assure their children's existence and survival in the new environment. But what kind of existence is it, if everything spiritual and holy is traded for the material? What kind of survival is it, if it means the sacrifice of the Soul for the amenities of the body?

Moreover, in their retreat from Yiddishkeit, they turned what they thought was an "escape to freedom" into an escape to servitude, pathetically trying to imitate the non-Jewish environment, failing to see that such imitation, by its caricature and inferiority complex, can only call forth mockery and derision, and can only offend the sensibilities of those, whose respect and acceptance they are so desperately trying to win.

* * *

The same false approach to the minority problem, whereby the misguided minority seeks to ensure its existence by self-dissolution, which essentially means suicide, or, at any rate, self-crippling, has dominated not only individuals, but unfortunately has been made the creed of certain groups thrown together by a set of circumstances. This gave rise to certain dissident movements on the Jewish scene, which either openly or subterfugely seek to undermine the Torah which Moses commanded us, as he received it from the One G-d, and transmitted it to our people, the Divine Torah which gives our people its unique and distinctive character among the nations of the world. Verily, these movements, while differing from each other, have one underlying ideology in common, that of "We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone." (Ezekiel 20:32).

* * *

The dire consequences of this utterly false approach were, that thousands upon thousands of Jews, have been removed from their fountain of life, from their fellow Jews and from their true faith. Deprived of spiritual life and content, there grew up children who no longer belong to the "Four Sons" of the Haggadah, not even in the category of the "Wicked" one. They are almost a total loss to themselves and to their fellow Jews and true Yiddishkeit, which are inseparable.

* * *

The event of the Exodus from Egypt and the Festival of Passover are timely reminders, among other things, that not in an attempt to imitate the environment lies the hope for survival, deliverance and freedom, but rather in the unswerving loyalty to our traditions and true Jewish way of life.

Our ancestors in Egypt were a small minority, and lived in the most difficult circumstances. Yet, as our Sages relate, they preserved their identity and, with pride and dignity, tenaciously clung to their way of life, traditions and distinct uniqueness; precisely in this way was their existence assured, as also their true deliverance from slavery, physical and spiritual.

* * *

It is one of the vital tasks of our time to exert all possible effort to awaken in the young generation, as also in those who are advanced in years but still immature in deeper understanding, a fuller appreciation of the true Jewish values, of Torah-true Yiddishkeit, a full and genuine Yiddishkeit; not of that which goes under a false label of misrepresented, compromised, or watered-down "Judaism," whatever the trade-mark. Together with this appreciation will come the realization that only true Yiddishkeit can guarantee the existence of the individual, of each and every Jew, at any time, in any place, and under any circumstances.

There is no room for hopelessness in Jewish life, and no Jew should ever be given up as a lost cause. Through the proper compassionate approach of **Ahavas-Yisroel**, even those of the "lost" generation can be brought back to the love of G-d (**Ahavas-HaShem**) and love of the Torah (**Ahavas-HaTorah**), and not only be included in the community of the "Four Sons," but in due course be elevated to the rank of the "Wise" son.

* * *

May G-d grant that all sons and daughters of Israel be gathered together at the same table of the Seder Service, to celebrate the Festival of Passover in its true spirit and manner, in accordance with "the testimonies, statutes, and laws, which G-d our G-d commanded us."⁴

⁴ *Devarim* 6:20.

May the gathering also of those “lost tribes of Israel,”⁵ and their assembly at the Seder table, hasten the beginning of the true and complete Redemption of our people, through our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our time.

With the blessing of a Kosher and Happy Pesach,

/Signed/ Menachem Schneerson

2

All Children Must Be Included

The importance of Jewish education for all four sons - children of all types; Pesach teaches that all Jewish children - boys and girls alike - must receive a pure Jewish education

ב"ה

13th of Nissan, 5712
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. Benjamin Glazer⁶
1775 Broadway
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Glazer:

I take this opportunity to extend to you and yours my prayerful wishes for a kosher and happy Pesach.

Yetzias Mitzraim - the liberation from Egyptian enslavement, and from all spiritual and physical limitations and handicaps - is a subject which the Torah commanded us to impress especially upon the children of every type - the wise, wicked, simple and ignorant.

⁵ *Yeshayahu* 27:13.

⁶ **Mr. Benjamin (Elchanan) Glazer** shared a close relationship with the Rebbe Rayatz and was a key supporter in creating the initial institutional structures of Chabad in America, including the United Lubavitch Yeshiva, Kehot Publication Society, and Chabad's European refugee relief programs. For additional letters addressed to him see letters dated 11 Tishrei, 5709; [13 Nissan, 5711](#); [29 Elul 5711](#) (see also letter dated [28 Nissan, 5712](#)).

Where Jewish education is concerned, it is our paramount duty to see to it that **all** Jewish children without exception, boys as well as girls, receive a pure Jewish education, based on the Torah and Tradition.

The enclosed Message,⁷ which I trust you will find of interest, emphasizes this lesson more fully, a lesson which we must bear in mind constantly, every day.

I am looking forward to your continued cooperation toward achieving this goal.

With kindest personal regards, and blessing.

Cordially Yours,

M. Schneerson

⁷ See circular letter dated Rosh Chodesh Nissan, 5712, on the Rebbe Responsa app.

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 EASTERN PARKWAY
BROOKLYN 13, N. Y.
HYacinth 3-9250

נהגם מענדל שניאורסאהן

15th of Nissan, 5712
Brooklyn 13, N.Y.

ב"ה

Mr. Benjamin Glazer
1775 Broadway
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Glazer:

I take this opportunity to extend to you and yours my prayerful wishes for a kosher and happy Pesach.

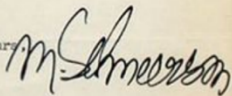
Yetzias Mitzraim - the liberation from Egyptian enslavement, and from all spiritual and physical limitations and handicaps - is a subject which the Torah commands us to impress especially upon the children of every type - the Wise, Wicked, Simple and Ignorant. Where Jewish education is concerned, it is our paramount duty to see to it that all Jewish children without exception, boys as well as girls, receive a pure Jewish education, based on the Torah and Tradition.

The enclosed Message, which I trust you will find of interest, emphasizes this lesson more fully, a lesson which we must bear in mind constantly, every day.

I am looking forward to your continued cooperation toward achieving this goal.

With kindest personal regards, and blessing,

Cordially yours,



Encl.

3

Being the Wise Son Year-round

Letter to a Young Israel congregation honoring their rabbi; the Pesach seder's emphasis on youth; the goal of uplifting all four types of children to the level of the "wise son"; maintaining youthful enthusiasm in spreading Torah and Mitzvot

By the Grace of G-d
3rd of Nissan, 5723
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. ...

Young Israel of Eastern Parkway
935 Eastern Parkway.
Brooklyn 13, N.Y.

Sholom u'Brocho:

Thank you very much for your letter of March 18th, with the most welcome news of the forthcoming presentation of life-tenure to your esteemed and distinguished spiritual leader, Rabbi Tzvi Dov Kanotopsky.⁸

This event is very gratifying indeed, for not only is it a well-merited and worthy tribute to your esteemed rabbi, but it also does honor to the officers and membership of your congregation, who appreciate the qualities of leadership which distinguish your manhig ruchni. Outstanding among these is your rabbi's dedicated and fruitful activity among the youth, which is of special concern to the Young Israel movement and prominent on its banner.

At this time, only a few days before Pesach, it is particularly relevant to mention that the Festival of our Liberation, and the seder especially, place the accent on youth. For, as is well known, the seder has many features for the special benefit of the Arbo'ó Bonim, the four categories of children, all of whom are to be

Published: *Letters From the Rebbe*, Vol 6 (OSL, 2005), p. 47.

⁸ See *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 22, letter 8613, letter to Rabbi Tzvi Dov Kanotopsky congratulating him on this celebration, and also mentioning that a copy of this letter would be sent to him as well.

gathered around the seder table, so that all of them would be uplifted to the level of the “wise son.”

Needless to say, the message of Pesach must be carried into the everyday life. Indeed, the Haggadah declares, “In every generation it is incumbent upon every Jew to consider himself as though he himself has been liberated from Egypt.” To which the Old Rebbe, author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch and founder of Chabad, adds with characteristic emphasis: “In every generation - **and every day**” (Tanya, beg. of Chapter 47).

The accent of youth, which is one of the main features of Pesach, is further emphasized by the meaningful remark of our Sages that G-d appeared unto the children of Israel at the crossing of Yam Suf “in the image of youth.”⁹

May G-d grant that with the advancement of age, each and everyone of us retain the energy and enthusiasm of youth in our efforts to spread and strengthen Torah-and-Mitzvoth Yiddishkeit.

With prayerful wishes for the success of your rabbi and congregation in your efforts in the said direction, in an ever-growing measure, and wishing you all a Kosher and inspiring Pesach.

With Blessing,

⁹ *Pesikta Rabassi* 21; *Mechilta Derashbi* to Shemos 15:3.

4

Make the Right Choice

There are four sons. Which one do you want to be?

Nissan 13, 1943

PESACH MESSAGE

My dear Young Friends:

You are surely well acquainted with the Haggadah by now. No doubt you know about the "Four Sons" — the wise, the wicked, the simple and the one unable to ask a question.

Which one do you want to be? Of course the "wise son," or wise daughter.¹⁰ But one should be a wise child not merely on the Seder-night, but **always**.

Do you know how to be and act like a wise Jewish child? It's entirely up to you!

LEARN OUR HOLY TORAH!

ENQUIRE ABOUT THE MITZVOTH GIVEN TO OUR PEOPLE ISRAEL AND DO THEM!

ENQUIRE ABOUT THE CUSTOMS OF OUR PEOPLE AND OBSERVE THEM!

SEE THAT YOUR JEWISH FRIENDS DO THE SAME!

If you do that you will certainly be a wise child, and you will make your dear parents happy and proud of you [and you will go from strength to strength on this happy path].

Source: This message for children was published at the end of the *Report and Souvenir Album* of the Mesibos Shabbos rally, Purim 5703 (Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Nissan 5703). The letter was subsequently published with slight variations as a preface to *The Seder*, a short sixteen-page pamphlet published by Merkos in 1944, explaining the Simonim of the Seder, Ma Nishtana, and some of the laws of Pesach (in the following year's edition the letter appears with the date "Nisan 5705" under the title "A Word to the Children").

¹⁰ "Or wise daughter" was added in the second edition of *The Seder* (published in 5705).

With best wishes for a kosher and happy Pesach.

MERKOS L'INYONEI CHINUCH
Rabbi Mendel Schneerson

5

The Responsibility of the Wise Son¹¹

Class's progress in Torah study and charity collection; the role of Jewish children in Purim and Pesach; all "four sons" must be gathered for the Seder; the special duty of the "wise son" to serve as a living example to other Jewish children and bring them closer to Judaism

By the Grace of G-d
5th of Nissan, 5725
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Students of Grade 4
Rockwood Park Jewish Center
156-45 - 84th Street
Howard Beach 14, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I was very pleased to receive your letter of March 29th, and to read in it about the progress you are making in your study of the Torah and similar subjects. I was especially gratified to note that you are advancing in the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth in the daily life for this is, after all, the main purpose of the study of the Torah.

At this time, between the festivals of Purim and Pesach, you will surely remember the important part of the Jewish children in the two mentioned festivals especially. For, as our Sages declared, the miracle of Purim took place at the very time when Jewish children were gathered around Mordechai and were inspired by him to the utmost dedication and devotion to the Torah and Mitzvoth.¹² As for

¹¹ **Source:** Photocopy of the original.

¹² See *Esther Rabba* 9:4. *Yalkut Shimoni* Remez 1,057.

Pesach, you surely know the importance of the “Four Sons” who are mentioned in the Haggadah, for whose benefit the Seder is mainly arranged. One of the important lessons here is that all Jewish children, whatever their background, should be gathered at the Seder table and taught the importance of Pesach and of the Jewish way of life in general. Those, like yourselves, who are fortunate to receive a Torah-true education so as to merit the title “Wise Son,” have a special duty and privilege to serve as a living example to less fortunate Jewish boys, to bring them closer to their Father in Heaven and to the Jewish way of life, the way of the Torah and Mitzvoth.

The collection for Tzedoko, which was raised in your class, is very welcome and a receipt is enclosed herewith. May it stand each and every one of you in good stead, to receive G-d’s blessings in all your needs, and especially to bless you with success in your advancement in Torah and Mitzvoth.

Wishing you all, as well as your teacher and parents, a happy and inspiring festival of Pesach, the Season of Our Liberation,

With blessing

By Nissan Mindel



Rebbe Responsa

The Rebbe's English letters

Timeless guidance on
every topic and issue - at
your fingertips

