

FOUR CHILDREN OF FOOD INSECURITY

The Torah teaches us to tell our children the story of Exodus four times, and each time our instructions are different. Traditional readings of the Haggadah understand this to mean that these represent many types of children who need to be taught in many different ways. The reality that learning styles differ from child to child has been a fundamental part of our Passover tradition for millennia.

So, how should we teach different types of learners about hunger and food justice?

THE WICKED CHILD

The wicked child understands that others go hungry, but chooses not to care. This child is selfish and mocks others who choose to be kind. This child says, "So what?!" and "That's not my problem." To this child you should say, "We are all responsible for one another. No-one can be free until all of us are free."

THE COMPLACENT CHILD

The complacent child may know about hunger, but does the bare minimum to stop it. This child might bring cans to the annual school food drive, but forgets those in need the other 364 days a year. This child says, "There, I've done enough." To this child you should say, "Thank you for what you have done. There are still people who go hungry every day. How can we help them every day, and not just when we are asked?"

THE CHILD WHO DOES NOT NEED TO ASK

There is a child who cannot "learn about hunger and food justice" because this child has always known - this is the child who never has enough to eat. This child asks, "Why do I feel so tired and have headaches all the time? Why is it so hard for me to learn and behave myself in school? Why do others have food when I go hungry?" To this child, you should say: "It is not your fault—it is because the world has not shown you justice. Today, let me help you with a meal—and tomorrow, let me commit to the fight for a better world where no child will feel how you feel."

THE WISE CHILD

The wise child knows that a warm meal can ease the pangs of hunger for a moment, but that they will soon return. This child understands that hunger is just one face of poverty, and that hunger will always exist so long as there are people deprived of opportunities, homes, and health. This child asks: "How can grown-ups allow for a world where anyone goes hungry, even for a day? No matter how big the changes would have to be, I don't want to grow up in a world that's so unfair." To this child you should say, "Nothing worth doing is simple, but together let's learn what we can do to change things. Let's follow the lead of people who have known poverty and hunger themselves, who know the problems and solutions best. Together, you and I will help them change the world so no child ever goes hungry again."