

**THE TORAH SPEAKS OF FOUR CHILDREN:
THE HAGGADAH OF PASSOVER IN LIGHT OF THE ROLL THEORY ROLL
PLAYING**

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Abstract: This article examines the therapeutic aspects of the text about the four sons in the Haggadah, the document that Jews read from thru all the generations on Seder night. Since the essence of the Haggadah is the story of the exodus from Egypt, and the turn of the people of Israel from slaves to a free nation, the four sons text is exceptional and supposedly doesn't serve the Haggadah plot. Therefore I ask to present a therapeutic outlook to the added value it brings to the most significant night in the Jewish year and the family dynamics created then.

Key words: Roll theory, Passover Haggadah, four sons, Roll playing, psychodrama, drama therapy.

Introduction:

The Torah speaks of four children:

One is wise

One is wicked

One is simple

And one does not know how to ask

this text appears at an early stage in the Passover Haggadah. It seems unrelated to the story about the process from slavery to redemption that the people of Israel go thru, and the Haggadah focuses on.

On the other hand, parallel to the main commandment of the Seder night, to tell the story of exodus from Egypt, exists a complimenting commandment: " Tell your son". meaning, the essence of the commandment to tell the story on the exodus from Egypt is the conversation with the kids and members of the family, and passing on the story to the next

generations. Is this the reason why the text of the four sons appears here ? probably so. But what is its meaning?

In this article I shall examine the text thru a therapeutic vision with the intent to go deeper into the psychological idea that the text might unfold.

I will bring at the beginning, references from Jewish interpreters in different generations to this text, and later connect this ideas to the psychodramatic theories, drama therapy and roll theories

Jewish interpreters

Most of the interpreters agree on the literal meaning: it refers to four different sons, different types all of whom should get answers as it is suitable for each one according to his character and strength.

Rabbi Zidkiya son of Rabbi Abraham Roffe (from the 14th century) relates to the word "sons" in a different manner:

"They were called "sons" meaning that they still do not know a thing, like young boys" (Catznelbogen, 1998 p. 48).

That is to say: these are four kinds of people that the Torah refers to and, as young children, they still know nothing. Rabbi Zidkiya wishes to say that each person in the Haggada is compared to a child who is at the beginning of his noetic development and each one is summoned to be, for one night, in that special place allowing him to be the evil, wise, innocent or the son who does not know how to ask. The connection with the childlike place inside us grants permission to be less rigid, more creative and more open with ourselves. To examine when I act as the wise, when as the evil, when I react as the innocent and when I am one who does not know how to ask.

If we were to translate the words of Rabbi Zidkiya into psychodramatic terms, it would have been possible to continue his idea and suggest that the participants experience role-reversal with each one of the types. For, in each one of us there are different parts which do not always live side by side through complete integration. Here there is an opportunity to examine each one of our inner parts, grant each of the parts legitimization to be and see what role it holds in our present life. The answers provided by the Haggada for each one of the sons, may be interpreted as attempt to suggest new observation about the need we have in each one of the roles at the present point of time in our life. Following that we could perhaps perform internal work on the changes in the balance between the roles or, to use the language of the Haggada: between the places that each one of the "sons" grasps within us.

Rabbi Shimon Ben Zemach Duran explains the four sons as four different types of people regarding their moral strength while coping with profound substances, intricate and conflicting ones:

"And the matter of the four sons is known – for it is known that those who enter the orchard delve into the intrinsic wisdoms and disagree about their research- there is the one who started the interrogation properly and completed it and it turned out proper which is called "came in safe and came out safe" and he is the one called "wise" in the Haggada. There is the one who delved into it to begin with, completed it and while in it was inclined towards impiety and held on to it and he is called "chopping the plants"- like the one who enters the orchard and chopped the tender plants which would not grow and so he lost an orchard, lost the wisdom and denied Divinity and he is the one called "evil" in the Haggada. There is the one who started the research and because of its depth was unable to complete it and remained in his innocence until he died and about such a person it is said "peeked and died" and in the Haggada he is called "innocent". And there is the one whose mind became confused during the research because of its depth and so he developed doubts and he is the one called "peeked and was hurt" ; like the one who wishes to enter an orchard, peeks at it from a distance, finds obstacles and stumbling blocs on the road and cannot go in and so he could gain nothing from the wisdom and in the Haggada he is the one called "does not know how to ask" (Catznelbogen, 1998, pp. 48-49)

Perhaps Rabbi Shimon Ben Zemach Duran wants us to stand with open eyes in front of ourselves and examine what is suitable for us regarding the processes of internal interrogation we wish to go through; so that we would not be hasty or act impulsively and excitedly. Let us step slowly, slowly, measure our steps, pave the right road in the orchard of life. Perhaps he wishes us to be aware of the different powers at our side so we would not be too quick to suggest going out on profound, psychic journey before we examine the precise adaptation to the special character and different way of each and every one.

Rabbi Nachman sees in the four sons a call to each one of us to find himself within the Israeli nation- there is room for all and no one is rejected:

"Each letter in the Torah refers to Jewish soul and serves as its root. Each one of us is connected in some way to the specific letter. That is why the Torah encompasses all the layers of Judaism- from the most prominent righteous to the greatest sinner- all together. The Torah touches all and sends unique message to each and every individual. Let us all search for our

letter, for its message through sincerity and truth- through the eyes of the person's individual life experiences" ("Nahat Hashulhan" in Start, 1999 p. 39)

The call to us to search ourselves inside the Torah, the public is a call based on seeing the good in each one and its necessity to complete the human circle, the Jewish one:

"Four sons: the wise, the evil, the innocent and the one who does not know how to ask. Four worlds: nobility, creation, formation and doing. All are needed for God's plan to create; each and every one of them embodies different aspect of Divinity. All the sons, all the Jewish souls constitute part of the whole Israeli nation. They symbolize the four levels of Jewish awareness. All are essential for God's plan for all humanity. In each one unique way is latent to notice divinity. The unity of the Jewish nation can be achieved only through perfect togetherness. The wise one- his wisdom makes him loved but at times he is charmed by his wisdom and so he should be taught to use it through acknowledgment about the limit of his skills. The evil- as self-proclaimed sees himself as evil. Show him that there is no evil in his roots; that if a trait is acquired then he has the ability to be free of it. However it should be explained to him that his current behavior would not lead him to redemption. The innocent- don't be fooled by his innocence. Perhaps he is more aware of his genius but he does not demonstrate it. He acknowledges the bad inclination within him but is meticulous about maintaining his innocence. The one who does not know how to ask: he is not aware of his unique ability because he does not draw inspiration from that which he sees in the other. His soul is like dry wood waiting to be ignited by the sparkle of God within him- by someone who would tell him precisely that....in the right words and the right way. Instead of looking in the other we would be better off delving into ourselves. We all- in that way or another- have within us the aspects of the four sons- four images of our self. We must combine the positive bases and re-track the negative ones. Just as we hear the voices of the sons, just as we learn how to take care of them, thus too we should learn how to handle the different voices of the self's images within us. Only together our Judaism is whole (Catznelbogen, 1998, p. 40).

Here is a direct reference to the participants in the Seder to acknowledge the therapeutic value of the process they are going through together on that night. To listen to the different voices that compose our individuality, acknowledge them and learn them. The Seder table serves as safe place for that purpose, one into which and in which it is allowed to bring in the different images that compose our self and hold dialogue between them. Further to such thinking, Dov Goldberger (2004) writes in his Haggada: *"It is possible to see the four sons as different stages in the life of the human being. The baby- does not know how to ask; the*

innocent- a young child at the beginning of his road; the evil- adolescence age ; wise- mature person. Sometimes all four are inside one person: at different ages, different situations, inner struggles, questions, self-search and various reactions. The answers and the references to them should also be different- to educate according to the situation and place" (p. 35)

The reference is adapted according to the situation, time and place is based on the special formulation in the verses describing the questions of the sons and their answers in the five parts of the Torah: "*He will ask you tomorrow*".... "*And you shall relate to your child*"...."*and when you come to the land*"...."*and should they say*"...."*should your son ask you tomorrow*" – all the verbs are in the future tense! Even though the Torah had been given to the people 3500 years ago still it is supposed to be suitable for all generations. Periods change, people change, situations and opinions change and so all the versions are about future situations in which questions and doubts would be instigated for which answers should be given (Ibid.)

Finally, we would come out of the fixture about the positive attitude towards the wise son and the negative one towards the evil son. The Israeli Haggada presents number of interpreters who relate slightly differently to the sons....We are accustomed to think about the wise son as the "good boy" who is obedient and loyal to his parents. He is the gifted son, asking intricate questions about the rules of Passover and accepts the God who led his parents out of Egypt. But, we should think twice before accepting that simplistic perception of the wise child. Is the wise son truly so good? Don Yitzhak Abarbanel said: *the wise son is proud of his wisdom; knows how to hold subtle distinctions with that percept. That is why except for the reason that brought him to the Torah he should not consider himself wise. Still you should teach him the other rules of Passover down to the last thing which is "there is no reading of the Haftara in Passover following the Afkoman"- which is the last oral Jewish Law at the end of the Pessachim tractate. Thus the one who ask the questions will understand that this deed holds double resourcefulness than his actual question in the same sense as " Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser" (proverbs, chapter 9, verse 9)*

Rabbi Nachman from Breslau said: *the greatest wisdom of all- not to be wise at all; just to be innocent and be honest and simple.* The prophet from Lublin said; *I love the evil who knows that he is evil more than the righteous who knows that he is righteous. The worst of all is the evil who regards himself as righteous and even when he is taken to hell, he thinks he is taken there so as to redeem the souls that are in hell.... (Zion, 2004).*

And so, the four sons symbolize different roles in our life, they testify about our self-

perception and our interactions with the other.

Psychological theories of Roll and Roll Playing

Many theoreticians from different schools regard the role as basic concept in understanding the personality and functioning disorders and turned it into a major one in their therapeutic approaches. Many theoreticians developed the role theory through the belief in the metaphor that life is theater and people are actors in it (Landy, 2001).

Laub and Levine-Keini (1992) write that three therapeutic approaches contributed to the cognition of role playing as accepted therapy form:

1. Psychodrama- the senior one among the approaches; developed by Moreno who referred to behavior in terms of role.

2. The therapeutic approach by Kelley – fixed role therapy- builds alternative role which is contrary to the role characteristic for the patient and enables him to enter the new role through repetitions.

3. Behavior reversal- developed by Wolpe and Lazarus of the Behaviorist school. They point out that the role also holds place in the gestalt therapy in which the therapist encounters the patient with the different parts in his personality and functioning and encourages him to express them through playing. They also add that in familial therapy, with its various branches, one deals with the characterization and change of the role.

Moreno (1961) defines the role as the actual and tangible form of the ego and writes: "*We define the role as the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved. The symbolic representation of this functioning form, perceived by the individual and others, is called the role.*" (p. 62) The role is formed through past experiences and cultural patterns of the society we live in. Each role is a compound of private and collective elements. Each role has two sides: private and collective. The role theory is relevant in all areas of human sciences: physiology, psychology, sociology and anthropology and in fact it connects all within a new basis. The sociologist Mead and Linton limited the role theory to the areas of sociology only but the psychodramatic role theory is far more extensive: it refers to all dimensions in life. That theory has built a model in which the role is beginning to form already at birth, before language is formed. That is why Moreno claims that the role theory is not limited only to the area of sociology but includes the three dimensions: *

Social roles- expressing the social dimension*

Psychosomatic roles- expressing physiological dimension* Psychodramatic roles- expression the psychological dimension of the ego.

Examples for psychosomatic roles are: "the eater" or "the sensuous". The characteristics of behavior patterns at the mother-baby interaction during the baby's feeding may form these kinds of roles which escort us all along life. Social roles develop at a later stage in life and rely on psychosomatic and psychodramatic roles that were experienced earlier by the individual. Blatner (2000) adds that psychodramatic roles include our memories, expectations from the future, hopes and fears. Each person has certain range of roles which he experiences in himself and roles which he sees others function in them opposite him. The roles are within different grades of development. Moreno (Blatner, 2000; Dayton, 1994) claimed that we are learning roles in three stages: **role taking, role playing and role creation.**

i. Role taking

This is the stage of imitation, of modeling. It is the most profound stage of learning, absorbing into it all we see or grasp outside us. That process is unconscious and it begins already at infancy. In role taking we play roles without any visible reason. It is a pattern of unconscious behavior. This is the state in which the role leads the person.

ii. Role playing

This is the stage in which we do all we learned in role taking but we bring into the role something new of ourselves. This stage exists on a more conscious level since we learned the role and feel sufficiently comfortable with it to try it through our way. This is a state in which it is not only the role that leads us but we also lead the role. When the environment grants us freedom and encourages us to research a role and not just act according to specific codes, we learn to sense within us confidence to discover who we truly are.

iii. Role creation

This is the stage in which we recreate the role. Once we internalized the two previous stages of the role, we are able to create a new role which is integration of the two previous ones, according to our talents, needs and wishes. This is similar to theater actor who at first learns his lines by heart, then the conception of the playwright or the director and then adds into it his personality and personal interpretation. Once all this is assimilated in him he can feel confident and "forget" that which he learned and be spontaneous. Thus he can let the role to stem from him creatively while experiencing moments of satisfaction and magic on stage. These magic moments may be in our life when we are during the role creation stage.

Blatner (2000) talks about the "meta roles" dimension: "The "meta"-level which describes the function of reflecting on, commenting on, consciously negotiating, and modifying the roles being played and their components". (p. 152)

"The "meta"-level which describes the function of reflecting on, commenting on, consciously negotiating, and modifying the roles being played and their components". (p. 152).

He adds that it is possible to examine each role according to number of aspects. In terms of drama he calls them: playwright, director, producer, audience and critic.

The playwright- decides which role to play

The director- decides in what ways the role can be played.

The producer- checks the conditions that would enable personification of the role in the most successful manner.

The audience- how others perceive of the role's personification.

The critic- examines the efficacy of the role.

Landy (2001) - one of the founders of the drama therapy method, amply handled the role theory and its practice. He suggested a triangle model for roles that assists with the diagnosis and therapy. In theatrical terms it would be defined as follows:

i. The role – this is in fact the protagonist

ii. The counter-role – this is the role found on the other pole of the scale- the antagonist. He is not contrary in terms of good vs. bad but the other side of the role which may have been denied, neglected or ignored while personifying the role. For example- if a woman embodied the role of the "mother" the counter-role can be the role of "sister", "daughter" or "father" or the role of "the savior". In such case it is possible that the role of the "mother" has qualities of punishment or abuse. The counter-role exists only in the role; at times exchange is made between the role and his counter-role.

iii. The role of the guide- this is the third part in the role's triangle. This is a transitional figure between the role and the counter-role and serves as bridge between them. One of the major functioning of the "guide" is to help with integration. Another thing is to help in finding the special way of the actual patient. At conventional therapy that image is of the therapist. People come for therapy because they do not have an internalized image of "guide". During the work process in drama therapy the patient is directed to create his inner "guide" and then the "guide" can assist him with the connection between his role and counter-role. On the Seder night the parents are the guides. That night we go back to our sources in which the ancient connection of parent-child is reconstructed and strengthened.

There are certain roles that compose human system. Landy (2001) suggest 84 kinds of roles (which come from the theater world). Each role may serve each one of the triangle's sides: as protagonist, antagonist or guide. The variety of roles available for the human being is called "role system" which is in fact another name for the structure of personality. Within the role system there are conscious and unconscious roles. Some were neglected, abused or there was no use for them. There are roles that need enabling environment so it would be possible to embody them. The structure of the role system is dynamic. When one role is called to the front of the stage, others move to the background. This may be viewed as positioning a theater scene on stage while one image talks the others should listen and respond accordingly. The roles within the system search for balance between them and their contrasted roles. According to the role theory one can see if the person is healthy according to the amount of roles internalized and embodied in him as well as according to the performance qualities. Following that theory, the unhealthy person gave up the struggle of living with ambivalence, with balance and he uses another role or a bunch of similar roles that darken and block all the other roles. Indeed, as seen among some of the interpreters, the four sons are different faces of the same personality which are expressed during different development stages in life or within different situations.

Practical Example

In one of the years, having discussed the idea that each one of us carries the four sons within, I called about playing a game called "many sons". I prepared crowns in advance and on each one I wrote the traits of the different sons. For example: the happy son, the swift son, the son showing interest, the sensitive son, the helping son, the lenient son, the caring son, the creative son, the attentive son, the generous son, the toiling son, the son seeking knowledge, the merciful son, the funny son, the diligent son and so on. Now the crowns were placed in the middle of the table so that the inscriptions on them were not visible. David volunteered to be the first to pick up the crowns. Having read the inscription he called: I am granting the crown ofto.....Then the sibling who received that crown picked up the next and decided who should get it- following the same formula. At first my intervention was needed through the formulation of the reason for a choice but gradually things were comprehended and the game flowed without me. At times I noticed the difficulty to choose just one. At times I saw the surprise in the eyes of the receiver in the sense of: "what, me? Do you really think so?" Thus each one kept the crowns he received and at the bottom of the pile some empty crowns

remained which were meant for anyone who wanted to grant someone else a crown that was not on the list. The children responded and so three more crowns were granted. Finally, I asked the children to look quietly at the crowns they received and find out: how do I feel with the crown I received? What seems to me as more suitable for someone else in the circle? What from the crowns distributed to others would have been suitable for me? What would I like to have? What trait I find important to work on? What would I like to change? How did I feel when I received the crown? How did I feel when I had to choose someone to give the crown to? Then I asked each one to tell me how he feels on that moment. Even the cynical ones among them "thawed" at that moment and cooperated. Suddenly it became warmer in the room and I felt that I was sitting opposite a group of siblings who were more consolidated and closer to each other.

Summary

Professor Feuerstein r.i.p, one of the greatest educators of underprivileged children in the country and abroad, used to start his Seder with a warning to the children which he would express with grave expression: "Listen children. This is an evening with much weight and importance and we have no time for disturbances in the middle. If you ask questions in the middle of the ceremony I would have to throw candy at you...". This humoristic statement is calling in fact to reverse the acceptable rolls and experience a different behavior in a safe space and open to new possibilities

"In the Haftara" (chapter from the books of prophets) said on the Saturday before Passover- The Big Saturday- we read at the synagogues the last lines in the book of prophets, the words of the prophet Malachi: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Chapter 3, verses 23-24) This is the goal and also the promise. The days of the Messiah, time for complete healing would arrive only when we open our hearts to our parents and when we, as parents, open our hearts to our children. We must create space between parents and children in which we can hear and let others hear, love and be loved" (Cagan, 2005, p. 36)

For me, this is the major issue of the Seder night. It is a form of group therapy when the group is the family. Only, instead of having a therapist who navigates the process of that evening there is a program which is not given to the choice by the participants- The Haggada- and all are equal before it. Each one of the participants, the mature and the young, father and

son, grandmother and granddaughter can at any time lead, can listen, is welcome to ask and others are glad about his/her intervention. The more the conductor of the Seder is clever and aware of its goal, thus there is a chance that the circle of participants would sense something from that experience of true togetherness that grants equal room for the equal different who are now united in the here and now on that special night.

All of us are the four sons. We all can choose at any given time whether to be the smart, evil, innocent, or the one who doesn't know how to ask. There is a permission here to experiment out of true freedom the different rolls, without judgment or criticism. That is a message of acceptance and legitimacy for development and adjustment to each of the participants.

I would like to emphasize that I absolutely do not claim that the major reason for which we were told to tell the story of the exodus from Egypt is therapeutic. There are many aspects to keep the Torah and its precepts and this article examines the therapeutic point of view, when the text of "the four sons" is calling for us a clear call to this reference.

It should be noticed that contrary to classical psychodrama, the guide on that night is the conductor of the - mother, father, grandfather or grandmother. Instead of being in the classic place of the therapist aiming to grant the patient remedial parental experience the parents have the opportunity to grant that experience to their children and themselves. That is why the parents on that night have both educational and therapeutic responsibility. Through that responsibility they must prepare, they must scrutinize and bring their awareness to the family's circle. Only this is about awareness that contains emotions and enables expression space that is not judgmental. Also in many cases the guidance "baton" moves around to the other participants as directors of scenes or as leaders of conversations. To me this is border-breaking psychodrama which offers new options for observation of therapy and its achievements.

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