

Teacher ↔ Learner:

Describe a moment when you arrived as a teacher and left as a learner, or expected to learn and found yourself teaching. What did that moment reveal?

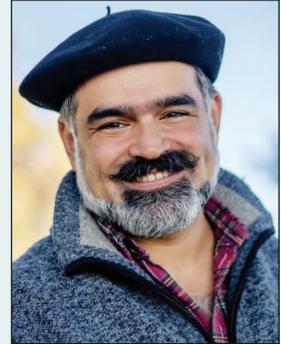
Arnon Z. Shorr, MFA in Creative Writing Student

The Torah speaks of four archetypical sons and prescribes different approaches to teaching each of them. As for my son, there's only one of him. But is he wise? Is he wicked? Or simple? Does he even know how to ask a question?

Consider the evidence: There was that one time when he intentionally failed (and eventually dropped out of) a Judaics elective at school. I made him learn Mishnah Pesachim with me instead. Once a week, he begrudgingly allowed me to yammer at him about the things a bunch of ancient rabbis once said about Passover. We had only managed to slog through the first half of that book by the time Passover came along. One day before the holiday, I found myself scrambling solo to scrub the kitchen. My mother-in-law was in the hospital, my wife had flown down to Baltimore early, and my daughters

were too young to help. And my son had made the mistake the previous day of thinking that scootering at high speed down a steep hill was a fun thing to do on a Shabbat afternoon and so all he could do was sit in the kitchen with his ankle elevated, feeling bad that he couldn't help with anything. That night, with the kids bundled into the car for the mad dash down I-95, I tasked him with reading the entire second half of Mishnah Pesachim (the half we hadn't gotten to yet) out loud in the car because I wouldn't be able to get us to Baltimore in time for a *siyyum* (and I really didn't want to suffer through the Fast of the Firstborn after an overnight drive). The *siyyum*, a

traditional celebration to mark the completion of the study of a tractate of Talmud or a book of Mishnah, requires its participants to eat and supersedes the minor pre-Passover fast. My son was suddenly eager to participate in this ritualized rabbinic loophole. And at the seder, 12 hours after we triumphantly recited the *hadran* at our little two-person *siyyum*, my son interjected with things he had learned in those *mishnayot*. The same nattering of bygone rabbis that felt like cruel paternal torture only a few months earlier had become elevated wisdoms that he could use to contribute to, and thereby enhance, our ancient conversation.



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