

Dave Danger Activity & Discussion Guide: “The Four Daves!”

Written by Stephanie Douglass, Teen Program Coordinator, Central Synagogue, NYC, in consultation with Nancy Bossov, Director, URJ Early Childhood Education Department

Contents

I. Objectives (page 1)

II. Dave Danger, Action Kid! / Bringing the Comic to Life (pages 2–3)

(Dramatizing the Comic, Questions for Students, Themes in the Episode)

III. The Story of Passover and the Four Children (pages 4–8)

(The Story, Fun Facts, The Four Children, Seder Means Order, Making a Change for Understanding)

IV. Activities and Discussion Questions (pages 9–11)

(The Four Children/Sons Game, Your Own Duplication Device, The Number 4, A Tasty Tour)

I. Objectives

Students will:

1. Interact with the “Dave Danger, Action Kid” comic strip, and analyze the different themes within the comic.
2. Explore the Passover themes and Jewish values within the comic.
3. Learn more about the holiday of Passover and the Haggadah.
4. Understand the main points behind the Haggadah story of the four children.
5. Apply these ideas and themes to their own lives and experiences.

II. Dave Danger, Action Kid! / Bringing the Comic to Life

Dramatizing the Comic

15 min.

Hand out copies of “Dave Danger, Action Kid” to the students. Assign each student one character, and have students read and/or act out the comic aloud. Encourage students to be creative about roles—someone can be the map by taping a picture to her/his shirt, another can make the sounds of the duplication device, and others can be different inventions in the lab, or players on the baseball team!

If the class is larger, you can divide students into several groups, and have each group perform their presentation of the comic for the class.

Questions for Students

- ❖ What was this story about? What happened?
- ❖ Who are the characters in this comic?
- ❖ Which character did you identify with the most?
- ❖ What words or names do you recognize?
- ❖ Are there any words or names you don't recognize?
- ❖ What do you think are the most important parts of this episode?
- ❖ Why do you think Dave used the duplication device?
- ❖ Do you think Dave did the right thing by making more versions of himself?
- ❖ Why do you think that Dave's parents were upset with him?
- ❖ Do you think that a person can be only wise, or only mean? Or can we be many things at once?
- ❖ What are some other ways Dave could have responded to his being asked to be in four places at the same time?
- ❖ Have you ever felt like you had too many things to do? What did you do? Did you choose the things you wanted to do? Or the things you were expected to do?

Themes in the Dave Danger Episode

The importance of asking questions.

Understanding that you are a part of the Jewish people.

Seeing potential consequences of your decisions.

Forgiving friends and family.

Admitting your mistakes.

Trying not to take on more than you can handle.

Recognizing the importance of tradition.

III. The Story of Passover and the Four Children

The Story

10 min.

Read this story aloud with students, or use as notes to tell them the story. It's from Exodus 1:1–15:27 and found in most Haggadot.

After Joseph became successful in Egypt, his family came to join him. The Jews enjoyed living in Egypt, and had many children, who grew up and had many children, who...you get the idea! Eventually, the Pharaoh who had loved Joseph and his family grew older and died, and was followed by another leader, and then another. By this time, the newest Pharaoh didn't remember all the wonderful things that Joseph and his family had done. He only saw that there were so many Jews, working and living and having more children...and he became afraid that they would become mightier than the Egyptians. And so he began to make things harder for the Israelites, forcing them to build roads and cities and work very, very hard. However, the Israelites continued to be strong. So Pharaoh did something extreme—he gave the order that all Jewish newborn sons were to be killed.

Well, one Jewish mother couldn't bear to kill her baby son. She hid him. And when he started getting too big, she put him in a basket on the Nile River, and sent her daughter to follow him.

It's a good thing that she did, because this little boy grew up to be the man we know as Moses—one of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people! Eventually, God chose Moses to help free the Israelites from Egypt, and lead them through the desert on the way to—you guessed it!—Israel.

All kinds of amazing things happened along the way—from plagues, to seas splitting in half, to food falling from the sky...you hear all about it at your Seder. The Seder is the meal that Jews have each year to celebrate freedom, and retell this story. During the Seder, we use the Haggadah as a guide, to make sure we do everything we are supposed to do in retelling the story.

Fun Facts:

- 1) Moses is actually NEVER mentioned in the Haggadah (although some modern authors have included him in recent Haggadot!). Many people say this is because we need to remember to thank God, and not Moses, for the freedom given to the Jewish people. What do you think?
- 2) Did you know that Passover really marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year? Although we celebrate Rosh Hashanah as the symbolic birthday of the world, it takes place in Tishrei, the seventh month of the calendar. Passover begins in Nisan—the first month!

- 3) In Israel, Jews have a seder on the first night of Pesach, but outside of Israel, in what we sometimes call the “Diaspora,” many Jews celebrate the seder on the first TWO nights. This tradition evolved during the times when we didn’t have telephones, mail, or airplanes. There were walled cities where customs were celebrated and everybody inside knew what was going on. By celebrating for two nights instead of just one, we were able to be sure that all Jews in the world had the opportunity to observe the holiday in the shared spans of time.

Questions for Students

- ❖ Why do you think we retell the story of Passover every year?
- ❖ What do you think are the most important parts of the story of the Jews leaving Egypt?

The Four Children

There’s one special part of the Haggadah that is a central theme in this Dave Danger episode:

Every year, in the Haggadah, we read a story about four children—they are usually called “The Four Sons,” but they can be either girls or boys—the really important thing to pay attention to is what they say! Each son wants to know something about the holiday, and what is happening at the big table around him/her.

The first child, also known as the “Wise” child, asks: “What are the rules, laws, and observances which God has commanded us?” The Haggadah tells us that we should answer by explaining all of the ways that Jews observe Passover, with every possible detail, especially about what goes on during the Seder.

Then, the second child, often called the “Wicked” one, asks: “What does this holiday mean to *you*?” Since the child says “to you,” and does not include him or herself, the Haggadah tells us that this person is rejecting being a part of the Jewish community. It says that the answer should sound angry, and is something like, “Because of what God did for *me*, when *I* left Egypt.” Some even go so far as to say that because of this person’s negativity, she/he would not have been allowed to leave Egypt with everyone else!

Next, the third child, usually called the “Simple” one, asks: “What is this?” The answer to this question is that, with a great deal of strength, God freed us from Egypt, where we were slaves. This is said partly to explain and partly in the hope that it will lead to even more questions!

And lastly, for the fourth child, known as the “One who does not know how to ask,” we are told to help the child by answering the question that hasn’t yet been asked, and saying that we do all this because of what God did to help us leave Egypt and become a free people.

Sounds like a simple story? Sometimes, as we'll see, the simplest stories can have the most interesting meanings hidden inside!

Themes in the Four Children/Four Sons Story

The importance of asking questions.

Understanding that you are a part of the Jewish people.

Helping those who do not know how to ask.

Answering each child in a way that he/she can understand—not giving him/her too much or too little information.

Recognizing the importance of tradition.

Learning from How the Four Children Ask Questions

We can learn many things from how each of the four children asks a question. Here is one thing we can learn from each—see how many you can add!

❖ *The “Wise” Way:*

The “wise” child asks a very detailed question. The more specifically we can ask for what we need and want, the better and more exact answers we can get. If we all try to communicate what we really mean, we'll be able work together to make great things happen!

❖ *The “Wicked” Way:*

The “wicked” child asks a question that sounds mean and uncaring. Even if he/she didn't mean it, that is how people hear the words. This shows us that we need to be careful with our words and how we say things. Can you hear the difference between these two sentences?

- 1) “Give me my game controller!”
- 2) “I'd really like to play with that game controller now. May I have a turn?”

Which sentence would make you more likely to want to share the game controller? Hint: the second one sounds a lot nicer. And probably makes the other person feel like she/he is doing something kind by sharing!

❖ *The “Simple” Way:*

Don't be afraid to ask! Even the simplest question can sometimes lead to deep answers... and to more questions!

❖ *The “Doesn't Know How to Ask” Way:*

Sometimes, we just don't know what we need; or we know it, but we don't know how to ask for it. If we all work to be aware of what others are feeling and try to read “signals” (like if someone is sad, or tired, or excited, or needs to talk), we will understand others—and be understood ourselves—a whole lot better!

Questions for Students

- ❖ Why do you think we read the story of the four children every year?
- ❖ What do you think are the most important parts of this story?
- ❖ Why do you think the Haggadah talks about four children?
- ❖ Are people always only one way?
- ❖ Has there ever been a time when you've felt like one of the four children? Which one and why?
- ❖ Do you think certain kinds of children are missing from the four in the Haggadah? Which ones?
- ❖ If you had to choose four "types" of people, and the questions they ask, what would they be?

Seder Means "Order"

Often, when we decide what we are going to do during the day, or how to work on a project, we put things in order. This helps us do things in the best way possible. In the Torah, we learn that it is very important for the Jewish people to retell the story of Pesach, or Passover. We do this at a meal called the "Seder," which means...you guessed it!—"Order." So in a very particular order, we tell the story of Pesach, eat, and sing. By the end of the night, we've had fun, learned all sorts of things, and, of course, eaten a delicious meal! Now if only we could find that afikomen...

Questions for Students

- ❖ What do you remember about the order of the Seder?
- ❖ What other things do you do in order? Why?
- ❖ Can you think of anything that you like to do out of order? Why or why not?

Making a Change for Understanding:

On Passover, we learn that when our ancestors realized they could leave Egypt, they were in such a rush to pack and get going before Pharaoh changed his mind, they didn't have time to let the dough for their bread rise. And even though they were now going to be free, they had a big price to pay for their freedom: they had to leave their homes and their entire lives behind.

To remember what our ancestors—and therefore what we, the Jewish people—went through, many Jews will not eat bread or any leavened product (that means something which rises, or contains yeast) for the eight days of Pesach. And some Jews don't eat other foods, like corn, beans, and peas, that don't even contain grains, because long ago these used to be stored with grains and could sometimes get mixed in with them.

Changing something we usually do helps us to identify with our ancestors as well.

In a class in Boston, students were studying about Haiti, a very interesting country where many people do not have enough money. Most people in Haiti spend only about \$2 a day—for food, clothing, housing, and everything else. As an experiment, for a whole week, everyone in the class tried to live on only \$2 per day, so they could begin to understand what it would be like to live that way.

Questions for Students

- ❖ Have you ever changed something about yourself so you could know what it feels like to be someone else? What was it?
- ❖ How did it make you feel?

IV. Activities and Discussion Questions

The Four Children/Sons Game:

15–20 minutes

In one container, place folded-up pieces of paper with the words “Wise,” “Wicked,” “Simple,” and “Does not know how to ask.” In another container, place folded-up pieces of paper with words that pertain to Pesach or parts of the seder, such as Matzah, Exodus, God, Plagues, Pharaoh, Egg, Saltwater, Slaves, and Recline. (In more advanced classes, students can come up with the words. Repeat words are fine as different students will have different associations to the words.)

Divide the students into two (or more) “teams.”

For every turn, a student from an alternating team goes up to the front of the class. She/he picks one paper from each container, and then forms a question based on the cue word, but in the style of the child/son-related word. For example, if the student from Team 1 chooses “Matzah” and “Wise,” she/he might ask, “Why do we eat matzah for the entire holiday of Pesach, and not just on the night of the seder?” If she/he gets “Matzah” and “Wicked,” she/he might ask, “How can you call this a holiday when this stuff tastes so bland?”

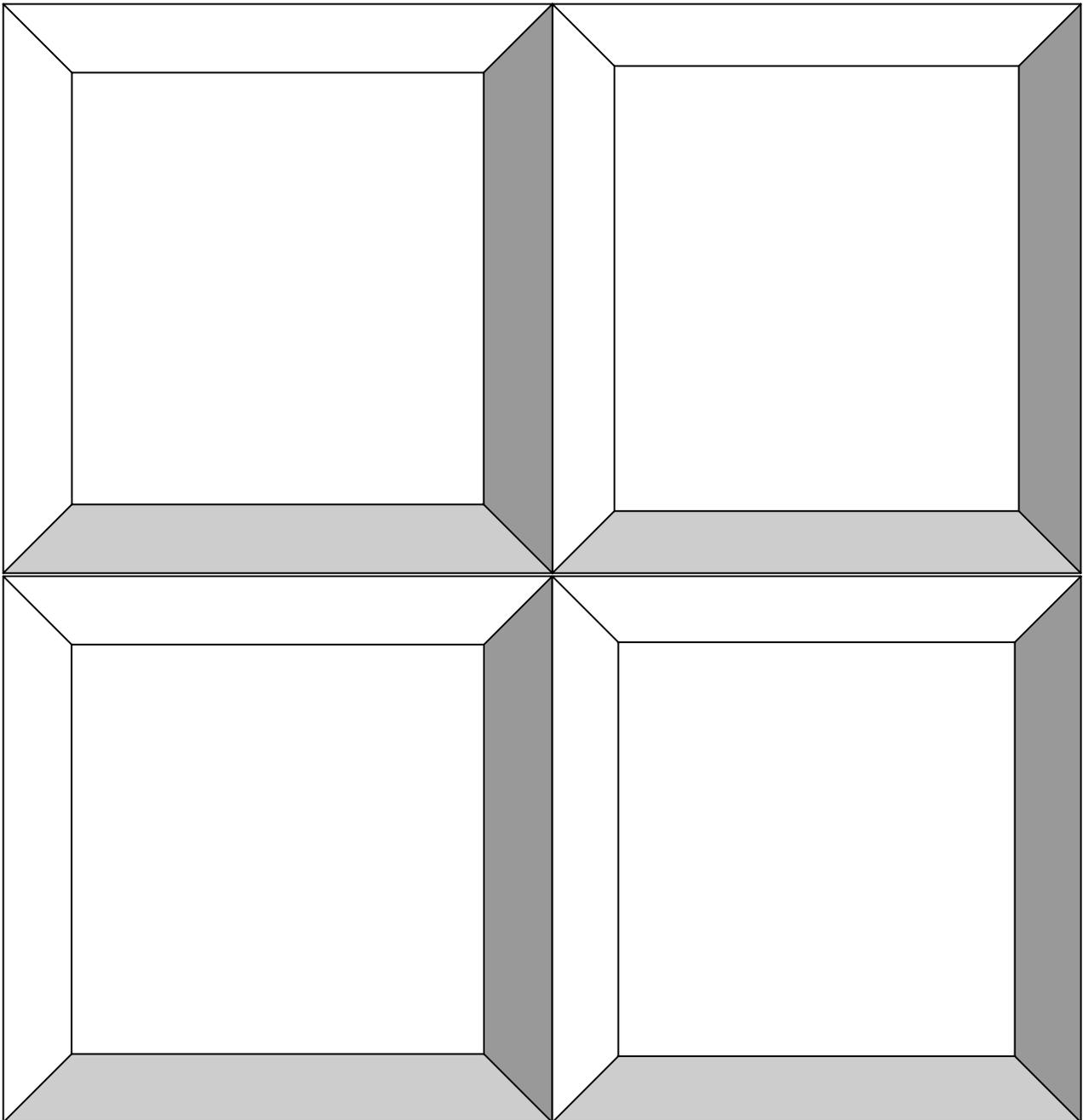
After the student asks the question, students on one of the other teams (see below) must decide 1) which “child/son” asked the question, AND 2) must try their best to answer the question. Each part of the response is worth 1 point, for a total of 2 points.

The only trick is if a student chooses “Does not know how to ask.” In that case, the student must use charades (no talking) to get her/his teammates to guess the subject. They must 1) guess the subject, and 2) come up with a question about it (for 2 points).

If a student in Team 1 came up with the question, members of Team 2 (or 3, etc.) have to answer the two questions above (if there is more than one other team, the teacher can call on whoever raises their hands or “buzzes” first). If Team 2 (or whoever raises their hands first) answers the questions correctly, they get the two bonus points. If they don’t answer both questions correctly, Team 3 gets a chance. If no other team can answer the questions correctly, the team that made up the question gets the two points!

Your Own Duplication Device: 10–15 minutes

In the comic, there are four different Daves—one usual Dave, and then three others, which go along with three of the children from the Hagadah story. One interpretation of this is that every person has these four sides. Do you? If not, what are the four sides, or moods that you notice in yourself the most each day? Using words and pictures, create the four “faces” or “sides” of you below!



Teachers: You can also create a class game where you (or students) name different events or ideas, and students can hold up whichever “face” they would feel, and discuss why.

The Number 4

Four sons, Four questions, Four glasses of wine...Four is an important number in the seder!

Ask students: What other “fours” can you find in the *haggadah* or in the Bible? Are there any other stories you can think of, or things you remember, where four is an important number?

Some answers:

- ❖ The word “Passover” has 4 names in Hebrew: *Chag haPesach* (the festival of Passover), *Chag haMatzot* (the festival of matzah), *Chag ha'Aviv* (the festival of spring) and *Z'man Cheyruteynu* (the time of our freedom).
- ❖ There are 4 places in the Torah where answers are given to children who ask about the story of Pesach—and each time, the Torah reminds us to teach this story to our children (Exodus 12:25-29, 13:5-10, 11-16, and Deuteronomy 6:20-25).
- ❖ There are 4 mothers married to the 3 forefathers of the Jewish people.
- ❖ During the flood in Noah’s time, the Torah says it rained for 40 days.
- ❖ After being freed from Egypt, the Jews were thought to be in the desert for 40 years.
- ❖ There are many families of 4: Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel; Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Esau; Moses, Tziporah, and their two sons—Gershom and Eliezer.

A Tasty Tour

Many cities have either a matzah factory or smaller home businesses where people bake their own matzah. If there is a matzah maker near where you live, ask if tours are available. The students will love seeing how matzah is made, and getting to bring fresh matzah home for their families to use on Pesach!