

Four Alternative Questions

Contributed by [HIAS](#)

Source: HIAS Seder Supplement

Following the framework of the Four Questions of the Passover haggadah, we ask four alternative questions for discussion. These questions are meant to spark conversations that can happen throughout the seder.

First Question

Read this narrative aloud and then discuss the question below.

“When I found out I got into the University, I immediately called my ‘real’ mom in Afghanistan, whom I haven’t seen since I was 14. My family, which belongs to the Hazaras, lived under the constant threat of the Taliban, until, one day the latter tried to run me over with a car. My parents feared for my life, and sent me to Iran. At first I was crying all the time. It hurt too much being on my own. When things got tougher there too, I headed to Europe.

I was just 17 when I came once more close to dying, this time in my attempt to cross to Samos on a boat from Turkey, along with four more Afghans. I had never seen the sea before and although I knew how to swim, the waves terrified me. When the sea got really rough and the oars of the boat broke one after another, there was panic. I was rowing with all the strength I had in me. What kept me going was a 13-year-old boy who was constantly asking me ‘If I fall in the sea, will you save me?’ ‘As long as I am alive, you have nothing to fear’, I kept telling him. We are still good friends with this boy.

I love Thessaloniki, the town where I live now, but if I could, I would return to Afghanistan without second thoughts. My country is beautiful, there are amazing landscapes, natural resources and high mountains. The only thing missing is peace...” —*Hamid, age 25, from Afghanistan, now living in Greece*

Through the Passover Seder, we reconnect with our biblical journey to liberation, and, yet, we retell the story now mindful of those who are not yet free—those whose futures are, therefore, bound up in our future. We recognize, as Hamid does in this powerful narrative, that the way we live has bearing on the lives of those who are not yet free. Why do you think we retell this story each year? With an eye to the struggles of our time, whose future do you feel is bound up in yours?

Second Question

Put yourself back into the story of the Exodus: What do you remember from leaving Egypt?

Third Question

What do you think makes some people stay and continue to experience unimaginable trauma and others flee in search of refuge and asylum? Can you understand both decisions?

Fourth Question

Just as we open the door for Elijah, to what or to whom do you want to open the door in your own life this year? What fears do you have about doing so?

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