

The Four LGBTQIA+ Jews

Contributed by [jayce koester](#)

Source: Tamara Cohen, Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell, and Ronnie Horn

The Four Queer/Trans Jews Adapted from “the Four Daughters” by Tamara Cohen, Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell and Ronnie Horn. Adapted and used with loving gratitude.

The queer/trans Jew is in search of a meaningful, holy past through our texts, traditions, and people. Ma heh omereh? What do they say?

“Why didn’t the Torah count, or acknowledge women and trans people among the ‘600,000 men on foot, aside from children,’ who came out of Egypt? And why did Moses say at Sinai, ‘Go not near a woman,’ addressing only men, as if preparation for Revelation was not meant for us, as well?”

Because we know that Jewish memory is essential to our identity, we teach them that history is made up by those who tell the tale. If the original Torah did not name and count us as women, trans people and those whose gender we do not know the words for now, it is up to us to fill the empty spaces left in our holy texts. We have the power to tell our own story, take our own census and create our own values. Jewish history is meant for us as well.

And the queer/trans Jew who wants to erase our differences and assimilate? Ma heh omereh? What do they say?

“Why do we keep pushing these questions into every text? Why make us so noticeable? So visible? Why are these issues so important to you? Don’t you want to blend in?”

They say: “To you,” instead of “not to me”. They forget the struggles of our ancestors, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Perhaps we’ve been here at some point or another too, what did we need to find the beauty in our divergence? Invite them to our seder tables. Let them see the pleasure and joy at living outside of cis-heteronormativity, the wonder of appreciating queer and trans bodies for all of our diversity and divergence. The blessings of our resistance.

And the queer/trans Jew who does not know that we have a place at the table? Ma heh omereh? What do they say?

“What is this?”

Because they don’t yet know that their question is, in itself, a part of the seder tradition, show them that the Haggadah is a conversation about liberation, and their insights and questions belong here, in our texts and seder plates. Their wonder and curiosity, their frustration and confusion, in equal parts belong right here, nestled between maror and charoset.

And the queer/trans Jew who asks no questions? Who is scared to exist? Isolated from themselves and others?

We must say to them, “Your questions, when they come and in whatever form, will liberate you from Egypt. This is how it is and how it has always been with your queer and Jewish ancestors. For every moment we choose to survive, to look towards unanswered truths, we move a half-step closer to liberation. Even with no questions, you have a seat at our table, you deserve to know the fullness of your ancestors, of Shifra and Puah, of Joseph, of Ruth and Naomi and Judith, of Marsha, Sylvia, Leslie, and so many more who lived both named and unnamed in their truth and power. Come to the seder table with us, you will always have a seat.”

The hebrew used in this text is in the style of Lior Gross and Eyal Rivlin of the Nonbinary Hebrew Project