

Another Four Questions: A Message for Shabbat HaChodesh

As we anticipate Passover 2020, I would like to invite you to join with me this year in asking Another Four Questions.

We find ourselves today in the midst of turbulent waters, hoping for God to send us a life raft. Perhaps, instead, we should be praying for parted waters.

We are now four weeks away from the beginning of Passover; this Shabbat being Shabbat HaChodesh (the last Shabbat before the beginning of the Hebrew month of Nissan). We do not know what the future will bring: whether we will gather as we like to do for large, family seders; whether we will enjoy the familiar recipes, the warm hugs, or the laughter that brings us joy. We do not even know right now about the accessibility of kosher for Passover food.

One thing, however, will not change: our obligation to tell the story of the Exodus -- to recount God's saving power in the midst of difficult situations. The great sage Rabban Gamliel tells us that, in every generation, we are to see ourselves as having come out of Egypt. In that way, we not only give thanks for God's blessing in our lives, but we gain the wisdom and summon the courage to apply the lessons of the Exodus to our experience today.

So, four weeks away from Passover, we prepare to ask ourselves: what are the stories we will tell this year? Moreover, just as we begin the Passover seder with questions to instigate the telling of the story, we begin exploring now: what are the questions we should be asking of ourselves at this time in order to generate the telling of our story?

In an effort to learn the story that must be told this year and to generate the questions necessary to tell that story, I would like to invite you to join me in an exercise of re-imagining how our family, how our community and how our society operate, with an eye toward creating a more Promised Land-like experience after we cross through these waters.

I am calling this act of reimagining, *Another Four Questions*.

In this period of social distancing and self-quarantining, allow me to ask you:

What specifically do you miss?

What do you not miss, that perhaps when things return to normal you would want to keep out of your life?

What wisdom have you learned about the world, about life, or about yourself?

What can you do now and after the turbulent waters recede, to directly and personally help someone in need?

Join with me this year in asking these four questions and in preparing to tell the story of Passover 2020. If you want to share your thoughts with me by replying to this e-mail, I would love to read them.

I hope that in the midst of the threat that surrounds us, you take the time to figure out how you can make your life better, how you can make the lives of those whom you love better, and how you can make the lives of those who are in need, truly, better.

With prayers that these turbulent waters should part and that we may walk through, unscathed, on dry land, Rebecca, Caleb, and Ayal join me in wishing you Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Aaron Starr

March 19, 2020

P.S. If you or if someone you love is in need of help or even a phone call, please let me know by replying to this e-mail.