

Loaded Questions

The four sons of the Haggadah pass over to modern day Israel

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The Wise Son, The Wicked Son, The Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask, and who can forget The Simple Son (surprisingly, many people can). We psychoanalyze the four sons during our Passover Seders every year as if they were Freud, and they were our patients. We know the questions they ask inside-and-out, but on paper, these four sons are merely archetypes. In order to get better acquainted with the Haggadah, we've carried these archetypes into the 21st century and compared them to real characters found in Israel over the eight-day Jewish holiday. From wise to wicked, tour guides to tourists, behold *Time Out Israel's* Real Life Guide to the Four Sons of Pesach.



“The Tourist” aka The Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask

Tourism tends to spike just before Pesach as Diaspora Jews fly across the ocean – unfortunately, we can't all just part the Red Sea at the flick of a staff – to experience the authentic Passover they've been replicating for years. Convinced that Hebrew school has taught them everything, The Tourist acts like a stubborn man refusing to ask for directions. Here's what you might expect this cowardly character to wonder to themselves, but never dare utter aloud:

Why on this night have I slaved over a second Seder, yet everyone seems to have stood me up? No need to leave that door open this evening, Elijah is probably out partying at a club off Rothschild or throwing back shots at a Dizengoff bar (does Jägermeister contain yeast?). While out in the Diaspora, Jews are accustomed to dividing their two Seders equally between

Bubbe's brownstone in Brooklyn and the in-laws' Hartford townhouse, here in Israel, we only break bread matzo on the first night of Pesach.

Why on this night are half of the grocery store aisles draped with gigantic picnic blankets? Struggling to find the Kosher aisle – where cardboard boxes filled with cardboard matzo are usually stacked in an ironic pyramid formation – The Tourist studies these giant blankets draped over half of Tiv Tam's stockpile harder than the Torah. Perhaps they lift a corner to take a quick peak, then immediately abort, heading across the street to see what AM:PM has got in store (spoiler alert: it's more blankets). This is due to the fact that although grocery stores remain open on Pesach (Thank Moses!), they cannot burn all of their



leavened bread products... especially at those corrupt prices.

Why on this night are the restaurants jam-packed? Back home, The Tourist makes it through one day of sad Chinese chicken salad at Panera Bread – hold the noodles, crispy wontons, and will to live – with a box of stale matzo crackers sulking in the middle of the table before giving up on eating out altogether. While Jerusalem turns into a ghost town during the holidays, Tel Aviv's chef quality restaurants sure as hell know how to serve a delightful Kosher for Pesach meal.

If you are a foreigner, and are too proud to ask for suggestions, check out timeout.com/israel/restaurants for a list of options.



“The Hipster” aka The Wicked Son

When in Florentin, do like the rest-of-the-world-outside-of-Israel does. Tel Aviv's growing hipster population brings with it a generation of apathetic Wicked Sons with attitudes as bitter as the herbs belonging to the Seder plate. While The Hipster might have a Haggadah lying about their apartment somewhere – scribbled over in sharpie to function as a “found poetry” collection, the only connection between this Israeli character and the story of Exodus is an affinity for the ninth plague: darkness (which they most likely discovered at a gallery opening while ranting about Gustave Doré between gulps of twenty shekel merlot). Here are some rhetorical questions that the ever-so-skeptical Hipster will ask, already equipped with their own opinionated answers and structured rationales to match:



Why is this night different from all other nights? While The Tourist is still over at Tiv Tam trying to solve the case of the oversized picnic blanket, despite the warm invitation from their mother, stepfather, brother, and aunt to come to Seder this year, The Hipster refuses, taking up refuge in their natural habitat instead: a rundown, candlelit studio apartment on Herzl Street (not because it's romantic, but because they forgot to pay the electric bill).

Why on this night must I burn chametz when I can burn cigarettes, joints, and incense instead? Burning the leftover chametz (i.e. stale “bageleh”) that one cannot enjoy for the next week or so is a common Jewish ritual observed in most places around the world...with a few exceptions, even right here in the Holy Land. Don't mistake that facial hair for Haredi; although the skinny-jeaned pothead might appear to be taking part in the bread-fueled bonfires circling the park at the bottom of Shuk HaCarmel, they are merely there to smoke their jay near the soothing crackles of firewood, then return to their culture caves without a trace.

Why on this night was graffiti permissible? The tenth plague required all houses containing a first-born son to be marked – or “tagged” as The Hipster calls it – by Moses with lamb's blood. In Tel Aviv, and Florentin specifically, street art is a part of the everyday lifestyle. While Israeli families come together to start the blessings, hipsters are hard at work using spray paint and blood-free tools to paint the White City as technicolor as Joseph's Dreamcoat. They count their blessings and wait eagerly for the next night to continue their masterpieces unseen: sunrise, sunset, sunrise, sunset.



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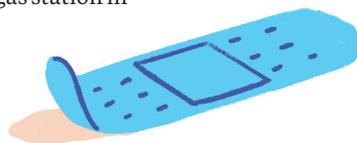
“The Child” aka The Simple Son

According to the Haggadah, “The Simple Son wants to learn”...that is, until they have a week off from homeroom, math class, and lukewarm cafeteria lunches (the only thing more repulsive than slimy gefilte fish from the jar). Jewish children belonging to the Diaspora cross their fingers and pray to the Easter Bunny that the two holidays overlap in the hopes of enjoying matzo brei brunch in the comfort of their own homes rather than explaining their weird-looking omelette to a catholic classroom. The children of Israel, on the other hand, run amok for eight days straight – flooding the playgrounds, streets, and beaches of Israel like locusts, wild animals, flies, and frogs all at once. Much like their attention spans, their questions are short:

What’s that? The Child hears The Wise Son ask a question that they, too, wish to ask. Instead, due to their lack of sophistication, they are accustomed to pointing and asking

the simplest of inquiries. Constantly questioning, they point to a half-smoked joint left behind on the table at HaMalabia by The Wicked Hipster and enquires “What’s that?”; they stare at The Bewildered Tourist sneaking a peak under the draped bread at the grocery store and ask “What’s that?”; they see a naked woman at the free Louise Bourgeois tour, led by The Wise Culture Buff and ask “What’s that?”...So many questions, so little interest in actually listening to the answers.

Why on this night do Ben & Jerry create new ice cream flavors? The Simple Son asks the cashier at the Shufersal checkout. Little Eli has yet to discover that the two stoners who started from humble beginnings in a gas station in



Burlington, Vermont, are in fact “two good Jewish boys”: Benjamin Cohen and Jerry Greenfield. And of course, the Holy Land needs Holy frozen dairy products to counterbalance the overabundance of macaroons, marzipan, and Kosher for Passover marshmallows that overtake any Passover pantry and boast a longer shelf life than Middle Eastern cockroaches.

Why on this night must we sacrifice the first born son? The eldest child – or “man” as they prefer to be called now that they’ve had their Bar Mitzvah – mistakes the tenth plague for a challenge. “Death of the firstborn” becomes a self-prescribed obligation to guzzle back 24-packs of XL energy drink and vodka handles, at warp speed like a college frat boy gone wild until they literally, feel, like, death. After all, everyone knows the true day young Yonatan becomes a man is the morning of his very first hangover.



“The Culture Buff” aka The Wise Son

While The Tourist’s questions remain rhetorical, and The Hipster’s insubordination is disregarded entirely by the rest of the country, The Culture Buff does not ask questions, but rather answers them.

Handy to have around after the first Seder food coma wears off, and the FOMB (fear of missing bread) rolls in, they play the part of the organic tour guide – one who does not money grab or work off commission, but actually takes pleasure in imparting the wealth of local knowledge that they possess. They are, unquestionably, The Wise Son. Before building up the matzo-fueled courage to pick The Culture Buff’s brains, here are some puzzles that they’ve already solved.

On this week the museums are free! With many places closing during the Jewish



holiday week, it can be a struggle to find creative activities to keep the family busy that don’t just involve beach days and bland cardboard-flavored picnics. Just as the boredom sets in, dozens of museums across Israel open their doors to the public, free of charge. The Culture Buff encourages you to save your shek and take advantage – after all, they are well aware of the importance of being prudent thanks to their minimum wage curatorial/journalist/theatre director status. (Check out timeout.com/israel/art for a list of free sites and museums to visit this Passover)

On this night it is socially acceptable to get hammered. Alcohol pretty much fuels the left-winged artists’ colony restringing their acoustic guitars south of Eilat Street, but the rest of the nation is plagued with full-time jobs, which are hindered by hangovers. The sage Culture Buff reassures the “Nervous Netas” that although a

yeast-less diet might rule out beer and most cocktails, wine is fine; its four-glass minimum represents the liberation of the Israelites. Freeeedooooommm...oh wait, wrong country.

On this night women kick ass. Even a male Culture Buff most-likely knows the history of the water-filled cup that stands proudly on the Seder table (No, Simple Son, it is not a glass of straight vodka for the taking). This cup honors Moses’ sister, Miriam: the biblical hero whose well provided water for the Israelites on their 40-year journey through the dessert. What better way to close off the last day of Women’s History Month than with a nod to the reality that men clearly could never survive without their better, more capable halves.

