

The Four Answers

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Where do we find the answers? The answers are in the story itself.

Avadim Hayinu. We were slaves in Mitzrayim. Our ancestors in their flight from bondage in Mitzrayim did not have time to let their dough rise. With not a moment to spare they snatched up the dough they had prepared and fled. But the hot sun beat as they carried the dough along with them and baked it into the flat unleavened bread we call matzah. In memory of this, we eat only matzah during Passover. This matzah represents our rush to freedom.

Avadim Hayinu. We were slaves. We eat maror to remind us how bitter our ancestors' lives were made by their enslavement in Mitzrayim.

Avadim hayinu. We were slaves. The first time we dip our greens to taste the brine of enslavement. We also dip to remind ourselves of all life and growth, of earth and sea, which gives us sustenance and comes to life again in the springtime. The second time we dip the maror into the charoset. The charoset reminds us of the mortar that our ancestors mixed as slaves in Mitzrayim. But our charoset is made of fruit and nuts, to show that our ancestors were able to withstand the bitterness of slavery because it was sweetened by the hope of freedom.

Avadim hayunu. We were slaves. Long ago, the wealthy Romans reseted on couches during their feasts. Slaves were not allowed to rest, not even while they ate. Since our ancestors were freed from slavery, we recline to remind ourselves that we, like our ancestors, can overcome bondage in our own time. We also recline to remind ourselves that rest and rejuvenation are vital to continuing our struggles. We should take pleasure in reclineing even as we share our difficult story.

And tonight we have a fifth question: Why is this night no different from all other nights? Because on this night, millions of human beings around the world still remain enslaved, just as they do on all other nights.