

# The Question I Wait For by Rabbi Noa Kushner

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Source: Women's Seder Haggadah: Women of Rodef Sholom

It happened again when I was in Jerusalem several years ago, at a seder that was lovingly prepared. There we were in our linen clothes, fresh and eager to participate in the evening's ritual, the festival of freedom. We were planning to do our part to bring a better world into being.

A young guest patiently listened to much talk of freedom and the end of slavery, and then voiced a question. "How can we sit here and celebrate our freedom when so many people are now enslaved?" There was a silence. Then, tentatively, one by one guests began trying to answer the question. As the conversation haltingly continued, to my mind the real seder had begun.

This is the question I wait for every year. I have come to believe that the entire ritual of the seder is meant to evoke this question. We sit here together and extol and praise our freedom just so that we can ask how we dare to do so. How dare we spend the night singing to God about our freedom against the backdrop of an enslaved world?

The paradoxical answer to this question is a the crux of why I return to the seder table spring after spring. Precisely because the world is broken, because there is still suffering and injustice, we must sit here and dwell on the miracle of our freedom from slavery.

By telling our story together, we affirm that while not everyone is free, that while even we ourselves are not totally free, there is still freedom in our world. We remember in a rush what freedom feels like. And together, over the course of the telling, we re-create a communal vision of a better world. We voice our desire that we be not only the recipients of freedom, but its instigators as well—a people ready to birth freedom at a moment's notice. Through our ritual and in our readiness, we isolate freedom, we stake it out, we approach it.

It is like any other act of faith. We know that there is pain in our world. But on this night, we do not let that pain paralyze us. We quietly but unmistakably deny pain the right to define our life's work. Rather, on this night, we gather together in our homes to stare into the eyes of freedom. We throw our mighty hands and our outstretched arms around its neck and refuse to let it go. ~Rabbi Noa Kushner

All Sing: *Avadeem Hayinu*

**Avadeem hayinu, hayinu. Ata b'nay horin, b'nay horin. Avadim ha-a-yinu. Ata ata b'nay horin, b'nay horin.**