

# The Four Answers

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Source: Love & Justice in a time of War

All: On all other nights we eat leavened bread and matzah. Why on this night only matzah?

Reader: Avadot hayinu. We were slaves. We were slaves in Mitzrayim. Our mothers in their flight from bondage in Mitzrayim did not have time to let the 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, no bread, during Passover. This matzah represents our rush to freedom.

All: On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables. Why on this night do we make certain to eat bitter herbs?

Reader: Avadot hayinu. We were slaves. We eat maror to remind us how bitter our ancestors' lives were made by their enslavement in Mitzrayim.

All: On all other nights we do not usually dip food once. Why on this night do we dip twice? Reader: Avadot 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 us that our ancestors were able to withstand the bitterness of slavery because it was sweetened by the hope of freedom.

All: On all other nights we sit on straight chairs. Why on this night do we relax and recline on pillows during the seder?

Reader: Avadot hayinu. We were slaves. Long ago, the wealthy Romans rested 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 our selves 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 reclining, even as we share our difficult stories.