

Avadim Hayinu "We Were Slaves"

Contributed by [Repair the World](#)

Source: Repair the World & Be'chol Lashon



Avadim hayinu l'pharoh b'mitzrayim. Vayotzieinu Adonai Eloheinu misham, b'yad chazakah uvizroa netuyah
We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Adonai, our God, brought us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.

Jews are a people of memory and action. On Passover, we use stories and rituals to remember and retell the narrative of our collective liberation. We share the ancient Exodus story, year after year, so that it resonates through the generations as a narrative of deliverance from slavery to freedom. In Hebrew, Egypt is called Mitzrayim, which means "a narrow place." Every year, the Haggadah asks us not only to share the story of the Exodus, but challenges us to actively engage in the process of combating oppression. We are encouraged to connect the biblical story of Exodus to communal and individual struggles for liberation, and are reminded that the fight for freedom is ongoing.

Let's discuss the process of Exodus, moving from "a narrow place" to a place of freedom. Every day, people fight for freedom on interpersonal, systemic, global and local levels. What are modern struggles for liberation? Discuss the following questions either in pairs or as a group to inspire thought, conversation and action:

Why do you think the text starts with "We were slaves" instead of "Our ancestors were slaves?" How does this quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. "no one is free until we are all free," connect to Avadim Hayinu? How are we free today? How are we still struggling? Share something that you are doing or can commit to doing to help move yourself or others from "a narrow place" to a place of shared freedom.