PASSOVER: SEDER

SEDER: PRINCIPLES

Seder: Purpose

It is praiseworthy to tell the story of *Passover* even if you know all the details and interpretations (as did the great *rabbis* of the *Talmud*), because of the principle of "in order to remember" (*lema'an tizkor*): that we should remember everything God did for us when taking us out of Egypt.

The Three Discussion Points

The most important part of the *seder* is discussing:

- *Passover* offering (*Pesach*),
- Unleavened bread (*matza*), and
- Bitter herbs (*maror*).

These three segments should be read from the *Passover hagada* in the *Hebrew*. If anyone does not understand the *Hebrew*, these paragraphs and the concepts they express must be explained in whatever language he or she can understand.

Children at the *Seder*

Children are an integral part of the *seder*. We try to get children to ask questions and then we teach them the answers. The *Torah* says to do this!

Acknowledging God's Miracles

We acknowledge God's miracles in sending the plagues against the Egyptians and their gods and in taking the Children of Israel out of slavery and Egypt.

Telling Our History

We tell our history beginning with Jacob (*Yaakov*) and Laban (*Lavan*) and on to slavery and, finally, to achieving freedom.

SEDER: PRACTICES

SEDER: PRACTICES: HALACHOT

Leaning to the Left

Every male (13 years old and above) at the *seder* is required by *halacha* to lean to the left side while:

- Drinking each of the four cups of wine.
- Eating *matza* for each of these *mitzvot*: *motzi*, *matza*, *koreich*, *afikoman*.

Ideally, lean onto something to your left, such as a chair or couch. A pillow is nice but optional.

NOTE Women and girls are not required to lean at any time during the meal.

SEDER: PRACTICES: CUSTOMS

Seder Customs

Here are some *seder* customs:

1. Have someone else pour the water over your hands for washing before *karpas*.
2. Have someone else pour your wine for you.

SEDER PLATE

Five Foods of the Seder Plate

Seder plate consists of five foods:

Shank Bone
Shank bone, meat, or a neck represents the *Passover* lamb offering.

NOTE Any part of any *kosher* animal or bird may be used for this purpose except liver. You may even use roasted lamb, but you may not eat it.

Egg
Egg represents the holiday offering (*chagiga*).

Bitter Herbs
Bitter herbs (*maror*), such as romaine, horseradish, or endive, represent the bitterness of slavery.

Charoset
Charoset (sweet mixture of nuts and fruits) reminds us of the mortar the Jews used to build the Egyptian storage cities.

Vegetable
Vegetable such as parsley or potato (*karpas*). The vegetable does not represent anything and is there to motivate the children to ask questions.

SEDER: THREE MATZAS

Introduction to Three Matzas (Matzot)

The *seder* table also has a stack of three matzas (*matzot*), representing, among other meanings:

- *Cohen-Levi-Yisrael*: The three divisions of Jews
- *Abraham-Isaac-Jacob*: The three forefathers

These *matzot* are used later in the *seder* for the steps of *Motzi* and *Matza* (top and middle *matzas*); the middle *matza* becomes the "*Afikoman*."

SEDER: STEPS

The 15 Steps in the Seder

Kadeish
U'rchatz
Karpas
Yachatz
Maqid
Rachtza
Motzi
Matza
Maror
Koreich
Shulchan Oreich
Tzafun
Bareich
Hallel
Nirtza

KADEISH: FOUR CUPS OF WINE

KADEISH: MAKING KIDDUSH

Passover Kiddush

Passover, like all *Jewish festivals*, is differentiated from weekdays by saying *kiddush*.

Everyone Must Drink at Seder

At the *Passover seder*, all Jews above the age of *bar mitzva* or *bat mitzva* (including women--unlike on other *Jewish festivals*) must drink wine for *kiddush* and for the other three times in the *seder* when the *borei pri ha'gafen* blessing is said.

NOTE On the other *Jewish festivals*, only one person needs to drink the wine when *kiddush* is said, and that will cover and fulfill everyone else's requirement for that *kiddush*.

NOTE Only children and people who will get sick if they drink alcohol are permitted to drink grape juice at *seder*.

Alcohol Content of Seder Wine

You may dilute the *seder* wine to a minimum of 4\% alcohol.

Red Wine or White for Seder

If you have equally good red wine and white wine, the red is preferred for the four cups at the *seder*. If your white wine is better or if you prefer white wine, use that.

Drinking More

You may drink more wine between the first and second cups, between the second and third cups, but not between the third and fourth cups.

KADEISH: FOUR CUPS, FOUR ROLES

Four Cups, Four Roles

Each of the four cups has a different role:

- First Cup: *Kiddush* to sanctify the holiday.
- Second Cup: Sanctifying the *hagada*.
- Third Cup: Sanctifying *Birkat ha'mazon*.
- Fourth Cup: Sanctifying *Hallel*.

KADEISH: FOUR CUPS, FOUR EXPRESSIONS

Four Cups, Four Expressions

The four cups of wine relate to the four expressions God used when telling what he would do to bring the Israelites out of Egypt:

- ***V'hotzeiti*** I will send them out.
- ***V'hitzalti*** I will save them.
- ***V'ga'alti*** I will redeem them.
- ***V'lakachti*** I will take them.

KADEISH: FIFTH CUP

Fifth Cup

The fifth cup of wine at *seder*, for *Eliyahu* (*Elijah*) the prophet, symbolizes *v'heiveiti*--"I will bring them."

REASON In the future, everyone will drink five cups of *seder* wine. (Some say the term *v'heiveiti* is not part of the redemption and some say it is a stage that has not happened yet.)
The cup of *Eliyahu* (which is not intended to be drunk by *Eliyahu*) should be used for *kiddush* the next morning. Various customs dictate when to fill *Eliyahu's* cup; it may be filled anytime from the beginning of the *seder*.

KADEISH: HOW MUCH TO FILL AND DRINK

Four Cups: Minimum Quantity To Fulfill Mitzva

Minimum wine to fulfill the *seder mitzva*:

- Each person must drink four cups of wine at the *seder*;
- Each cup must hold at least 4 fl. oz. (119 ml);
- For each blessing on the wine, you must drink at least 2 fl. oz. (59 ml) within 30 seconds of when you begin to drink each cup.

Majority of the Cup/Rov Kos

The *seder* is the only time in the year that you must drink most of your cup *(rov kos)* of *kiddush* wine. (For *kiddush* on *Shabbat* and *Jewish festivals*, you need drink only 2 fl. oz., or 59 ml). So if you have a cup larger than 4 fl. oz. (119 ml), you may have to drink a lot of wine--more than half of each cup for four cups!

NOTE You may drink other liquids between the first and second cups of wine at the *seder*, but it is not recommended.

KADEISH: LEANING TO LEFT

Leaning To Left while Drinking Four Cups

Every male at the *seder* is required to lean to the left side while drinking each cup of wine.

U'RCHATZ: WASH HANDS (NO BLESSING)

U'rchatz (No blessing)

Wash hands from a cup of water but do not say a blessing on washing.

REASON We are about to eat food that is wet and Jews may not eat wet food if their hands have spiritual impurity (*tum'a*).

KARPAS: EAT THE VEGETABLE

Karpas Blessing

Dip the *karpas* in the salt water and say the blessing *borei pri ha'adama;* keep in mind that this blessing will also apply to the bitter herbs you will eat later in the *seder*.

How Much Karpas To Eat

Eating any amount of *karpas* fulfills the *mitzva* of eating *karpas* at *seder*, but you may not eat more than 0.6 fl. oz. (17 ml, or 1/12 cup).

YACHATZ: BREAK THE MATZA

Breaking the Middle Matza

Break the middle of the three *matzas* and hide the larger part.

REASON As with most of the actions we do at the *seder*, this is to evoke curiosity in children. It also represents the idea that poor people can't afford a whole loaf of bread or might save some food for the next

day.

MAGID: TELL THE STORY

Four Questions

The Four Questions are actually only one question and that question is:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

Seder in Bnei Brak

The teachers in *Bnai Brak* were so engrossed in telling the *Passover* story that they did not notice that it was after sunrise.

REASON They may have been in a windowless room since they were risking their lives by celebrating *Passover*, against Roman law.

Like 70 Years Old

Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya says he is “like 70 years old” because even though he was only 18 years old, his hair turned white overnight as if God approved his appointment as *Sanhedrin* head.

Four Sons

Only three of the Four Sons' questions are mentioned in the *Torah* (which all related to the *Passover* sacrifice), since the fourth (smallest) child cannot ask questions. Regarding this child, the *hagada* says, "Aht p'tach lo" (in the feminine).

REASON The mother is supposed to be a child's primary teacher while the child is young.

There is a difference in attitude between the wise son and the evil son: The wise son says "Eloheinu" (OUR God); he is asking a question and seeking and answer. The evil son makes a statement (sort of a rhetorical question), instead of asking a question for which he seeks an answer.
Why is there a “wise” (chacham) son and not a “righteous” (*tzadik*) son, which would be the logical counterpart to the “evil” (rasha) son?
We don't know who is a *tzadik*. We cannot be sure by external appearance or even by seeing certain behaviors. We can tell who is a chacham by hearing him speak or by discussing *Torah* with him.
Yet, regardless of the sons' level of observance, it is a commandment to teach them about going out of Egypt.

Calculating the End (of Slavery)

God told *Avraham* (*Abraham*) that his children would be living in “lands not their own” and would be enslaved for 400 years, Yet the *Torah* states that the Israelites were in Egypt for 210 years. So we say God “calculated the end” (*chisheiv et ha'keitz*) of the enslavement: He started the counting from the birth of *Avraham's* son, *Yitzchak* (Isaac), until the *Exodus* (a total of 400 years), as follows:

Time from Birth of *Avraham's* Son to Going Down to Egypt

- *Yaakov* (Jacob) was born when *Yitzchak* was 60 years old.
- *Yaakov* told *Par'o* (Pharoah) (when he and the rest of his family entered Egypt) that he was 130 years old.
- 60 + 130= **190 years before going down to Egypt**

Time in Egypt
210 years in Egypt

Time from Birth of *Avraham's* Son to *Exodus*
190 Before going down to Egypt
+ **210** In Egypt
= **400 years from *Yitzchak's* birth to the *Exodus***.

NOTE *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov* did not yet "own" *Eretz Yisrael*. Since the Israelites were not given *Eretz Yisrael* until after the *Exodus*, *Avraham's* offspring were living in "lands not their own" for 400 years.

V'Hi She'Amda and Lefichach

When we lift up our wine cups at *v'hi she'amda* and at *lefichach*, we cover the *matza*.

REASON So the *matza* won't feel "embarrassed," since bread/*matza* is more important than wine.

Let Us Deal Cleverly (Hava Nitchakma)

Hava nitchakma (let us deal cleverly) was an attempt at a clever way to keep the Israelites as slaves.

REASON The Egyptians were afraid the Israelites might join the Egyptians' enemies in a war.

Ten Plagues

Each of the plagues was against one of the Egyptian gods, to show that they were actually powerless.

Spilling Drops of Wine

We spill 10 drops of wine when reading the list of plagues.

REASON Wine symbolizes happiness and so we drink less wine to show that we are sad that the Egyptians suffered.

D'Tzach-Adash-B'Achav

In "the plague of the first-borns" (*makat bechorot*), did the first-borns suffer by dying or did their families suffer more?
In *Rabbi Yehuda's* abbreviations of the ten plagues, *d'tzach-adash-b'achav*, the abbreviation ends with the *Hebrew* letter "vet" for *bechorot* (first-borns), implying that it was the families who suffered, since if it ended with a "mem" for *makat bechorot*, it would have been the first-borns who suffered.

Dayenu

In *dayenu*, we say that at each level of what God did for us, it would have been enough. Since we didn't get the *Torah* until one of the last stages, this seems incorrect, since of what value is money, wandering in the desert, and all of the other details if we don't have the *Torah*?
The answer is that we need to be grateful to God for each miracle that we received, and that at each stage, we owe praise and thanks to God.
Also, in one sense, we already had the *Torah* (in some version, even though not in the form in which Moses/Moshe wrote it later).

Pesach, Matza, and Maror

Pesach, *matza*, and *maror* should be read and explained with special attention.

REASON They are the main parts of the *seder* and of the commandment to have a *seder*.

In Every Generation

The *hagada* tells us that in every generation, a person must see himself as if he had personally gone out of Egypt. If so, why didn't our Sages suggest how to visualize or recreate the experience?

It is not possible to actually see ourselves as having left slavery. Rather, we should feel our obligation to do the *mitzvot* (commandments) as the Israelites felt when they left Egypt, as they switched from being slaves to serving *Hashem*. We can be freed (*b'nei chorin*) from physical or spiritual slavery.

Why Matza and Not Bread

Question: Why didn't the Israelites bake bread (the *Torah* says that they did not have time for the dough to rise)? They knew 14 days ahead of time (on *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*) that they would be leaving, and they knew it would be middle of night (since God said that is when they would leave).
Answer: The Israelites did not do anything to prepare, except what God told them to do: the *Passover offering* and putting blood on their doorposts.

RACHTZA: WASH HANDS (WITH A BLESSING)

How To Wash Your Hands for Rachtza

To wash hands for *rachtza*:

- Fill the washing cup with at least 3.3 fl. oz. (99 ml) of water.
- Pour enough water (may be as little as 1.3 fl. oz.--39 ml, or 1/6 cup) from the washing cup to completely cover your entire first hand (either hand may be first, but it is the custom to wash your right hand first).
- Pour enough water to completely cover the second hand.

You do not need to pour more than once per hand and you do not need to break up the revi'it into more than one pour for each hand.

Handwashing Blessing

Say the blessing on washing hands, ending in *al netilat yadayim*.

MOTZI MATZA: BLESS ON/EAT MATZA

MATZA: WHY

Matza: Meaning

Matza represents:

- Food of poor people, and
- The unleavened bread that the Israelites ate when leaving Egypt.

NOTE A pun reflects this dual meaning of poor bread plus the story of leaving Egypt, since "*lechem oni*" may mean "bread of poor people" or "bread of (many) answers."

MATZA: WHAT KIND

When Shmura Matza Is Necessary

The only time you must use *shmura matza* is for the four commandments of *motzi*, *matza*, *koreich*, *and afikoman*.

NOTE You may use any other *kosher* for *Passover matza*, even for the rest of *seder*. There is no need for using *shmura matza* for the other days of *Passover*.

Hand Shmura Matza or Machine Shmura Matza

Hand *shmura matza* has some advantage in that it was made with the intention of being for a *mitzva*, but machine *shmura matza* has the advantage of being less likely to become *chametz* since it is automated and not touched by human hands.

MATZA: HOW MUCH

How Much Matza To Eat

Motzi, Matza

For *motzi* and *matza* together, you must eat at least 1.9 fl. oz. (56 ml) of *matza* within a 4-minute period from when you begin eating.

Afikoman

For *afikoman*, you must eat another 1.9 fl. oz of *matza*; *b'di'avad*, at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) is sufficient.

NOTE This amount is about 1/2 of a machine *shmura matza*, or 1/3 of a hand *shmura matza*.

NOTE If your mouth is too dry to eat that quickly, you may drink water with the *matza*.

MOTZI/MATZA: BLESSINGS

Why Two Blessings over Matza

We say two blessings over the *matza*: *ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz* and *al achilat matza.*

REASON The blessing on *motzi* is one of enjoyment (*nehenin*); the blessing on *matza* is a blessing on a commandment (*mitzva*).

How To Do Motzi and Matza

The *seder* leader says the blessing "*ha'motzi*" while holding the three (which are now 2 1/2) *shmura* matzas, drops the bottom one, and says the next blessing, *al achilat matza*. Everyone takes a small piece from the two top matzas and eats it, along with enough additional *shmura matza* to fulfill the minimum requirement.

MAROR: EAT BITTER VEGETABLE

Maror: What To Eat

The ideal bitter vegetable for *maror* at the *Passover seder* is horseradish. Horseradish for *maror:*

- Must be fresh enough to be sharp.
- Should be ground (if ground ahead of time, it must be stored in a covered container until the *seder*).
- Must not have liquid (horseradish with beets added is not suitable for use as *maror)*.

NOTE Many people have the custom to use romaine lettuce for *maror* (be careful to check for bugs on the romaine).

Maror: How Much To Eat

The minimum amount to fulfill the *mitzva* of eating *maror* at *seder* is 0.65 fl. oz. (19 ml), or about the volume of 1/3 of an egg.

NOTE If you choose to use romaine instead of horseradish for *maror*, the minimum amount is about 2-3 stems (depending on their size), or enough leaves if crushed to make up 0.65 fl. oz.

NOTE It is even better to eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup).

Maror: How To Eat It

Say the blessing "*al achilat maror.*"
Dip the *maror* into the *charoset* and shake off all but a little bit of the *charoset*.
Do not lean when eating the *maror*.

NOTE The blessing for *maror* was included in the *borei pri ha'adama* blessing, which was said on the *karpas* earlier in the *seder*.

KOREICH: EAT THE SANDWICH

Koreich: How Much Matza To Eat

You need eat only 0.95 fl. oz. (28 ml) of *matza* within four minutes of beginning to eat it to fulfill the commandment of *koreich*.

Koreich: How Much Maror To Eat

For *koreich*, use the same amount of *maror* as for the *maror* commandment. See *Maror*: How Much To Eat.

How To Eat Koreich

To eat the *koreich:*

- Put some bitter herbs on the *matza*.
- Lean to the left when eating the *koreich*.

SHULCHAN OREICH: EAT THE FESTIVAL MEAL

Lamb and Other Meat at Seder

Don't eat roasted meat of any kind at the *seder*, including roasted poultry.

REASON So it will not be confused with the *Passover* offering.

NOTE You may eat lamb as long as it is not roasted.

What Constitutes Non-Roasted Meat at Seder?

Meat is not considered to be roasted if, when the baking began, there was at least 1/4" of liquid in the cooking utensil with the meat.

TZAFUN: HIDDEN (AFIKOMAN)

When To Finish Afikoman

You should ideally finish *afikoman* by midnight at the *Passover seder*, but you may eat it later than midnight if you have not finished (or even started!) your meal by then.

Eating or Drinking after Afikoman

After eating the *afikoman* on *Passover*, you may not eat again until daybreak, but you will still drink two more cups of wine and you may drink water anytime through the night.

BAREICH: SAY BIRKAT HAMAZON

Forgetting Afikoman

If you said *birkat ha'mazon* at the *seder* but had forgotten to eat the *afikoman*, you must:

- Wash your hands,
- Say *ha'motzi*,
- Eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of *matza*,
- Say *birkat ha'mazon* again, and then
- Drink the third cup of wine.

OPENING THE DOOR/ SH'FOCH CHAMATCHA

Sh'foch Chamatcha

Open the door at this point.

REASON To show our trust in God to protect us, since the first night of *Passover* is called a night of watching (*leil shimurim*), when God provides special protection for the Jewish people.

NOTE

You should open the door unless you are in an unsafe neighborhood. If the neighborhood is dangerous, it may be forbidden by Jewish law to live there at any time.

HALLEL: SAYING HALLEL PSALMS

Hallel Divided at Seder

At the *seder*, *hallel* is divided into two parts. The first two *psalms*, read before the meal, deal with the *exodus* from Egypt. The remaining *psalms*, read after the meal, concern other miracles and the future of the Jewish nation.

Hallel at Night at Passover Seder

There are many opinions as to why we read *hallel* at night: most are related either to praising God for saving the Jewish people or to accompanying the *Passover* sacrifice in the *Temple* in Jerusalem.

NIRTZA: ACCEPTED

Acceptance of Seder and Commandments

We hope that God accepts our *seder* and all of the commandments that we have done on this night.

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