

The purpose of this guide is to highlight the structure, Mitzvos and some insights to the Seder. The halachos and measurements were mostly culled from the Kol Dodi Haggadah by Rabbi David Feinstein.

Mitzvos of the night

Biblical Mitzvos are mitzvos that are found in the Torah (five books of Moses)

Rabbinic Mitzvos are mitzvos that our Sages enacted. There is a Biblical Mitzvah that the Rabbis can enact Rabbinic Mitzvos and we follow them just as if they were Biblical Mitzvos

In the times of the Talmud and before (before the year 500 C.E), there was a Sanhedrin composed of 70 of the leading Rabbis of the time. Every Rabbi had to be ordained by a Rabbi who had been previously ordained with the chain going back to Moses and the giving of the Torah by G-d at Mount Sinai. To be ordained, the Rabbi had to know all the laws of the Torah. After the period of the Talmud, this ordination process ended, mostly due to the dispersion and persecution of the Jewish People.

The Biblical Mitzvos on Pesach are:

- Eating Matzah - "In the evening you shall eat unleavened bread".
- Relating the Story of the Exodus from Egypt - "And you should relate to your son (the story of Pesach) on this day".

The Rabbinic Mitzvos on Pesach are:

- Drinking four cups of wine
- Eating Bitter Herbs
- Reciting the Hallel - Songs of Praise

Seder Plate

-- Three Matzahs - two normally required for Yom Tov and Shabbos in remembrance of the two portions of Manna that fell before Yom Tovim and Shabbosim in the wilderness. The Middle Matzah is for the Biblical Commandment of Eating Matzah.

-- Karpas - Dipping foods and the eating of greens before a meal was the sign of wealthy men in the past. Another reason we eat it tonight is that it is not a normal procedure and children will notice the difference and ask questions.

-- Maror - Two types. Romaine Lettuce and Horseradish; Romaine Lettuce - bitter taste symbolizes our bondage in Egypt. The Romaine lettuce initially tastes sweet and then turns bitter like the life of our forefathers in Egypt who were first paid workers and then oppressed slaves. Horseradish - sharp taste symbolizes our bondage in Egypt. When we eat the Maror (by itself and in a sandwich) you can use either one.

-- Charoses - symbolizes mortar used to make bricks. Also counteracts the taste of the Maror.

-- Shankbone - recalls the Pesach Offering. The Pesach Offering was in remembrance of the lamb that was put aside and then eaten on the night of Passover. In the times of the Temples, a major part of the holiday was the eating of the Pesach Offering. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, we no longer bring offerings and the Shankbone *represents* the Pesach Offering but is not eaten at the Seder.

-- Egg - recalls the Festival Offering. On all Festivals there would be a special offering. As mentioned above, since the destruction of the Second Temple we no longer make offerings so the egg represents the Festival Offering. The egg was chosen since it is a mourner's food and symbolizes our mourning for the Temple and our inability to offer the Pesach and Festival Offerings.

Reclining

We are required to act as if we ourselves had just been freed from Egyptian Bondage. Therefore, when we dine on the night of Passover, we eat and drink while leaning - in the manner of free men and royalty. We lean when we drink the four cups, eat Karpas, and eat Matzah. Women don't lean since it was not the practice for most women to lean while eating.

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Four Cups of Wine

Symbolizes the 4 terms of redemption mentioned in Torah.

-- 1st Cup - Kiddush -I will take you out from the burdens of Egypt.

-- 2nd Cup - over the Story -I will save you from their servitude.

-- 3rd Cup - over Grace after meals -I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

-- 4th Cup - over Psalms of Praise -I will take you for Me for a people.

We drink at least 1.7 ounces while leaning to left (women don't recline). Beverage preference; wine, wine with grape juice, wine with water, grape juice, grape juice with water, raisin wine. People should pour the cups for each other to feel like royalty. We drink it in less than 9 minutes, preferably within 2 minutes.

*The first cup of wine is poured.

1) Kaddesh - Sanctify the day with the recitation of Kiddush.

Leader of the Seder recites Brocha over Wine, Brocha over Kiddush and a Brocha thanking G-d for bringing us to this time.

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Boray P'ri Ha-Gofen.

Blessed Are You Hashem, Our G-d, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Kiddush Brocha - See the Hagaddah

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Shehecheyonu V'kiymonu V'higi-onu Lazman Hazeh

Blessed Are You Hashem, Our G-d, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this time (season).

* Everyone answers - Amen. Do not talk until you drink at least a half a cup.

* Everyone drinks first cup of wine; men lean to the left.

This is the cup of wine over the mitzvah of reciting Kiddush.

2) Urechatz, - Wash the hands before eating Karpas.

In the times of the Temple, when people were able to observe the laws of spiritual purity in full they washed before eating a vegetable dipped in a liquid that is still moist to wash away spiritual impurity. According to many opinions in our times, we don't do this since we are unable to reach this level of purity. At the Seder, we wash because it reminds of the times of the Temple and it expresses the hope that we will soon be required to follow it again, with the coming of Mashiach. It also represents a royal custom in keeping with the special dignity with which we dine tonight. It also arouses the curiosity of the children so they should ask questions.

*Pour water over right hand twice and then over left hand twice. Do not make a Brocha. Dry your hands.

3) Karpas - Eat a vegetable dipped in salt water.

In olden days, banquets were started with such appetizers. The custom was preserved to make the children ask questions and to serve as a sign of freedom.

The dipping of the food is also a sign of comfort and indulgence.

The salt water represents the tears of the Jewish People in their suffering.

The vegetable is dipped in salt water and everyone takes a piece. (Don't eat it yet.)

*The leader says the Brocha or you can make your own Brocha:

This Brocha is intended to also include the Maror that we will eat later and the person making the Brocha should have that in mind when making the Brocha.

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Boray P'ri Ho-adomah

Blessed Are You Hashem, Our G-d, King of the Universe, who creates fruits of the earth.

*Everyone eats the green vegetable. Eat a small amount so that there is no requirement to say an after Brocha,

4) Yachatz, - Break the middle Matzah. Put away larger half for Afikoman.

We are about to recite the story of our Exodus and the Torah tells us to do this when Matzah is before us. The Matzah is often referred to as the bread of poverty and affliction and a poor man does not feast over a whole loaf since he is never sure he will have food for the next meal.

We hide the Afikoman to insure that it will not be mixed up with the other Matzahs and inadvertently eaten and not to shame it, so to speak, since it will not be eaten till the end of the meal.

Hiding it keeps the children awake by encouraging them to try and steal it.

The leader breaks the middle Matzah and puts away the larger half for the Afikoman.

5) Maggid - Tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

The central mitzvah of the night is telling about the Exodus from Egypt.

We are supposed to remember the Exodus from Egypt everyday, but at the Seder we must tell the full story from bondage to deliverance, in the form of question and answer with as much elaboration as possible.

Bread of Affliction - Draws attention to the bread of poverty over which the Haggadah is to be told.

This paragraph does not appear in the earliest sources but was composed after the destruction of the Second Temple. In exile, we can not fulfill the Torah commandments of Pesach and Maror so that Matzah is left as the preeminent obligation of the evening. But Matzah is special since it symbolizes both freedom and bondage, with the hasty departure of our forefathers from Egypt, it became a symbol of freedom. Originally, however it was their food when they were slaves and therefore it is a symbol of bondage. We stress the bondage aspect of the Matzah at this point so that it will trigger the recollection of the events in Egypt, and help us to project ourselves into the situation of our forefathers so that we can better feel the relief and joy of deliverance. This is the goal of the Seder, to feel like we personally were redeemed from Egypt.

*Second Cup of Wine is poured to stimulate the asking of questions.

*Four Questions are asked by youngest child, if there are no children an adult asks, if a person is alone he asks the questions to himself. Only someone who is bothered by a question is really interested in the answer. We are particularly eager to pass on the message of Pesach because the assurance of our national continuity lies within this passing on from one generation to the next. There are four questions, two about Biblical commands (Matzah and Maror) and two about Rabbinic commands (dipping and reclining) to show the equal validity of both types of commands. Another reason for these four questions is to highlight the paradox of the evening in that it reflects both a sense of enslavement (Matzah, saltwater, Maror and Charoses) and freedom (beautiful table setting, white kittel, wine, reclining and dipping).

According to the Malbim the structure of the narrative portion of the Haggadah is based on the verse in the Torah from which the obligation to tell the story is derived:

And you shall relate to your child on that day, saying "It is because of this that Hashem acted for me when I came forth out of Egypt."

This source verse is broken up into six parts corresponding to the six sections of the story in the Haggadah.

- *And you shall relate to your child*
- *on that day*
- *saying*
- *It is because of this*
- *Hashem acted for me*
- *when I came forth out of Egypt.*

*And you shall relate to your child...*The first eight paragraphs correspond to this verse and teach us about this obligation to tell the story

- "We were enslaved unto Pharaoh and G-d freed us"-- tells us we should relate this to our children who would also still be enslaved had G-d not taken us out.
- "It once happened that Rabbi Eliezar.." --shows that our greatest sages told the story, since the main function is to recount it for our children.
- "Rabbi Elazar, son of Azaryah, said..." --shows the duty to do so at all times.
- "Praised be the Ever-Present, praised be He..." --shows how every type of child is to be instructed at the Seder.
- "What does the wise son say..." --shows how to teach the wise son
- "What does the wicked son say..." --shows how to teach the wicked son
- "What does the naive son say...." --shows how to teach the naive son
- "And regarding the one who does not know how to ask a question..." --shows how to teach the son who can't ask a question

-- "*on that Day...*" --The next paragraph tells us when the obligation to tell the story applies

-- "One might think that the obligation to talk..." --explains when the special duty applies.

-- "*saying...*" -- The next paragraphs contain the actual saying of the story of the Exodus

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- "In the beginning our fathers were worshippers of idols..." --shows the deeper roots of the exile and the Exodus as the way to spiritual redemption.
- "Blessed is he who keeps His promise..." --shows that G-d kept His promise to Abraham that we will be enslaved and redeemed
- "It has stood firm...in every generation there are those who rise against us.." --shows that G-d continually redeems us
- "Go and ascertain what Lavan the Aramite intended to do..." --describes the beginning of the Exodus when Jacob went down to Egypt
- "And he went down...And he sojourned there...With few people...And he became there a nation..." --Great, mighty...And formidable...describes how we became a great nation in Egypt
- "And the Egyptians made evil of us..." --And the tormented us...And laid hard labor upon us...describes how the Egyptians enslaved us
- "And we cried out unto G-d.. And G-d heard us...And He saw our distress... And our travail... And our oppression..." -- describes how G-d heard our pleas
- "And G-d took us out of Egypt...With a strong hand...And with and outstretched arm...And with great terror...And with signs...And with wonders..." --describes how G-d redeemed us
- "Blood, and fire and smoke...An alternative explanation...These are the ten plagues...Rabbi Yosi the Galilean says...Rabbi Eliezer says...Rabbi Akiva says..." --describes the miracles and wonders G-d did for us during the redemption
- 'How indebted are we...How multiple, then is our debt to G-d...' --describes additional accounts of G-d's benevolence which were not yet mentioned

- "*It is because of this...*" --can be read *this is because of...*Rabban Gamliel reads it this way...*this* refers to Pesach, Matzah and Maror
- "Rabban Gamliel used to say..." --explains the concrete Mitzvos ordained for the Seder: Pesach, Matzah and Maror.
- Pesach... Matzah...Maror...explains the reason for these Mitzvos

- "*Hashem acted for me...*" --The next paragraphs describe how we should consider it as if Hashem took us out of Egypt
- "In every generation, one is obliged to regard himself..." --emphasizes that, in celebrating the Seder, we must see ourselves as having gone out from Egypt.

- "*when I came forth out of Egypt.*" -- The next paragraphs are the introduction and recitation of Hallel songs of praise, similar to the songs of praise that were recited when we left Egypt.
- "Therefore it is our duty to thank, praise..." -- since Hashem took us out from Egypt, we praise Hashem for his kindness ending the Haggadah with a Bracha.
- "Praise G-d..." -- When Israel went out of Egypt...is the beginning of Hallel which describe the going out from Egypt

This is the first part of Hallel, which are Psalms of Praise, and declarations of our faith in Hashem.

We will say the second part of Hallel after the Seder. Hallel is not normally said at night. It is normally said in the Morning Prayer service on Yom Tovim and Rosh Chodeshim (the first of the Jewish Months). Daylight is normally the time when we see G-d's kindness in action and sing His praises. Night usually stands for trepidation and calls for faith rather than jubilation. The night of Pesach is different from all other nights of the year. In the 132nd Psalm it says that on Pesach G-d 'lit up the night like the day' through his great self-revelation (with the last plague and our redemption) so it is appropriate that we should say Hallel at night

The first part of Hallel deals with the deliverance from Egypt and therefore belongs to the part of the Seder preceding the meal. The second part looks ahead to the Days of the Messiah and our ultimate redemption, which is the theme of the Seder after the meal.

Also, by bracketing the Seder meal between hymns of praise of G-d, we mark it as a Divine service, rather than an ordinary supper.

*Leader of Seder recites blessing of Boray Pri Hagofen.

Boruch Atoch Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Boray P'ri Ha-Gofen.

*Everyone answers - Amen. Do not talk until you drink at least a half a cup.

*Everyone drinks the second cup of wine, men leaning to the left.

*This is the cup of wine over the mitzvah of telling over the Haggadah.

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6) Rachtzah - Wash the hands prior to the meal.

Whenever we eat bread (or Matzah) at a meal we wash our hands.

*We wash by pouring twice over the right hand and then twice over the left hand.

*Before we dry our hands we say the Brocha, then we dry our hands.

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melcch Ho-olom Asher Kidshonu B'mitzvosov V'tzivonu Al N'tilas Yodoyim.

Blessed Are You Hashem, Our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us concerning the washing of hands.

*We do not talk until we eat the Matzah.

7) Motzi - Recite the blessing, Who brings forth, over Matzah as a food.

Before we eat any food we say a Brocha, but before we eat bread (or Matzah) at a meal we say the Brocha 'Hamotzi' which covers all foods we will eat at the meal.

At meals on Shabbos and Yom Tovim (Holidays) we always use two loaves of bread (or Matzah) to commemorate the double portion of Mannah that fell before Shabbosim and Yom Tovim when the Jews were in the Wilderness.

The stringent amount of Matzah is a piece measuring about 6" by 7" (2/3rds of a round Matzah). The lenient measurement is 4" by 7". Measure out the proper amounts for all participants at this point.

*The leader of the Seder says the Brocha while holding the two Matzahs and the broken Matzah between them.

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Hamotzi Lechem Min Ho-oretz.

Blessed Are You Hashem, Our G-d, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

*Everyone answers - Amen. Do not talk until you finish eating the Matzah. Do not start eating until the Matzah brocha.

8) Matzah - Recite the blessing and Eat the Matzah.

The Matzah represents both our bondage (bread of poverty) and our freedom (hasty departure from Egypt). We say an additional Brocha over the Mitzvah on this night to eat Matzah.

*The leader of the Seder says the Brocha while holding the upper Matzah and the broken Matzah.

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Asher Kidshonu B'mitzvosov V'tzivonu Al Achilas Matzah.

Blessed Are You Hashem, Our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us concerning the eating of Matzah.

*Everyone answers - Amen. Do not talk until you finish eating the Matzah.

Everyone eats the required amount of Matzah, men lean to the left. Take a piece from the upper two Matzahs.

9) Maror - The Maror is dipped in Charoses and eaten.

The Maror represents the bitterness of our enslavement. The charoses represents the mortar with which we built bricks. The Maror is dipped in charoses but the majority is shaken off so as not to mask the taste of the Maror.

The amount of Romaine Lettuce required for this eating is an 8" by 10" piece if you are eating the full leaf and 3" by 5" if only eating the stalks. If using Horseradish, the amount is 1 ounce of a grated Horseradish, equal to a full plastic shot glass.

*The leader says the Brocha or you can make your own Brocha:

This Brocha is intended to include the Maror that we will eat in a sandwich.

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Asher Kidshonu B'mitzvosov V'tzivonu Al Achilas Maror.

Blessed Are You Hashem, Our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us concerning the eating of Maror.

* Everyone eats the Maror dipped in Charoses. Do not lean for this Mitzvah since the Maror symbolizes bondage and not freedom

10) Korech - Eat the sandwich of Matzah and Maror.

The reason we eat the sandwich is because the great sage Hillel (Who said: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you') took the view that the Pesach offering, Matzah and Maror must be eaten in a sandwich rather than separately. The rest of the Sages ruled otherwise but the Talmud, which was written after the destruction of the Temple, does not rule on who we follow. This is because after the destruction of the Temple, the Pesach Offering was no longer made and the Maror is now a Rabbinic command instead of a Biblical command. Matzah is still a Biblical command. To preserve a reminder of Hillel's practice during Temple times we eat Matzah and Maror together even though we already ate them separately.

The amount of Matzah for this eating is a piece measuring about 4" by 7". The amount of Romaine Lettuce required for this eating is an 8" by 10" piece if you are eating the full leaf and 3" by 5" if only eating the stalks. If using Horseradish, the amount is 1 ounce of a grated Horseradish, equal to a full plastic shot glass. Measure out the amounts and include a piece from the bottom Matzah

We will use part of the bottom Matzah for this Mitzvah. The Maror is dipped in charoses but the majority is shaken off.

*The leader (or everyone) recites the paragraph- In remembrance of the Temple...

*Everyone eats the sandwich of Matzah and Maror; men lean to the left.

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11) Shulchan Orech - The Festival meal is served.

*Everyone eats the Festival Meal.

It is a custom to start with a hard boiled egg because it is a symbol of mourning. It has no opening or mouth, just as a mourner is struck silent by his fate; at the same time it offers encouragement: it signifies the turning of the wheel of destiny which hopefully will bring joy instead of sadness. The absence of the Pesach Offering evokes a sense of mourning for the destroyed Temple, which hopefully will be rebuilt in our time. Roasted meat is not served, since the Pesach Offering was roasted.

The meal must end by Halachic Midnight in time for the Afikoman. One should not overeat. We must have some appetite leftover for the Afikoman.

12) Tzafun - Eat the Afikoman which had been hidden all during the Seder.

There are two opinions about the Afikoman. One is that it is a memorial to the Pesach Offering which was eaten at the end of the meal. The other view is that the Afikoman represents the Matzah that was eaten with the Pesach offering and it is this Matzah which represents the actual Mitzvah of eating Matzah.

The eating of the Afikoman completes the eating of the Middle Matzah which represents the "Bread of Affliction" and therefore symbolizes our ultimate redemption from all affliction and oppression. This in effect introduces the second part of the Seder which is dedicated to the redemption to come, that of Mashiach.

The stringent amount of Matzah for this Mitzvah is a piece measuring about 6" by 7" (2/3rds of a round Matzah). The lenient measurement is 4" by 7". Measure out the proper amounts for all participants at this point.

*Everyone eats the Afikoman; men lean to the left.

We don't eat after the Afikoman except for water, tea, or the like.

*Third Cup of Wine is poured.

13) Barch - Recite Birkas Hamazon, the blessings after the meal.

It is a Biblical commandment to give thanks to G-d after we eat a meal. There are several blessings, the first is thanks to G-d for giving food to all and was composed by Moses; the second is for the gift of land and was composed by Joshua; the third is to Jerusalem and Israel which gives the land special goodness and was composed by Kings David and Solomon. The text of the third was changed after the destruction of the Temple. The Sages added a fourth blessing when the Romans permitted the burial of the victims of the Bar Kochba rebellion in the third century. It teaches us to be grateful, even in bitter times and for favors that might not evoke rejoicing.

*Everyone should read the Blessings out loud in a low voice.

*Leader of Seder recites blessing of Boray Pri Hagofen.

Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Boray P'ri Ha-Gofen.

*Everyone answers - Amen.

Do not talk until you drink at least a half a cup.

*Everyone drinks third cup of wine; men lean to the left. This is the cup of wine over the Birkas Hamazon.

*Fourth Cup of Wine is poured. The extra cup for Elijah is poured.

14) Hallel - Recite the Hallel - Psalms of praise and declarations of our faith in Hashem

As mentioned above (at the end of Maggid) we now recite the second part of Hallel. This part of Hallel deals with our ultimate redemption with the coming of Moshiach.

*Everyone recites Hallel out loud. At the part "Thank Hashem for He is good" we recite it responsively. At the part of "Hashem save Us"... we recite it responsively.

*Leader of Seder recites blessing of Boray Pri Hagofen. Boruch Atoh Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech Ho-olom Boray P'ri Ha-Gofen.

*Everyone answers - Amen. Do not talk until you drink at least a half a cup.

*Everyone drinks fourth cup of wine; men lean to the left.

This is the cup of wine over the Hallel.

15) Nirtzah - Pray that G-d Accept our observance and speedily send the Messiah.

We ask G-d, that just as we were worthy to perform the Pesach service this year so may we be worthy to perform it in the future.

Sing the songs of the Seder.