

Seder Highlights

A Basic Summary of Laws
In a Clear and Simple Style

By: Rabbi Yochanan Schnall

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Introduction

Contrary to what one might think, every mitzvah of the Seder is independent from one another. Namely, those who are only able to perform one or two of them should not be discouraged. They should know that what they have accomplished is tremendously valuable.

If someone will only be doing a few of the mitzvos, it is wise to be aware that some mitzvos have more significance than others. The two most significant mitzvos during the Seder night are eating matzah and saying over some of the aspects of the exodus from Egypt.

❖ Preparing for the Seder

- Taking the time to find a hagadah that appeals to you can make all the difference for a meaningful Seder.
 - It is wise to use one that has clear translations and instructions.
 - Be sure that the one you choose follows the customs of your tradition or community (e.g. Ashkenaz, Chassidic or Sefardic).
- A Seder should have a leader who will guide and occasionally represent the group. The leader should be aware of this role ahead of time in order to become familiar with the various steps and texts.
- Married men customarily wear a kittel during the Seder. A kittel is made of white, broadcloth material and looks similar to a robe. It is sold in most Judaica stores.
 - If one is in the year of mourning for a parent, it is the general custom not to wear a kittel.¹
- At the Seder, it is a mitzvah to use and display the most beautiful silver and crystal that one possesses.²
- All items that were used during the year must be purged from any absorbed chometz before it may be used on Pesach. Ask a rabbi how this is done.

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- When preparing for the main Seder meal, be aware that the custom is not to eat roasted meat or fowl during the Seder night³. Additionally, many communities do not dip foods other than those prescribed in the Hagadah.⁴
- Everyone including children will require their own cup for wine (or grape juice).

The Seder Plate

The Seder plate is a designated plate that contains the symbolic foods necessary for a Seder. A fancy, decorated one is nice but not necessary.

- The items on the plate are *marror*, *charoses*, *karpas* (a piece of vegetable such as celery or potato) *zeroa* -a roasted foreleg or wing, and an egg that is cooked or roasted⁵.
- Three whole matzos are placed next to or under the Seder plate. They begin the Seder with a cover over them⁶ (it is removed during some of the Seder steps).
- If a foreleg or wing is unavailable for the *zeroa*, any bone with some meat on it may be used.⁷
- Although the Seder plate is placed on the table in front of the leader,⁸ the items are for all in attendance.⁹ (Additional quantities are often necessary.)

Matzah

Matzah represents two aspects of our redemption from Egypt. As “poor man’s” bread, it was what we ate during our subjugation.¹⁰ It also represents the quickness with which Hashem took us out of Egypt since the dough that we prepared for the journey did not have time to rise and was baked into matzah.¹¹

Shmurah Matzah

In order to fulfill this mitzvah, it is not enough to use “kosher for Passover” matzah! Rather, it is necessary that the matzah is also *shmurah* (protected). From its earliest stages of production, “*shmurah* matzah” is proactively shielded from water with the purpose of using it for the seder.¹² *Shmurah* matzah is identified as such somewhere on its packaging.

Egg Matzah

Matzah that contains any liquid other than water is not the matzah that the Torah commands us to eat.¹³ Nonetheless, one who is too weak to eat regular matzah should consult his or her rabbi to see if egg matzah is an appropriate option.

Marror

Marror reminds us of the bitter affliction we experienced in Egypt.¹⁴ Today, the obligation to eat marror is Rabbinic since the Torah commandment applies only when it can be eaten together with the Pesach sacrifice¹⁵.

- Only two types of marror are commonly used: romaine lettuce and freshly ground horseradish. Of these, romaine lettuce is the Halachic ideal choice.¹⁶
 - Be aware that romaine lettuce often harbors tiny insects and since eating an insect is forbidden from the Torah, the lettuce must be inspected before it can be eaten.¹⁷ These insects are not readily apparent so consult a knowledgeable person for guidance with this.
- If horseradish is used, it must be ground into small pieces and eaten raw. Jarred or cooked horseradish do not fulfill the obligation.¹⁸

Charoses

Charoses is a mixture of ground fruit, nuts and red wine.¹⁹ Before marror is eaten, it is dipped into charoses. The charoses is then shaken off to preserve the marror’s taste.²⁰ An explanation for this procedure can be found in the commentary of most Hagadahs.

- The ingredients of charoses are selected from the fruits and nuts that the Jewish People are compared to. These include apples, figs, dates, pomegranates, walnuts and almonds.²¹

The Four Cups

We drink four cups of wine during the Seder. These cups commemorate the four levels of redemption²² that Hashem provided us with.²³

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- As a display of nobility, the leader of the Seder does not fill his own cup.²⁴
 - Many homes apply this tradition to all in attendance and all cups are filled by one another.

Cup Features

- It is a mitzvah to use a beautiful cup.²⁵
 - The cup should not be disposable, but without any alternative this is permitted.²⁶

Reclining

During the Seder, we eat in a reclining position. This is the manner of free, aristocratic people and it commemorates the freedom that Hashem provided for us on this night.²⁷

- Reclining is specifically towards the left side.²⁸
- It is proper to use pillows or cushions when reclining.²⁹

General Rules

- During the Seder night there is a particular mitzvah for parents to teach their children about the Exodus (Shemos 13: 8).
- The Seder begins at least fifty minutes after sunset.³⁰

אשרה לד' כי גמל עלי

I am indebted to my wife for all the patience and support she continues to have for me.

Thank you my dear reader, for without your interest this pamphlet would not exist.

Much thanks as well to the Minneapolis Community Kollel for their resources.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to be a quick review of some pertinent laws relevant to this time of year.

It was formulated for those who do not have the opportunity or resources to study the laws in detail.

Many of these laws and sources are from the seforim:

הלכות, שליט"א Kol Dodi Laws of the Seder by Rabbi David Feinstein זצ"ל, Halachos of Pesach by Rabbi Shimon D. Eider, קונטרס שיעורי הלכה מתוך שיעורים של רב שמואל פעלדער, שליט"א by Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Karp חג בחג

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Nissan 5775

¹ Mishna Berurah 472:12

² Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 472:2

³ Mishna Berurah 476:1

⁴ Rema Orach Chayim 476:2

⁵ Shulchan Aruch and Rema Orach Chayim 473:4

⁶ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 271:9

⁷ Mishna Berurah 473:27

⁸ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 473:4

⁹ Mishna Berurah 473:17

¹⁰ Devarim 16:3 see Rashi ad. loc.

¹¹ Mishna Pesachim 115B

¹² Mishna Berura 453:21

¹³ Shulchan Aruch 462:1

¹⁴ Mishna Pesachim 115B

¹⁵ Tur Orach Chayim 472

¹⁶ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 473:5

¹⁷ Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deyah 84

¹⁸ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 473:5

¹⁹ Rema Orach Chayim 473:5

²⁰ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 475:1

²¹ Rema Orach Chayim 473:5

²² Shemos 5:6-7

²³ Chayei Adam Chapter 130:10

²⁴ Rema Orach Chayim 473:1

²⁵ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 472:2

²⁶ Igros Moshe Orach Chayim III 39

²⁷ Rambam Chametz U'matzah 7:7

²⁸ Mishna Berurah 472:7

²⁹ See Kol Dodi Laws of the Seder Ch. 5 P. 18

³⁰ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 472:1

Mishna Berurah ad loc.

Igros Moshe Orach Chayim IV:62