



PESACH



**THE S E D E R
P L A T E G U I D E**



SHANKBONE *ZEROA*

Traditionally the leg bone of a lamb, this represents the Paschal offering that was sacrificed the day before Pesach and eaten before midnight on Seder night. As such, there is a custom to slightly 'roast' the shankbone over a flame, as would have been done in Biblical times. The word zeroa means 'forearm', an allusion to the verse that says "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm" (Exodus 6:6). Due to the fact that, without the Temple, sacrificial offerings are now forbidden, one must be careful not to eat the Zeroa. The risk of severe food poisoning probably covers this possibility already.



EGG *BEITZAH*

Like the Zeroa, the egg represents a special offering that would've been brought up in Temple times: the Festive Offering (Chagigah). It is no coincidence that first night Seder always falls on the same day of the week as the 9th of Av, traditionally a day of intense sadness when we fast and mourn the destruction of both Temples and subsequent suffering in exile. The contrast between the joy of Pesach and despair of Tisha B'Av couldn't be starker. And yet, the last meal we eat before the fast of Av is an egg dipped in ashes. On Pesach we eat the egg dipped in salt water, representing the tears of the Jewish people in slavery. The connection is clear: we have come so far, yet there remains a great distance to the horizon of peace, prosperity and perfection.



BITTER HERBS *MAROR*

Probably the most readily-understood element of the seder plate. The Maror symbolises the bitterness of our suffering in slavery, and indeed that of Jewish people throughout the generations. From exile to pogrom to blood libel to inquisition to Holocaust to resurgent antisemitism, the Jewish people have seen more than our fair share of pain.



LETTUCE *CHAZERET*

Chazeret is a bitter lettuce (often Romaine – don't forget to check for insects!) that traditionally accompanies the Maror and is used to complete the Kazayit (appx. 35 grams) that one is required to eat. The accepted custom is to use horseradish for Maror – those with higher pain thresholds tend to grate it first! Before eating it, we briefly dip the Maror into the sweet charoset (see right). This signifies our belief that – forgive the cliché – every cloud has a silver lining. That no matter how desperate times may get, there is always a glimmer of hope.



SWEET PASTE *CHAROSET*

Just as no two fingerprints are the same, no two Charoset recipes are ever identical. Precisely how to combine the delicious mixture of apples, cinnamon, almonds, wine, lemon juice, honey, raisins and walnuts (or none of the above) tends to be a fiercely-kept family secret passed down through the generations since the revelation at Mount Sinai itself. A thick consistency, the Charoset symbolises the cement and mortar used by our ancestors to construct the Nile Delta cities of Pe-Atum and Rameses. It is surprising that a symbol of such hardship and servitude should merit such a sweet taste, but the reality is that without hard work and sincere toil, we accomplish very little and end up looking back at an inconsequential life with a tinge of sadness and regret. Nothing in life is sweeter than the fruits of arduous toil.



VEGETABLES *KARPAS*

Another item that demonstrates the diversity of tradition, customs range from celery to parsley to radish, even travelling as far as the humble potato. The only binding prerequisite for the Karpas is that it should be a vegetable whose blessing is 'Ha'adamah'. There is a fascinating discussion in the Talmud (Pesa-chim 114a) that seeks the symbolism of the Karpas, but hits a dead end. Our conclusion? The Karpas is placed on the plate and eaten having been dipped in saltwater "so that the youngsters ask questions". An answer that at surface value looks like a rather unconvincing cop-out actually gets to the core of what Seder night is all about: transmitting the epic tale of the Jewish Nation from one generation to the next. To this end, we introduce numerous peculiar elements to the meal in order to arouse the curiosity of the table's younger occupants, thus encouraging active participation and conversation.



10 TIPS FOR

1

"Set your table the night before - this allows you to enjoy your pretty table and to post your pictures on social media!"

- REBBETZIN GITEL BRUKIRER

2

"Serve a light meal before Pesach begins so no one is asking when dinner is."

- RABBI MENDY BRUKIRER

3

"Sing *Ma Nishtana* in many languages. Always a lot of fun. There are invariably different language speakers around the table."

- RABBI RAPHY GARSON

6

"One of the greatest challenges is bringing to life a story that is more than three thousand years old and counting! Children in particular learn so much about Pesach at school, which is amazing, but it is so important to avoid the whole night becoming a bit stale. We enjoy dressing up as various characters from the story and 'casting' for roles in the tale. If Moses and Pharaoh are sitting at your table, it feels so much more alive!"

- REBBETZIN TAMAR GOLDWATER

4

"There are many traditions on Pesach. We have one even before Pesach starts. In our family, my kids know that part of the tradition is they all have to sleep in the afternoon. It's a long night and we want everyone to have the best evening."

- REBBETZIN MIRIAM GEFEN

5

"One year I brought real locust. They were in a box hidden under a towel on the side board in the dining room. You can imagine how we became the best parents that night when we revealed what we were hiding under that towel when we sang the Ten Plagues."

- RABBI ZVI GEFEN



YOUR SEDER NIGHT

7

"We try to make the Seder as interactive and engaging as possible. A few years ago, after I had split the middle matzah and hidden the Afikoman, I had this crazy idea to break another matzah into a triangle shape and place it on a spinning plate that usually sits in the middle of the table. After each section, we play 'spin the matzah' ...if it lands on you, ask a question or contribute an idea, or no dessert!"

- RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM

8

"The songs at the end of the Seder are just so enjoyable, sung to classic tunes that have been used for centuries. To finish off the magical evening strongly and with a lasting impression, we have always divided the various characters of 'Chad Gadya' amongst the guests. The ensuing hilarity as cat, dog and cow impressions clamour for attention makes it a night to remember!"

- REBBETZIN SHALVIE FRIEDMAN

9

"One of the trickiest parts of the Seder is holding the children's attention. For a while now we move to the lounge to have a 'discussion' rather than a 'ceremony' when it comes to Maggid – the section that speaks about the Exodus story. In a more relaxed, informal setting, the discussion can go on for hours! Then, when we are ready to return to the table, we are refreshed and re-engaged."

- RABBI AVROHOM ZEIDMAN

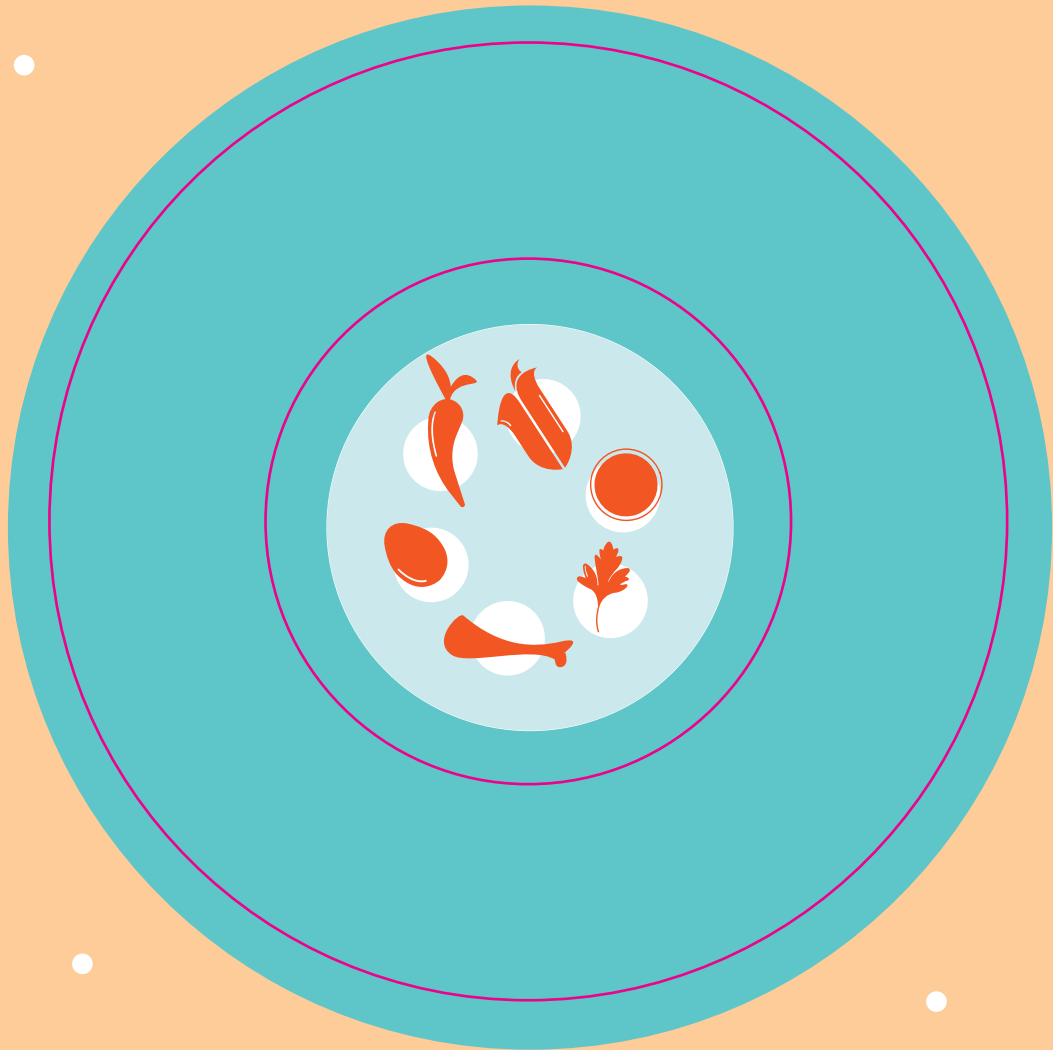
10

"There is a well-known Talmudic dictum that on Seder night we are meant to view ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. It's a lofty idea but one that I, and I'm sure many others, struggle to connect to. Instead, every year before Seder night I spend a few minutes thinking about problems or limitations in my life that inwardly I wish I could be released from. Totally changes my experience!"

- RABBI MOSHE FRIEDMAN



PESACH



S E D E R S T A G E S

**“A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF
THE STAGES OF THE HAGGADAH”**



1. MAKE KIDDUSH *KADDISH*

Wine can be used for base drunkenness, but it can also be used for joy and elevated consciousness. Like so much in this world, it all depends how we use it. We believe that holiness is not withdrawal from the world. Kiddush involves taking the worldly and making it holy.

2. WASH HANDS *URECHATZ*

In contrast to those that idealise blind obedience, Judaism has always demanded an active participation of the mind. To this end, the Talmud gives the seemingly unsatisfactory explanation behind Urechatz of “it piques peoples’ curiosity”. Unsatisfactory, and yet crucial. Without a rigorous process of question and answer, we cannot learn and cannot pass traditions down through the chain of future generations.

3. EAT A VEGETABLE *KARPAS*

Karpas symbolises mankind’s journey from exile to redemption. This vegetable started life in the dark and frozen depths of winter. Over time it grew slowly, receiving nourishment from the earth. Despite this, in the spring, it sprouted realising its full potential. The Jewish journey also began in the darkness of slavery where they formed as a nation, before breaking through the barriers of exile and attaining freedom.

4. HIDE THE MATZAH *YACHATZ*

We live in a world of instant gratification. Our choice to put the matzah aside for later teaches us a life lesson: true freedom includes freeing ourselves from the shackles of immediate indulgence, sacrificing the pleasures of today for the future of tomorrow.

5. TELL THE STORY OF THE EXODUS *MAGGID*

The art of storytelling is not simply one of fables and lore, but on Pesach we are implored to re-enact the drama of the Exodus as our own story. This story is the very core of Jewish identity. Contained within this narrative are the values we bequeath to our children.

6. WASH HANDS *RACHTZA*

By washing our hands as a preparatory step before eating, we become mindful of what it is we are about to eat. Water is symbolic of purity, and in effect we are cleansing our hands, the medium through which we act in the world. Washing our hands is thus a statement that our actions will be pure.

7. BLESS THE FOOD *MOTZI*

Curious are the words of this blessing “He who takes out bread from the ground”. Any farmer will attest to the year-long process culminating in the production of bread, it is anything but simply extracting it out of the ground! However, herein lies the secret: even that which we toiled in, which has many composite parts, is essentially directed by God.

8. BLESS THE MATZAH *MATZAH*

Matzah is free of extras, it is bread without the hot air, and represents the bare essentials. It proposes a focus on necessities over luxuries, and that we concentrate on our ‘personal bests’ in life rather than ‘world records’. Matzah rids us of ego and the delusions of self-importance holding us back from achieving our true goals.

9. EAT BITTER HERBS *MAROR*

By scaling peaks of hardship, we truly appreciate the brilliance of success. Freedom and pain are inexorably linked. We eat bitter herbs to recognise that pain and suffering emanate from the same source as joy and pleasure.

10. MAKE A HILLEL SANDWICH *KORECH*

Hillel the Elder would sandwich together the matzah, bitter herbs and charoset, and eat them together. This sandwich is created by bringing together a mixture of bitter and sweet flavours, symbolising that the redemption came from the Jewish people being united. The hardships are durable and the blessings enhanced if we share them with others.

11. ENJOY A MEAL

SHULCHAN ORECH

Why is this meal different? Our experience of life can be rich, we have about 10,000 taste buds and can see millions of shades of colours. Will we use that to swallow our food quickly or instead be mindful of what we eat to satiate us with energy to do good in the world?

12. EAT THE AFIKOMAN *TZAFUN*

‘Tzafun’ means ‘hidden’. The word for universe ‘olam’ is derived from ‘ne’elam’, meaning concealed. The world, so to speak, conceals its true nature, taking time to see beyond the superficial. We entrust our children to search for the Afikoman as our collective future lies in our ability to transfer our Jewish values to the next generation.

13. FURTHER BLESSINGS *BARECH*

God does not need our blessings, but we need to bless God. In an age when a simple ‘thank you’ is so hard to come by and when so much is taken for granted, it is important that we work on developing the art of appreciation and gratitude.

14. PRAISE GOD *HALLEL*

Hallel is a prayer recited on happy and joyous occasions. What makes its recital here unique is that it is the only time that it is said at night. Night time is symbolically seen as a time of fear and confusion. On Pesach, we attest to the clarity and confidence gained as a result of the Exodus.

15. FINALE *NIRTZAH*

The finale of the Hagaddah is a series of songs that allude to the end of history. As always, Jewish consciousness is steeped in the belief that in the end, good will triumph. Full of faith and hope, we conclude the evening with our dreams of “next year in Jerusalem!”