

Guide for the Seder Night



A Practical Guide to the Seder.

This guide should be used in conjunction with a Haggadah. Page numbers given correspond to the “Artscroll Family Haggadah”(FH) and the “Artscroll Youth Haggadah”(YH). **To properly enjoy the Seder experience with your family, please review this guide *before* the Seder night.**



Seder Table Setup

Items on the Seder plate are placed in a very specific order, starting from the bottom and continuing clockwise: Chazeret (lettuce), Karpas (vegetable), Beitzah (roasted egg), Zero'ah (roasted bone), Charoset (nuts and dates). In the center is Marror (bitter herbs).

[There are various other customs concerning the arrangement of the Seder plate. The above version is based on Shulchan Aruch – Code of Jewish Law.]

A bowl of salt water is placed on the table near the Seder plate.

Three matzahs are placed under or in front of the Seder plate. The matzahs are covered, and separated from one another by a napkin or cloth.

[At the Seder, we use special ***shmurah matzah***, carefully guarded against contact with water – fulfilling the Biblical commandment, “*Ush'martem et hamatzot*” — “And you shall guard the matzot.”

Seven Mitzvot of the Seder

Two of Biblical origin:

- 1) Retelling the story of the Exodus
- 2) Eating matzah

Five of Rabbinic origin:

- 3) Eating Marror (bitter herbs)
- 4) Eating the Afikoman (extra piece of matzah for dessert)

- 5) Reciting Hallel (Psalms of praise)
- 6) Drinking four cups of wine
- 7) Demonstrating freedom and aristocracy — e.g. leaning on a pillow or cushion as we eat; beginning the meal with a “dip.”

Four Cups of Wine

At the Seder, everyone drinks four cups of wine, corresponding to the four expressions of freedom mentioned in the Torah (Exodus 6: 6-7).

Since we are free this evening, each person should have his or her wine poured by someone else — served like royalty.

Red wine is ideal, symbolizing the blood spilled by Pharaoh, the blood of the Ten Plagues, and the blood on the Jewish doorposts. However, white wine is also perfectly acceptable.

Every individual should have a personal wine cup containing a *revi'it* (3.3 oz.) , When Passover falls on Shabbat, the **first** cup (the cup of Kiddush) should contain at least 4.42 oz.

Although it is preferable to drink the entire cup of wine, it is sufficient to drink most of it.

Preferably, the cup should be drunk in two swallows, without a pause. If that is not possible, the wine should be consumed within four minutes.

Men lean to the left while drinking the wine, as a sign of royalty. [In classical times, it was the practice of aristocratic men – but not women – to eat this way.]

The steps of the Seder

"Seder" means "order." By following these specific steps, you will be conducting the Seder the way it has been for hundreds of years.

1) Kadesh FH pg.20, YH pg.12

Kiddush and **first cup of wine**

Recite the Kiddush, with intent to fulfill two *mitzvot*:

- 1) The *mitzvah* of Kiddush, as on every Shabbat and Yom Tov
- 2) The *mitzvah* of drinking four cups of wine at the Seder

The *Shehecheyanu* blessing is recited with intent to cover all the various *mitzvot* of the Seder.

[When the Seder falls on Saturday night, add the Havdalah blessings printed in the text, using the Yom Tov candles as your Havdalah candle.]

Don't forget to lean to the left while drinking!

2) Urchatz FH pg.22, YH pg.14

Everyone at the Seder **washes their hands** in the manner one washes for bread — pouring water from a cup over each hand, until the wrist. No blessing is recited over this hand-washing.

[Food that has come in contact with certain liquids becomes susceptible to spiritual uncleanness. Therefore, we wash our hands before Karpas, which entails dipping a vegetable in salt water.]

3) Karpas FH pg.22, YH pg.14

Dip the **Karpas vegetable into salt water**.

[Karpas must be a vegetable whose blessing is *Borei Pri Ha-Adamah* when eaten raw, but is not useable as Maror. Some options include celery, potato or radish.]

Eat only a small piece, to avoid the need for an after-blessing.

When reciting the blessing of *Borei Pri Ha-Adamah*, do so with intent to cover the Maror — linking the Karpas to the Meal. The after-blessing obligation can then be fulfilled with Grace After Meals.

4) Yachatz FH pg.24 YH pg.14

The leader of the Seder **breaks the middle matzah in two**. The smaller piece is put back between the other two matzot, to be eaten later at *Hamotzi*. **The larger piece is wrapped up and becomes the Afikoman**.

Children are encouraged to "steal" the Afikoman, as an incentive to remain awake.

5) Maggid FH pg.24 YH pg.15

As we begin **the main part of the Seder — recounting the story of the Exodus** — it is important to have a good translation of the Haggadah to understand what we are saying.

The first paragraph of the Haggadah, *Ha Lachma Anya*, is written in Aramaic, a common language during the Second Temple period and beyond.

We uncover the matzot, raising the broken matzah for all to see, until the start of the Four Questions.

Four Questions – Ma Nishtana

Pour the Second Cup of wine.

Remove the Seder plate from the table until it is time to eat. We do this to prompt questions, and to show that we're not going to eat until we've told the story!

It is customary for the youngest person at the Seder to recite the Four Questions.

Avadim Hayeenu

The three matzot are left uncovered for the duration of the Exodus story.

The declaration, "We were slaves in Egypt," is the essential answer to the Four Questions. After this, young children may go to sleep.

Ten Plagues

Every time one of the plagues is mentioned, we dip our finger in the wine and spill a drop. This reminds us that our cup of joy is not complete when others suffer.

A total of sixteen drops are spilled — three for "blood, fire and pillars of smoke," ten for the ten plagues, and another three for Rabbi Yehudah's abbreviation of D'tzach, Adash B'achav.

Three Most Important Topics at the Seder FH pg.42 YH pg.32

The Haggadah states“...One who does not discuss three things has not fulfilled his minimum obligation. These are the three; (1)**Pesach** (Passover lamb), (2)**Matzah** and (3)**Marror** (bitter herbs).” It is important to focus on the meaning of these symbols at the Seder.

- 1) **Pesach:** The Passover lamb, eaten by the Jews on the night of redemption, represented G-d “passing over” the Jewish homes during the plague of the firstborn. (Pesach means “pass over”.) The Passover lamb is not eaten today, in the absence of the Jerusalem Temple.
- 2) **Matzah:** The matzah is symbolic of the Jewish people being rushed out of the slavery so quickly that their bread had no time to rise.
- 3) **Marror:** bitter herbs symbolize the bitterness of Egyptian slavery.

Lefikach

Cover the matzot, raise the cup of wine, and recite this paragraph aloud and joyfully.

Second Cup of wine

Recite the blessing and drink the wine.

Don't forget to lean to the left while drinking!

6) Rachtza FH pg.48 YH pg.37

We wash our hands a second time:

Fill a large cup with water. Remove any rings from the fingers. Pour water twice over the right hand until the wrist, then do the same for the left hand. Recite the blessing and dry the hands.

Avoid speaking until after matzah, maror and korech are consumed.

7) Motzi FH pg.48 YH pg.37

and

8) Matzah FH pg.50 YH pg. 37

Recite two blessing over the matzah.

The matzah should be eaten within a span of about two to four minutes. If this is difficult, **the matzah should be consumed within nine minutes.**

The amount of matzah consumed should be at least 1/2 of a square matzah or 1/3 of a round hand-baked matzah. (Some opinions require 2/3 of a square matzah or 1/2 of a round matzah.)

Men lean to the left while eating the matzah. (This symbol of royalty is so important that **if one forgot to lean, the mitzvah of eating the matzah is repeated.**)

Unlike on Shabbat, on Passover we do not dip the matzah in salt; it is a special mitzvah to taste the matzah itself.

Everyone should eat at least a small piece of the top and middle matzot, supplementing it with other matzah.

9) Maror FH pg.50 YH pg.38

Eat the bitter herbs.

If Romaine lettuce is used, the amount of leaves consumed should be large enough to cover an area of eight by ten inches. Extreme care should be taken to check the lettuce, since frequently there are small bugs in the leaves.

If ground horseradish is used, the appropriate amount is 1.1 fluid ounce compacted.

Horseradish in store-bought jars should not be used, since sweeteners are added to make it less bitter. Particularly problematic is "red horseradish," which is actually a mixture of beets and horseradish.

Horseradish should be ground before Passover begins.

Before making the blessing, the Maror is dipped in Charoset, which is then shaken off.

The blessing is recited with intent to cover the Maror in the "Korech sandwich" as well.

Do not lean while eating the Maror.

Maror should be consumed within two to four minutes of the first swallow.

10) Korech FH pg.50 YH pg.38

Take the bottom matzah (of the original three) **and make a sandwich with Maror.**

The amount of matzah should be approximately 23-25 cc —roughly **one-third of a square matzah, or one-fourth of a round matzah.**

The amount of Maror needed is 3.6 by 2.7 inches of Romaine lettuce, or 0.7 compacted fluid ounces of horseradish.

Dip the sandwich into Charoset and then shake it off.

Say the paragraph of "Remembrance of the Temple." No blessing is recited.

Eat the sandwich while leaning to the left.

The sandwich should be consumed within two to four minutes of the first swallow.

11) Shulchan Orech FH pg. 52 YH pg.39

Eat the festive meal. It is customary to begin the meal with an egg, symbolizing the *Chagigah* offering eaten during Temple times.

The meal should preferably end with enough time to eat the Afikoman by midnight. Leave room for it!

We do not eat roasted meat, to avoid giving the impression that we are eating the Passover lamb, which cannot actually be brought in the absence of the Temple.

12) Tzafun FH pg.52 YH pg.39

The Afikoman should preferably be eaten before midnight. (This exact time of midnight varies with geographic location.)

Eat at least 1/2 a square Matzah, or 1/3 of a round Matzah. (Some opinions require 2/3 of a square matzah or 1/2 of a round matzah.)

Each person should have at least a small piece from the actual Afikoman, which can then be supplemented with other matzah.

The Afikoman should be the last food eaten this night, aside from water, tea, and the remaining two cups of wine.

The Afikoman is eaten while leaning to the left.

It must be consumed within two to four minutes of the first swallow.

13) Barech FH pg.52 YH pg.40

Rinse the wine cups and fill them for the **third cup of wine**, which will be drunk at the conclusion of "**Grace After Meals.**"

The blessing for wine, "*borei p'ri Hagafen*," is recited, and the **third cup is drunk while leaning to the left.**

14) Hallel FH pg.62 YH pg.47

Pour the **fourth cup of wine**, along with a special extra cup for Elijah the prophet.

Open the door of the house, to show that this is "Leil Shimurim" – a night of special protection for the Jewish people.

The Hallel prayers (praises of God) are completed while holding the Fourth Cup of Wine.

Don't forget to **lean to the left while drinking.**

15) Nirtzah FH pg.76 YH pg.55

We rejoice at the privilege of joining countless generations in performing the Seder. We pray for the coming of the Messiah. Next Year in Jerusalem!

We conclude the Seder with songs recounting G-d's miraculous salvation and endless love.

If you have any questions, please contact us *before* Passover begins at sundown on Monday evening, April 14th. Have a happy and meaningful Passover!

