

# Seder Highlights

## Introduction

As each *mitzvah* is performed at the *Seder*, it is imperative to be conscious of it. In fact, according to many opinions, a *mitzvah* that was performed thoughtlessly does not fulfill the requirement! To that end, it is helpful to pause before each *Seder* Step to think about the *mitzvah* that is about to be fulfilled. This will go a long way in assuring that the *mitzvos* are performed properly, as well as adding more purpose to the *Seder*.

Let's review the unique *mitzvos* that we will be performing - two are *Midioraisa* (Biblical), and three are *Midirabbanan* (Rabbinic). The Torah *mitzvos* are eating *matzah* and *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* (recounting the Exodus from Egypt). The *mitzvos* *Midirabbanan* include drinking four cups of wine, eating *marror*, and reciting *Hallel*.

## Matzah

To fulfill this *mitzvah* at the *Seder*, it is not enough to use "kosher for Passover" *matzah*! Rather, it is necessary that the *matzah* is also *shemurah* (protected). From its earliest stages of production, *shemurah matzah* is proactively shielded from water with the purpose of using it for the *Seder*. *Shemurah 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. In fact, Ashkenazic custom forbids a healthy person from eating this type of *matzah* on Pesach. If one is too weak to eat regular *matzah*, a rabbi should be consulted to see if egg *matzah* is an appropriate option.

## Measurements

Sometimes it is unclear how measurements in *halacha* convert into modern day quantities, and a classic example of this is the volume of *matzah* that must be eaten at the *Seder*. Nonetheless, the generally accepted volume is 1/2 of a hand *matzah* and 2/3 of a standard machine *matzah*. This volume should be eaten at both the *Motzi Matzah* step and for the *Afikomen*. For *Korech*, half of either volume is sufficient. The required amounts of *matzah* are to be chewed in a normal, continuous manner within nine minutes, and, if possible, within two minutes. Those who have difficulty eating due to age or illness should consult a Rabbi for any relevant leniencies.\*

## Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim

The *Seder*-step of *Maggid* is when we fulfill the Torah obligation of recounting *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The narrative begins with the ignoble origins of our nation and describes our slavery in *Mitzrayim*, Hashem's retribution to the *Mitzrim* (Egyptians), and His miraculous deliverance, which culminated in giving us the Torah. The *haggadah* text is not an "end all"! It is to be used as a springboard for further discussion of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

**If the entire *Maggid* text is too difficult to read or be present for, three paragraphs near the end entitled "Rabban Gamliel Haya Omer", "Rabbi Gamliel would say" are the minimum requirement to be read or heard. Second to this in importance are the Ten *Makkos* (plagues). To that end, it is a good idea to translate these paragraphs in case someone present does not understand them.**

## Marror

*Marror* reminds us of the bitter affliction we experienced in *Mitzrayim*. Today, the obligation to eat *marror* is Rabbinic, since the Torah commandment applies only when it can be eaten together with the *Korban Pesach*. Two types of *marror* are commonly used - romaine lettuce and freshly ground horseradish. Of these, romaine lettuce is the ideal *halachic* choice.

**Note that romaine lettuce often harbors tiny insects. Since eating an insect is a Torah prohibition, the lettuce must be inspected before it can be eaten. These insects are not readily apparent, so see page 99 of this Pesach Guide or search at [www.ASKcRc.org](http://www.ASKcRc.org) for guidance.**

Packaged romaine lettuce is also often available with a reliable kosher certification. If horseradish is used, it must be ground into small pieces and eaten raw. Jarred or cooked horseradish does not fulfill the obligation.

## Measurements

*Marror* is eaten during two of the *Seder* Steps: ***Marror*** and ***Korech***.

For the ***Marror*** step, the necessary volume is slightly more than one fluid ounce. Grated horseradish can be measured quite easily; the volume of romaine leaves is slightly larger than one large leaf (approximately the surface area of 8 x 10 inches).

For the **Korech** step, it is sufficient to use 0.7 fluid ounces of horseradish, but the romaine lettuce should be the same as above.

For both **Marror** and **Korech**, the full volume of *marror* is to be chewed in a normal, continuous manner within nine minutes, and if possible, within two minutes. Those who have difficulty eating due to age or illness should also consult a Rabbi for any relevant leniencies.\*

## Charoses

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

*Charoses* should have a thick, mortar-like consistency, and its ingredients are selected from the fruits and nuts that the Jewish People are compared to. These include apples, figs, dates, pomegranates, walnuts, and almonds. Some have the custom to add cinnamon and/or ginger in their unground form. At the *Seder*, additional wine is added just before the *marror* is dipped into it.

## The Four Cups

We are obligated to drink four cups of wine during the *Seder* which commemorate the four levels of redemption that *Hashem* provided for us. It is a *mitzvah* to use a beautiful cup, and if at all

	First Three Cups	Fourth Cup
<b>Minimum Cup Volume</b>	Approximately 3 ounces [In years when the <i>Seder</i> is on Friday night, the 1st cup should be approximately 4.5 oz.]	Approximately 3 ounces
<b>Basic Consumption Volume</b>	1.5 fluid ounces	Approximately 3 ounces
<b>Ideal Consumption Volume</b>	Approximately 3 ounces, or the majority of the cup – whichever of the two is greater	

## Type of Beverage

Red wine is the ideal beverage for the Four Cups, unless the available white wine is of better quality. If necessary, the wine may be diluted with grape juice or a very small percentage of water; even using wine for a portion of the four cups is virtuous. If wine

is not an option, grape juice is also acceptable. If necessary, the grape juice may also be diluted with a very small percentage of water. If neither wine nor grape juice are feasible, speak to a Rabbi for further possible leniencies.\*

possible, it should not be a disposable one. As a display of nobility, the leader of the *Seder* does not fill his/her own cup, and many homes apply this tradition to all in attendance. The cup is filled to the top for each time it is consumed.

The cups must be drunk at the designated intervals of the *Seder*. One who is unable to remain present throughout the *Seder* must still recite or listen to the necessary *haggadah* texts in between each cup.

## Measurements

Two measurements need to be considered: the cup volume, and the consumption volume. The cup volume generally must be a minimum of 2.9 fluid ounces. [Note that if the first *Seder* night is Friday night, the obligation to recite *kiddush* is from the Torah and for the first cup, the minimum volume is approximately 4.5 fluid ounces.]

As far as the consumption volume, the basic obligation for the first three cups is 1.5 fluid ounces. If this is too difficult, one should consult a Rabbi.\* Ideally however, either 2.9 fluid ounces or the majority of the cup – whichever of the two is greater - should be consumed if possible. (For this reason, it is wise to use a small cup so that drinking the majority of the cup is a small amount.)

For the fourth cup, the minimum consumption amount of 2.9 fluid ounces should always be consumed. In all instances, the wine is to be consumed in a normal, continuous manner without interruption.



Red Wine	White Wine	Wine diluted with Grape Juice	Wine diluted with a small amount of water	Grape Juice	Grape Juice diluted with a small amount of water
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## General Rules

### Educating Children

When children are old enough to comprehend a *mitzvah*'s concept (usually at age five or six.), their parents are obligated

to train them in its performance, and on the *Seder* night, there is a particular *mitzvah* for parents to teach their children about *Yetzias Mitzrayim* (*Shemos* 13:8). Corresponding to their age and ability, they are to be encouraged (never forced!) to consume the required amount of foods and recite the necessary *haggadah* texts.

## Timing of the Obligations

The *Seder* may not begin before nightfall which is 8:24 PM in the greater Chicago area in 2024. In addition, eating *matzah* and *marror* must be completed before the middle of the night – 12:48 AM in the greater Chicago area in 2024.

Ideally, the entire *Seder* through *Hallel* should be concluded by this time as well.

## Reclining

During the *Seder*, we eat while reclining on pillows and cushions. This is the manner of free, aristocratic people, and it commemorates the freedom that Hashem provided for us on this

night. Women do not commonly recline, but they should at least be seated when the foods that require reclining are consumed.

Reclining is specifically towards the left side (and left-handed people recline in this direction as well).

One who is in the presence of his Torah teacher reclines only if the teacher has given specific permission, and one who is within the mourning period for a close relative reclines in a subdued manner.

\*See also the Dietary Needs article on pages 54-55.

*Note: Sources for this article can be found online at <https://consumer.crckosher.org/publications/seder-highlights-pesach-2024/>*



## Seder Plate

**Beitza**  
the egg, hard-boiled and lightly roasted

**Karpas**  
celery, boiled potato, parsley etc.

**Chazeres**  
romaine lettuce



**Zeroah**  
roasted piece of meat, chicken, lamb, turkey, duck or bone thereof

**Charoses**  
usually made of grated apple, ground walnuts, cinnamon, red wine and dates

**Marror**  
the bitter herb – ground horseradish root