

Massah U`Maror
by Rabbi Harari

The most prominent items at the Passover seder are the massah and maror. Indeed, Rabban Gamliel teaches us that the Passover seder would be incomplete without the presence of both these food items.

Not surprisingly, they bring to the table dramatically different motifs. The massah represents the exodus from Egypt while the maror represents the slavery itself. The massah, bread in its unleavened state, expresses the G-d's impatience in delivering us from the hands of the Egyptians. For all future generations we would know that G-d's rush in taking us out of Egypt would be symbolized by bread that was not allowed to rise. The maror, on the other hand, reminds us of the bitterness of our oppression and the evils of the demonic power that ruled over the people of Israel for centuries.

These two food items, therefore, capture the essence of the holiday of Passover. They remind us of our obligation to connect to our forefathers and our history in the fullest sense: the good and the ugly, the exhilarating and the depressing. Much like the holiday of Purim that we celebrated a month ago, Passover reminds us of the unusual turns that our lives as the Jewish people have taken. We have witnessed the worst of what humankind has dealt others and the best of what G-d has rewarded His people. In our own times, our people were both slaughtered during the Holocaust years and witnessed the miraculous rebirth of the Jewish people in its homeland.

Passover reminds us that both experiences and emotions are part of what it means to be a Jew. And by connecting to the messages that the massah and the maror send us, we propel ourselves to strengthen our relationship to the Almighty.