

Seder Instruction Manual

Why a Seder?

Order is not ... characterized by things in a static, motionless relationship – Leonard Read (1965)

It's quite ironic how the Festival of Freedom is inundated with such a comprehensive litany of technical instructions, guiding our actions, table conversation, and menu throughout the evening. The very name for the meal – Seder – means order. Why should we celebrate our freedom with rules?

The Haggadah itself answers this question: “וְעַכְשָׁיו קָרְבָנוּ הַמָּקוֹם לַעֲבֹדָתוֹ” – “And now Hashem has brought us close to serve Him.” The freedom that we celebrate is our servitude to God. Indeed, as the Torah says (Leviticus 25, 55) “כִּי־לִי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים עָבְדֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם” – “For the children of Israel are servants to Me; they are My servants, whom I took out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God.” And while this may answer the question, the term “freedom” still seems like an odd choice. Why not call it what it is? We’re not celebrating our freedom, we’re celebrating our servitude to God?!

The Haggadah appears to address this question as well: “וְעַכְשָׁיו קָרְבָנוּ הַמָּקוֹם לַעֲבֹדָתוֹ” – “And now Hashem has **brought us close** to serve Him.” Why does the Haggadah use the word קָרְבָנוּ – to bring close? It seems extraneous?! And yet this choice of language is not unique to the Haggadah. We say every Yom Tov during the Musaf prayer לַעֲבוֹדָתְךָ מִלְּפָנֵינוּ לְקָרְבָנוּ – “You brought us close, our King, to your service.” Why does serving Hashem necessitate us being drawn close?

The Abudraham (14th Century Spanish Rabbi) explains that these phrases refer to accepting the Torah on Har Sinai. He quotes a very interesting verse - וַיְהִי כִשְׁמַעְכֶּם אֶת־הַקוֹל מִתּוֹךְ הַחֹשֶׁךְ - וַתִּקְרְבוּ אֵלַי... – “And when you heard the voice from amidst the darkness... **you came close to Me**” (Deuteronomy 1:22). According to this verse, the Jews approached God, not the other way around, as the liturgy indicates?!

In reality, both perspectives are true. Bringing someone close means just that. You bring them close, but not all the way. They need to take the final step. A genuine loving relationship can't be one sided; both parties need to contribute. The same is true with the relationship between the Jews and Hashem. Hashem took us out of Egypt. He brought us close to Sinai. He brought us to the threshold of Torah, mitzvos, and divine service. But then He turned to us and asked, “You’re a free people. So what can you do to make this relationship special?”

Our answer was accepting ownership of the Torah. Moshe brought it down into this world and the Jews have been masters of the Torah ever since; when the court below decides *halacha*, the Heavenly Court must accede.

This is our freedom. The freedom to be partners in the cosmic enterprise of revealing Hashem's glory in this world through Torah and mitzvos.

Such a relationship with the Infinite Divine must be predicated on *avdus* – servitude. But that is just the beginning. It is the foundation upon which a loving partnership is established like a marriage. It is a relationship that is continuously growing and evolving. It is predicated on Seder – order – anchored upon an immutable tradition of Torah and an unwavering loyalty to Hashem. But that Seder is not static. It is alive and constantly in motion. The fractals of history, culture, and self-expression that accumulate over the millennia of Jewish life express the eternity and vitality of the Jewish Nation's relationship with God. And it is that message of servitude – of dynamic order – of love within Seder – that we relive each year at Pesach night.

It is not surprising that the Seder has so many unique customs. Some dating back centuries to a far away country, and others that we came up with in our quarantined homes this year. Some that sages developed with their inimitable knowledge and tradition, and others developed by preschool children taking their first steps into the vast Sea of Torah. All coalesce at the Seder.

It might be daunting to run and participate at a Seder, especially for the first time. There are many intricate details, laws, and customs. The amount of preparation is incredible. It is a lot of work. It is a lot of Seder. It is a lot of order. We must remember that it is that Seder, that order which is the bedrock of relationship with God. Our faith and fealty to furthering God's Will in this world through Torah and mitzvos. And we must also remember to ensure that the Seder does not become static. To make our Seder come alive. To bring our personal touch to the table. Something to show Hashem, His people, and ourselves what it means to us to be free as the Chosen Nation. Will it be a certain thought of Torah we share? Maybe a special dish for the meal? Or maybe an activity to make the story of the Exodus come alive?

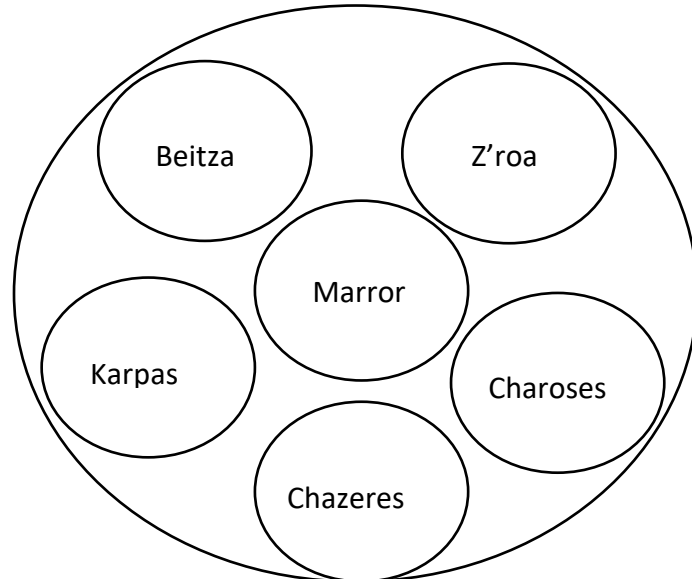
This Seder Guide is not comprehensive. A playbill must faithfully describe what will happen at a production, but it will never fully encapsulate the experience of watching the production unfold. There will be details, nuances, and pathos that cannot be expressed in a list. So too, this guide is a list of what will happen Seder night. But the transcendental, transformative experience and nuances of the Seder simply cannot be captured in a list of bullet points. That is for each person to fill in for themselves. To help us visualize leaving Egypt that night. To see Hashem Himself beckon each one of us to come close and join Him.

As Pesach has not yet arrived, there is still time for Moshiach to come. May we merit to join together and have our Seder **this year** in Jerusalem at the Beis Hamikdash (Holy Temple). But wherever we may find ourselves, may we merit a healthy and joyous Seder where we rekindle our loving relationship with Hashem – a dynamic Seder.

Chag Kashem V'Sameach – Happy Passover!!

Seder Preparations

- The Seder should begin after nightfall - approximately 8:12pm
 - One should try to do as much preparation for the **first** Seder as possible **before** Pesach begins
 - All preparations for the **second** Seder (and lighting Yom Tov candles) should only begin **after** nightfall
- 3 whole **matzos** separated by a cloth or napkin.
- A bowl of **salt water**
- **Wine** (or grape juice if needed) – enough for 4 cups (minimum 3.4 fl. Oz per cup) for each person
 - Many have the custom to use red wine
- A **wine glass** for each setting
- **Cup of Elijah** - it is customary to have a cup for Elijah who visits each Seder
- **Pillow** – some have the custom for each member to have a pillow by their place to recline on during the Seder
- **Seder Plate**
 - A large plate or dish is customarily used
 - The items on the Seder Plate are customarily arranged in the following order (see diagram):*
 - **Z'roah – Roasted Shankbone**
 - Roasted bone (with some meat on it)
 - Symbolizes the *Korban Pesach* (Passover sacrifice) that Jews offered and ate at the Seder
 - **Beitza – Hard-Boiled Egg**
 - Symbolizes the *Korban Chagigah* (holiday sacrifice) that Jews offered and ate at the Seder
 - The egg is a sign of mourning and symbolizes our longing for the *Beis Hamikdash* (Temple)
 - **Marror – Bitter Herbs**
 - Many different vegetables can be used for Marror, but many Jewish communities have the custom to use grated/very finely chopped horseradish



* There are other customs regarding the arrangement of the seder plate. (Some make the entire table one large seder plate and line the perimeter with romaine lettuce!)

- Symbolizes the bitterness of slavery
- **Chazeres – Lettuce**
 - Many different vegetables can be used for Chazeres, but many Jewish communities have the custom to use Romaine Lettuce
 - Symbolizes the bitterness of slavery
- **Charoses**
 - A mixture of grated/chopped apples, wine, and nuts (there are many different customs to add/replace with other fruits and spices)
 - Symbolizes the bricks and mortar that the Jews used in Egypt
- **Karpas - Vegetable**
 - Many different vegetables (other than the ones used for Maror and Chazeres) can be used such as parsley, celery, and boiled potatoes (some use bananas!)
 - Later dipped into saltwater to symbolize the tears of the Jews in Egypt

The Seder

Note: This is a general list of instructions. Portions of the Seder which do not have any instructions beyond reading the text are omitted from this list, so this should merely serve as a supplement to what is in the Haggadah.

- General Guidelines
 - Leaning
 - 1) All leaning must be done on the **left** side
 - 2) Leaning does **not** mean that one must fully recline. All one needs to do is to completely lean (transfer their weight onto) **on something** on their left side.
 - 3) Unless otherwise noted, if one accidentally did not lean while eating or drinking one of the required items, one should repeat the step leaning (without a blessing).
 - 4) One who is mourning for a relative should still lean but in a less luxurious manner than usual.
 - 4 Cups of wine
 - 1) If there is more than one person present at the Seder, it is customary to fill the other person's cup as a symbol of royalty
 - 2) One should try to drink the entire cup, or at least more than half
 - 3) Pure wine may be diluted with water up to 1/3
 - It is preferable to finish Hallel (step 14 in this list), or at least the Afikomen (step 12 in this list) by *chatzos* (midnight in *halacha*) – approximately 12:57AM.
 - One should try to eat each of the required foods (matzah, maror, etc.) within a time span of 2-9 minutes
 - Some men who wear a *kittel* on Yom Kippur have the custom to wear it at the Seder.
 - Sefiras Haomer (Counting the days between Pesach and Shavuot) begins on the second Seder night (after nightfall).
- There are 15 Steps at the Seder:
 - 1) Kaddeish – Kiddush

- 2) Urchatz – Washing
- 3) Karpas – Dipping karpas into salt water
- 4) Yachatz – Splitting the middle matzah
- 5) Maggid – Retelling the story of the Exodus
- 6) Rachtzah – Washing hands
- 7) Motzi – Making the blessing on the matzah
- 8) Matzah – Making the blessing second on the matzah
- 9) Marror – Eating marror
- 10) Koreich – Making a sandwich of matzah and marror
- 11) Shulchan Oreich – The festive meal
- 12) Tzafun – Eating the Afikomen (dessert)
- 13) Bareich – Saying Grace After Meals
- 14) Hallel – Praising God
- 15) Nirtzah – Prayers and songs to conclude the Seder

1) Kaddeish – Kiddush

- a. Some have the custom to say or sing the 15 steps of the Seder before Kiddush:
- b. Everyone's glasses should be filled with wine
- c. Kiddush is recited
- d. The wine should be drunk while reclining
- e. One should not drink any wine (or grape juice or other alcoholic beverages) in between the first and second cup of wine (at the end of step 5)

2) Urchatz – Washing

- a. A cup of water is filled and both hands are washed as done for bread (2 times on the right hand and 2 times on the left) **but without any blessing**

3) Karpas

- a. The Karpas is dipped into salt water
- b. The blessing of *Ha'adamah* is made
 - i. One should have in mind that the blessing should also be on the Marror that one will eat later
 - ii. One should eat less than a *kezayis* [an olive volume – roughly half an egg] of the vegetable
- c. One should **not** recline when eating the Karpas

4) Yachatz – Dividing

- a. The middle matzah is broken in half
- b. The smaller part is returned back to the middle, while the larger part is put away for the Afikomen (dessert)
 - i. Many have the custom for the young (and young at heart!) to hide the Afikomen

5) Maggid – The Recitation of the Story

Recounting the story of leaving Egypt is the primary focus of the Seder. This story has been passed down from generation to generation as the bedrock of our faith and heritage. It has been told throughout the world wherever Jews have been. Whether it was a large family basking in the glow of the Beis Hamikdash in Jerusalem or alone in a cellar hiding from the

*Inquisition, Nazis, or KGB, Jews have recounted and relived God's miracles and love taking us out of Egypt - free to be His beloved children and Chosen Nation. Such a memory and message can only be properly experienced and transmitted with the verbalization and engagement of the text. **Therefore, even if one is the only person at the Seder, the Haggadah must be said aloud.** On this eve, we join together in conversation with generations past and generations to come. It is a colloquy that transcends space, time, and homes - one that informs and inspires our Judaism throughout the year and our lives.*

- a. It is important to understand the text of the Haggadah, and the passages should be translated if necessary
- b. *Ha Lachma Anya* – This is the Bread
 - i. During this passage, the matzah is lifted (or pointed to) for all to see
- c. *Ma Nishtanah* – The Four Questions
 - i. The second cup of wine is poured before the questions are asked
 - ii. During this passage the Seder Plate is removed
 - iii. It is customary for the youngest person to ask the questions
 - iv. Even if one is alone, the questions must be asked out loud
- d. *Avadim Hayinu* – We Were Slaves
 - i. The Seder Plate is returned
 - ii. The matzos are uncovered during the recitation
- e. *Vehi Sheamdah* – This Has Sustained Us
 - i. During this passage, the Matzah is covered and the wine cups are raised
- f. 10 Plagues
 - i. A drop of wine is spilled by pouring or with a finger at the following points
 1. For the three terms in the phrase: דם ואש ותימרות עשן (blood, fire, and pillars of smoke)
 2. For each of the 10 plagues
 3. For each of mnemonic acronyms: ד"צ"ר ע"ש ב"א ח"ב (acronyms for the 10 plagues)
 - ii. The cups are refilled with new wine
- g. Rabban Gamliel
 - i. This passage references the Pesach sacrifice, the matzah, and marror. As the text indicates **one who does not say or listen to this passage (and understand it) has not fulfilled the minimum requirements of the *mitzvah* of retelling the Pesach story.**
 - ii. During the passage referencing matzah, the middle (broken piece) is lifted (or pointed to)
 - iii. During the passage referencing marror, the marror is lifted (or pointed to)
- h. Hallel - Praise
 - i. Before Hallel begins, the matzos are covered and cup is raised for at least the paragraph before Hallel (*Lefichach*)
- i. The Second Cup

- i. The cup is raised during the blessing
 - ii. The wine should be drunk reclining
- 6) Rachtzah – Washing
 - a. Hands are washed as regular for bread (2 times on the right hand and 2 times on the left) with the regular blessing
- 7) & 8)[§] Motzi & Matzah
 - a. The Matzos are raised for the blessing of *Hamotzi*
 - b. The bottom Matzah is placed down for the second blessing of *Al Achilas Matzah*
 - c. Some have a custom to not put salt on the matzah
 - d. Each person should eat 2 *kezaisim* [2 olive volumes – roughly an egg] of matzah
 - e. The matzah should be eaten reclining
 - i. If one forgot to lean, one should eat half the above volume again
- 9) Marror – Bitter Herbs
 - a. Marror is dipped into Charoses
 - b. One should eat a *kezayis* [an olive volume – roughly half an egg] of marror
 - c. One should **not** recline
- 10) Korech – Sandwich
 - a. A combination of matzah and marror dipped in charoses is eaten
 - b. One should eat a *kezayis* [an olive volume – roughly half an egg] of marror and a *kezayis* of matzah
 - c. The sandwich is eaten reclining
 - i. If one forgot to lean, one does **not** need to repeat
- 11) Shulchan Aruch – The Festive Meal
 - a. Some have the custom to eat the *Beitza* – hard-boiled egg
 - b. It is customary to not eat roasted meat or poultry on the Seder night
 - i. Meat that is roasted and subsequently boiled (cooked with water) is fine
- 12) Tzafun – Uncovering the Afikomen
 - a. The Afikomen (the other half of the broken matzah that was put away earlier) is eaten
 - b. One should eat a *kezayis* [an olive volume – roughly half an egg] of Matzah
 - c. The Afikomen should be eaten reclining
 - d. One should not eat any food after eating the Afikomen
 - i. If one needs to eat something else, one should subsequently eat another piece of matzah to count as the Afikomen (while leaning)
 - e. With the exception of the remaining two cups of wine, one should not drink any additional wine or strong beverages. Water or mild tasting beverages are fine.
- 13) Bareich – The Grace Over Meals
 - a. The third cup of wine is poured before *Birchas Hamazon* (Grace Over Meals)
 - b. *Birchas Hamazon* is recited
 - i. The additions for Pesach (*Shir Hama'alos*, *Ya'aleh Veyavo*, and the *Harachaman* for Yom Tov) are added to the regular *Birchas Hamazon*

[§] The two steps of Motzi – the blessing of Hamotzi – and Matzah - the blessing of Al Achilas Matzah – are grouped together.

- c. The third cup wine should be drunk afterwards reclining
- 14) Hallel – Praise
- a. The fourth cup of wine is poured
 - b. Many have the custom to fill Elijah's cup
 - c. The door to one's home is opened and *Shefoch Chamuscha* (Pour Out Your Wrath) is recited
 - d. Hallel is recited
 - e. The fourth cup of wine should be drunk reclining afterwards
 - f. A *Barcha Acharona* (blessing after wine) is recited
- 15) Nirtzah – Acceptance
- a. The passage *Chasal Siddur Pesach* (The Pesach Seder has Concluded) and *Leshanah Haba'ah Beyerushalyaim* (Next Year in Jerusalem) are sung
 - b. On the first night, the passage *Uvichen Vayehi Bachatzi Halaylah* (And so it Happened in the Middle of the Night) is sung, while on the second night, the passage *Uvichein Va'amertem Zevach Pesach* (And So You Shall Say This is the Pesach Sacrifice) is sung
 - c. The following are sung on both nights:
 - i. *Ki Lo Na'eh* (For Him it is Fitting)
 - ii. *Adir Hu* (He is Mighty)
 - iii. *Echad Mi Yodeah* (Who Knows One?)
 - iv. *Chad Gadya* (One Little Goat)
 - d. After the Seder has formally concluded, many have the custom to learn and read about the Exodus as much as they are able to

לשנה הבאה בירושלים!!

NEXT YEAR IN
JERUSALEM!!