

SOME NOTES ON PASSOVER

- The five types of Maror, in order of preference are:
 - Lettuce, Chicory, Horseradish, Endives, Wormwood
 - The lettuce, which is least bitter, is most preferred. Why? Because it is tasteless, and is compared to the slavery of assimilation....we don't even realize how bitter our lives have become as the we get used to it, and the bitterness of assimilation becomes impossible to notice
- We need to make sure to cover three topics during the night:
 - Pesach - Passover: Evil passes over the Jewish people as long as they are true to their path
 - Matza - Time: Time is precious. If Matza is made in 17 minutes and 59 seconds, it is kosher for Passover. One second more and it is considered Hametz and not fit for the Seder
 - Maror - Assimilation: See above

Some Insights from Hasidic Masters:

- "According to the Holy Kabala the 1st nite-the Matza is called "Food of FAITH". The 2nd nite is called "Food of Health". Don't miss an ounce of the 2nd nite even if U R Alone." *(From a text sent to Rabbi M. Barclay by R. Shlomo "Schwartzie" Schwartz on Thursday, April 21, 2016)*
- Rebbe Nachman taught that we should be careful not to be so stringent in our practice that we become depressed rather than uplifted. He was especially clear about this concept in Passover, where many people went so far in observing the many fine points of custom that they were actually depressed by the holiday. (from Sichoth HaRan235)'
- There are three things for which man has destructive appetites. They are money, sex, and food... Through the three festivals, these three appetites can be rectified. Pesach is the rectification of money. It is

thus written “God gave people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked.” (Ex. 12:36). The Egyptians (their enemies) gave the Israelites gold and silver against their will, since they did not want it at all. This is therefore a rectification for the appetite of money. (Shavuot is the rectification for sex; and Succoth for food and greed. We will study those passages more during those festivals)

- *Some Modern Ideas for a Passover Plate*

- Orange

- The “myth” is that a man said to Susannah Heschel (the daughter of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel z”l) that “a woman belongs on the pulpit like an orange belongs on a Seder Plate”. As part of the feminist movement of the late 20th century, some families place an orange on the plate to symbolize that women do in fact belong on the pulpit.

- Miriam’s Cup of Water

- A glass or cup of water placed next to Elijah’s cup, this is to symbolize the importance of Miriam’s well, which kept the Hebrews nurtured throughout their journey in the desert. Some people will hold it up at the beginning of the Telling of the story, when Miriam is mentioned for placing Moses in the water, with the following words: *Zot Kos Miryam, kos mayim hayim. Zeikher l’yitziat Mitztrayim*, This is the cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. Let us remember the exodus from Egypt.

- Ruth’s Cup

- In the last three years, some very liberal communities have placed a cup of wine for Ruth on the table. This is to symbolize inclusiveness, specifically for the LGBTQ community. The challenge with this theologically is that it adds a 6th cup of wine (which takes away the entire

balance of God's name); and more importantly, that it separates and points out a distinct part of the community. The story of Ruth is specifically and directly in opposition to this concept: the story is about a stranger integrating into Judaism, not Judaism integrating and distinguishing the separate-ness of a "stranger". By making the LGBTQ community member distinct and a special observance, it actually precludes integration into Judaism...and stops the concept of Passover that "we were ALL strangers in a strange land", and that we all come out together.

○ Other foods and customs:

- Cucumber slices to serve as the "zeroah" or arm of God
- Celery dipped in vinegar instead of parsley in salt water
- Scallions to whip each other with during either the recitation of the 10 plagues or the singing of Dayenu
- In Gibraltar, a small bit of actual brick dust is added to the charoset. The Seder leader also runs 3 times around the table when the Haggadah says "we left Egypt in a hurry", holding the Seder plate and hitting each person's head lightly with it while passing by them
- In Syria, there is the custom of putting matza in a knapsack and carrying it while the Haggadah story of exiting Egypt is told
- In Hungary, people bring all their jewelry and put it on the Seder plate as a symbol of the gold and rings that were given to the Hebrews upon exiting Egypt
- Hasidic Jews from the Polish town of Góra Kalwaria, known as Gerer Hasids, re-enact the crossing of the Red Sea on the seventh day of Passover by pouring water on the floor, lifting up their coats, and naming the towns that they would cross in their region of Poland. They raise a glass at each "town" and then thank God for helping them reach their destination. This is a small adaptation of the Kabbalistic last night Seder that is done by our mystics as we embark on the journey of Counting the Omer, awakening our Sephirot, and choosing the freedom of the desert as opposed to the velvet prison of Egypt.

- ***Nissan: The month of Passover***
 - The Mazal (constellation) of the month of Nissan is telah, the lamb or kid --- Sefer Yetzirah 5:9
 - This relates to the Akeidah, the binding of Isaac, who was born in Nissan
 - Nissan is the “Rosh HaShana for Kings” (Bavli, Tractate Rosh HaShana 3a)
 - Jeremiah said that “Israel is like scattered sheep” (Jer. 50:17), but in Nissan this metaphor is extended as an understanding that in this month, which has lambs as its mazal, the people of Israel gather together and unite in the nature of lambs. (Shem HaShmuel)
 - The month of Nissan corresponds to the letter Hey ה From this letter is created all the open space, deep oceans, humans, and all other creatures according to Rashi Menachos 29b It combines the letter dalet ד which is the letter of creation for this world, and yod י which is the letter of the world to come. Moreover, Sefer Yetzirah teaches that hey “was enthroned upon speech”, and is the month of Judah (from whom the kingship is descended)
 - This means that through a conscious telling (speech) of Passover Seder, we are able to access all of creation, and our sovereignty

- ***From Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum (Azamra Institute in Jerusalem):***

- **Nissan**

- "This month will be for you the head of the months" (Exodus 12:2). Nissan, the month of redemption for the Children of Israel in all ages, is the first of the months. It is also called *Aviv*, Springtime, for in Israel the rains and clouds of winter are mostly gone, the hills are green and a flower, the fruit trees are in blossom, and the wheat and barley in the fields are reaching full ripeness.
- The mild sunny spring days are ideal for walks in the country to reconnect with nature after being closed up at home during the winter. Release and joy are the themes of the Pesach (Passover) festival that takes place on the night of the full moon of the month of Nissan. In preparation for the festival, Chassidim would go out into the woods and meadows for lengthy periods of prayer and meditation. Those who are unable to go out into nature before or during Pesach can experience the natural beauty of spring through

the customary reading of Song of Songs after the Pesach *Seder* and on the Shabbat that falls during the festival (*Shabbat Chol HaMoed*).

- Because of the requirement for our homes to be free of all *Chametz* (leaven) during Pesach, people tend to be preoccupied with home cleaning in preparation for the festival. While the autumn Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur season of awe is associated with looking *inside* ourselves with introspection and self-examination, the spring-time pre-Pesach cleaning of our closets and drawers, houses and yards puts the focus on the *outer* home and surrounding environment. Pesach cleaning is a good opportunity to think carefully about our lifestyle how to bring it into greater harmony with God and nature.

● **The Festival of Pesach**

- The seven day festival of Pesach is the first of the three annual pilgrim festivals. In Temple times Jews would flock to Jerusalem to enter the awesome, sacred courtyards of the Temple and offer the Pesach and other festival sacrifices, after which they would join with their families, friends and the poor and needy for ritual meals where they would eat of the sacrificial meat and joyously partake of *Maaser Sheni*, the special tithe of all the different kinds of produce of the land which they would bring to eat in Jerusalem in holiness and purity. The streets of Jerusalem were bedecked with produce and filled with excited crowds together with their sacrificial sheep, goats and cows.
- At present we can only imagine all this and think ourselves into the spirit of the festival using the *Machzor*, the Festival Prayer Book, with its many references to Temple practice. Thus on the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nissan, eve of the Pesach Seder Night, it is customary to recite passages about the Pesach sacrifice that was brought on that day. Reference has already been made to the connection between the paschal lamb and the Ram or Aries, the astrological sign of Nissan (see [Month by Month](#)).
- In our time when we do not have the Pesach sacrifice, the main focus of the festival celebration is the Seder Night ritual, when we recite the *Haggadah* telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt, drink four cups of wine, and eat *Matzah*, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs (*Maror*). Sitting at our tables bedecked with the Pesach plate and its colorful greens, vegetables and the shankbone and egg symbolizing the Pesach sacrifices, our homes are once again a mini-Temple and our tables an altar.
- At the heart of the idea of redemption from Egypt is that of spiritual redemption from distorted, restrictive worldviews and mindsets. Egypt represents the ultimate in sophisticated city decadence and corruption, from which the Children of Israel had to escape in order to build a new way of life founded on a simple, pure truth that could be learned only amidst the stark natural grandeur of the wilderness. The Exodus teaches that God rules over everything. The Haggadah can be understood on a multitude of levels. For the ecologically-minded, the account of the ten ecological catastrophes or "Plagues" with which God smote the Egyptians should provide plentiful material for thought.
- In Temple times the sixteenth of Nissan was the time of the *Omer*, a national offering of a portion of the finest barley flour from the new crop specially harvested the previous evening and brought to the Temple together with special animal sacrifices. The weeks following Pesach are in Israel the time of the grain harvest, and the Omer offering was the first from the new grain. Before the sixteenth of Nissan it is not permitted to eat from the new crop, for man may only partake of the fruits of this world after first giving thanks and acknowledgment to God. The humble offering of barley (which is primarily an

animal food) brings us into the harvest season with the proper attitude of respect and gratitude. According to the Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a), Pesach is the time when God judges the world for grain, determining the success of the harvest. The Omer offering brought at this time of judgment has obvious ecological implications.

- *The second major climax of the Pesach celebrations comes on the seventh day of the festival, recalling the splitting of the Red Sea, which the Children of Israel crossed on dry land while the Egyptians were finally destroyed. The timely parting of the waters was one of the most striking historical exceptions to the normal workings of nature, showing that God is in total control of every part of creation, making and suspending the laws of nature at will. The Seventh day of Pesach is an appropriate time for reflection on God's control of natural processes and the concept of miracles. It is also a time for looking forward to the messianic redemption that we are now awaiting, hailing the restoration of the Holy Temple and bringing the world to be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the seas.*



The four cups of wine, known in Hebrew as *arba kosot*, are drunk by each participant at the Passover *seder* service.

This ceremony is prescribed by the Mishnah as a duty to be observed by even the poorest man (Pes. 10: 1). The four cups are drunk in the following order: (1) the *Kiddush* at the start of the *seder*; (2) at the conclusion of the main part of the *Haggadah* which ends with the *Ge'ullah* ("Redemption") benediction; (3) at the end of the Grace after Meals; and (4) at the conclusion of the *Nishmat* hymn ("*Birkat ha-Shir*"). Only the second and fourth cups were added for the *seder* meal since the drinking of the two other cups forms part of every meal on Sabbaths and holidays. The reason for four cups is based by the rabbis upon the midrashic interpretation of Exodus 6:6–7, where four different terms of deliverance are employed: "I will bring you out ... deliver you ... redeem you ... and will take you to Me for a people," etc. (Ex. R. 6:4). Other symbolic explanations for the four cups are that they correspond to the four cups of Pharaoh mentioned in Genesis, ch. 40, or to the four ancient kingdoms which oppressed Israel and for which God requites Israel with four cups of consolation (TJ, Pes. 10:1, 37b–c).

The text literally says (Mishna Pes 10:1) "they should provide him with no fewer than four cups of wine", leaving the potential of the fifth cup being hidden, but provided in a different way. The understanding is that this refers to the verse, "***I will bring you*** into the land" (ibid). This is a promise for a future, so it is a "hidden" cup as the future world has not yet been revealed. Since the herald of the future times is Elijah, this is one of the reasons that this cup is "Elijah's Cup"

God's Name of YHWH (Yod Hey Vav Hey) הוה'
 Elijah the Prophet: אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיאַת El *YaHu-Ha* Navi

אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיאַת, אֱלֹהֵי הַתְּשֻׁבִי, אֱלֹהֵי הַגִּלְעָדִי. בְּמַהֲרָה
 בְּיָמֵינוּ, יָבֹא אֱלֵנוּ, עִם מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן-דָּוִד.

May Elijah the prophet,
 Elijah the Tishbite,
 Elijah of Gilead,
 quickly in our day come to us
 with the Messiah, the Son of David
 (*Chanted at the end of Havdalah*)



“In the Image of God”
(YHWH Vertically)

ה

Bottom Hey: Purely Physical/ Assiyah/ 1st Cup/ Morning

Blessings/ "I will take you out" (Ex.6:6)/ Sanctification/ Salvation from harsh labor

ו

Vav: Physical with a little Spiritual/ Yetzirah/ 2nd Cup/ Pesukei

D'Zimra/ Psalms/ "I will save you" (Ex.6:6)/ Redemption/ Salvation from servitude

ה

Top Hey: Spiritual with a little Physical/ Bria/ 3rd Cup/ Shema

and its Blessing/ "I will redeem you" (Ex.6:6)/ Blessing/ Splitting of the Sea of Reeds

י

Yod: Purely Spiritual/ Atzilut/ 4th Cup/ Amidah/ "I will take you as a nation" (Ex.6:7)/ Acceptance/ Becoming a nation at Sinai

י

"Kutz of the Yod" (top point)/ Intention/ Hidden Fifth Cup/ Torah Reading/ "And I will bring you" (Ex.6:8)/ Coming of Messiah & Temple Rebuilt