

A PESAH SEDER GUIDE

Seder literally means order, and lel haseder is called this because it follows the format that is customarily recited at the beginning of the seder: kadesh, urhas, karpas, yahas, magid, ruhsah, mosey-masah, maror, koreh, shulhan oreh, safun, bareh, hallel, nirsah. This is the order of the seder and each one of these words contains within it many laws and traditions. Without preparation we won't know what kadesh or urhas is. If we aren't familiar with the detailed halachot, we could go our entire lives making sedarim where the son teaches the father what to do instead of fulfilling the misvah of "vihigadeta lebinha", the father teaching the son. The key to a good seder is preparation, the more you have prepared, the better it flows. The father is the leader of the seder and he must know all of the halachot, he must take control and lead the family, telling them at each point when to lean to the side, the amount one must drink and eat etc. It is advisable at each juncture for the baal habayit to give a short introduction to the upcoming misvah.

Erev Pesah

The Gemara relates that twice a year Rabbi Akiva would come into the Bet Medrash and tell everyone to stop their learning and go home. Once was on Erev Yom Hakipurim, so that they could fulfill the misvah of eating the seudat hamafsket before fasting, and once was on Erev Pesach so that the fathers would go home to ensure that the children would sleep and be well rested, because the seder is all about the children. Making sure they nap is a prerequisite to "Vihigadeta Lebinha". It is incumbent on the parents to make sure the children sleep on erev Pessah, so that they are awake at the seder, for the seder begins when it is already late and if they haven't slept they might miss the most important parts of the seder. It is recommended for the adults as well to lie down for an hour to regain your strength so you can lead the seder energetically. This is especially pertinent to the women, who work hard the entire month prior to Pessah, they need to rest so they don't come to Lel Haseder exhausted. Let them enjoy the great moments for which they have invested so many preparations. Furthermore, the Shulhan Aruh writes, "yesader shulhano mebi od yom", you must set your table ahead of time so that when the men come home from bet hakneset, the table is already set and Kiddush can be recited immediately so that the children remain awake for the seder. Maran also writes, "yahin makom moshavo", prepare your seat ahead of time, leaving sufficient space on your left for haseva.

The Kos and the wine

For each of the four cups, the halacha says to fill the cup to the top and to drink at least rov kos, more than half, but if it is a very large cup, more than half is quite a lot of wine. Therefore when choosing a cup, make sure that it holds eighty-six grams but isn't too much bigger than that. The kos should be glass and not plastic but there is no preference to a glass with a stem over a flat one. It is preferable to use red wine but one can use grape juice and in the case of women and children it is even ideal to do so. If a person is sensitive to wine and drinking wine will prevent him from doing the other misvot properly, he too should drink a kos of grape juice for the first three kosot, using the same shiur as if it were wine, and he can use wine for the fourth kos since most people go to sleep soon after the fourth kos. It is preferable to use wine that is not mevushal, but of course then he must make sure that the opened bottle is not touched by any goyim.

Types of Massa

Haham Ben-Sion didn't like using machine massa for lel haseder, therefore hand made massa shemura with a good hechsher should be used at the seder. Some have the minhag of using hard massa, but for those who don't have this minhag, soft massa is also acceptable, as long as it has a good hechsher. In either case the box should be marked "avodat yad", hand made.

When and How to Recline

The Raavayah determines that since people no longer eat as was once common practice, namely close to the floor on a couch or supported by cushions, it is therefore no longer obligatory to recline, causing us discomfort instead of feeling like kings. Maran rejects this opinion and considers reclining mandatory even today when we are used to eating sitting up straight in chairs. We recline while drinking the arbah kosot and while eating the massa. If one does not recline as he drinks one of the arbah kosot, he hasn't fulfilled his obligation and must drink another kos. So **before** making Kiddush, the baal habayit should make an announcement, reminding everyone to recline while drinking. Keep in mind that reclining, haseva, is always to the left. Each person should concentrate on reclining to his own left and not be confused by the people sitting opposite him who look like they're reclining to their right. The Sages offer two reasons for reclining to the left. One is for safety purposes,

to avoid the sakana of our food or drink being ingested by the windpipe which might happen if we lean to the right. The other reason is practical. Since most people are righties and need their right hands to eat, reclining to the left makes their right hands available for holding the kos or the massa. The Rabbis decided that even a lefty should recline to the left, despite the inconvenience, in order to avoid the aforementioned sakana. Haham Ben-Sion defines haseva as leaning forty-five degrees to the left, and one must be leaning on something such as the back of the chair or the table, and not simply leaning to the side in mid air with no support. Leave enough room for this when preparing the seating. It is debatable whether or not women should recline, some opinions maintain that a woman shouldn't do haseva unless she is considered an isha hashuva, an important woman. Shulhan Aruch says that all women are hashuvot, important and significant, and therefore they should also recline.

Setting The Seder Plate

The baal habayit comes home and sets up the keara. The various items must be set on a plate, not directly on the table. It doesn't matter whether the plate is plastic, metal or china or if it is marked where each item should be placed. The Ben Ish Hai says to place the three massot at the top of the plate, the shank bone on the right, an egg on the left, the marror in the middle, the haroset on the bottom right, the celery for carpas on the bottom left and the endives for the hazeret on the very bottom in the center. The mahzor has a picture depicting where each item is placed on the keara. We only need one keara per table and it remains in front of the baal habayit throughout the entire seder.

Here is a short explanation regarding the three massot on the keara. The top massa and half of the middle massa are used for mosey-masa, the other half of the middle massa is saved for the afikoman at the end of the seder. The bottom massa is used for koreh.

Our minhag is to begin the seder by singing the sequence of the seder, kadesh, urhas etc.

Kadesh

Before reciting Kiddush, we cover the keara, just as we cover the hallah on a regular Friday night. We make Kiddush, which is the first of the four kosot. Everybody should have a cup in front of him. The halahah requires the cup to be rinsed inside and outside before using it for the first kos, and the strict letter of the law doesn't require rinsing it again before each of the other kosot, although the kaballah does recommend this as does the Ben Ish Hai. In

any case, before Kiddush is recited the cup must be rinsed and then filled with wine. Since on this night we are free, we do not fill the cup for ourselves, rather someone else fills it for us. So each person can fill another person's cup. After the cup is filled we do mezigah, we pour three drops of water into the cup. The poskim say that one must drink eighty six grams of wine. The wine should be drunk in one shot and not sipped leisurely. If he cannot drink it in one shot, he may drink it in a few gulps but quickly, making sure to finish it within a few minutes. If he can't drink the entire content of the cup, the poskim say he has to drink at least rov kos, the majority of the wine in the cup, but of course it is preferable to drink it all. The baal habayit should make an announcement before Kiddush that one may not talk during Kiddush, not even to say baruch hu ubaruch shemo, because the baal habayit's Kiddush is everyone's Kiddush, he is helping us fulfill our obligation. Only answer amen. If someone does say baruch hu ubaruch shemo, bediavad it is ok so don't get upset at him, but lehathila it is better not to do so. The baal habayit should also announce that after Kiddush he will be reciting the berahah of shehehyanu and that everyone should have in mind that the beraha should include the other misvot to be preformed tonight, massa, marror and the four kosot on which we do not recite shehehyanu separately and are all included in the shehehyanu of the Kiddush. Some say that this shehehyanu even includes the misvah of sefirat haomer. The mekadash must pronounce the words of the Kiddush clearly. Have in mind that the berahah of hagefen is not only for the first kos, but also the second kos, as the minhag of the sefaradim is not to make another hagefen again before the second kos. In fact have kavanah that the berahah of hagefen made on the first kos includes any kos, not only the first and second, just in case someone forgets to do hasevah and has to drink an additional cup which isn't really the first or the second kos.

Everyone stands for Kiddush. Someone should hold the kos from the bottom in both of his hands (if the kos is a glass with a stem this doesn't mean under the stem rather under the wine receptacle) handing the mekadash the kos. The mekadash should receive the kos with both hands and then transfer the kos to his right hand. According to Rabbenu Haari the kos is held in the finger tips. Then the baal habayit performs mezigah , pouring three drops of water from another glass with his right hand. As he pours the three drops he says maleh yadenu mibirhotecha. Don't add more than three drops of water since our wine is already diluted and diluting it any more might change its berahah from hagefen to shehakol. Kiddush and shehehyanu are recited, everyone reclines forty-five degrees to the left, leaning on something such as the back of the chair or the table, and then everyone drinks the wine. Any wine that spills in the process doesn't count as part of the shiur. If you didn't drink the proper amount because the wine spilled on your shirt or elsewhere, drink more wine until you have completed the shiur.

Urchas and Karpas

After drinking the Kiddush wine, the baal habayit should explain to everyone what comes next. Urchas means we wash our hands without making a berachah. We wash because we are about to dip the karpas, the celery which has been dipped into saltwater. The Shulhan Aruch writes that anytime (not only during the seder) we eat something that has been dipped into one of the seven liquids, one of them being water, we must first wash our hands, without making a berachah on this washing. We wash our hands just as we wash netilat yadayim for bread, three times on the right hand and three times on the left hand. Then we are quiet until we take a small piece of celery, less than a kezayit, make sure it has no bugs on it, dip the celery in the saltwater and the baal habayit makes the berachah of borei peri haadamah. Have in mind that this berachah of haadama is also for the marror that we will be eating later. We do not answer baruch hu uvaruh shemo, we just answer amen and eat the celery, the karpas. According to the halahah, one can use any vegetable upon which the berachah of borei peri haadamah is recited, except marror, but we specifically use celery because our minhag follows Rabbenu Haari. Karpas, כרפס spells ס-פרך backwards, symbolizing the six hundred thousand Jews who were in servitude. We do not have to recline when eating the karpas. The minhag in Halab was not to recline. Leave at least some celery on the keara.

All this must be explained before everyone leaves the table to wash for urhas, because after washing we don't talk.

Yahas

We raise the three masot. Each one of the masot corresponds to one of the Avot, Avraham, Yishak and Yaakov and also to Kohen, Levi and Yisrael. The baal habayit takes the middle masa and breaks it into two pieces, one big and the other smaller. Making a daled and a vav out of the masa is not a halachah, it is kabalah and it's very hard to do, so don't worry if it doesn't look like a daled and a vav. Instead make sure that your kavana is for the vav to be the bigger piece and the daled to be the smaller one. The small piece is placed right back in between the two whole massot, where the middle massa was originally. The big piece is placed in the massa cover and the Syrian minhag is that the baal habayit places it over his left shoulder and says "Misharotam Serurot Besivlotam Al Shihmam uvnei yisrael asu kidvar moshe" minjeye (where are you coming from?) (where are you going?) to Yerushalayim etc.

Harei ze halifati, harei ze kaparati harei ze temurati. Then he passes it to the next person who repeats all this. Handle the masa gently so it doesn't break too much in the process. The women can also do this and instead of singing the words they should say them to avoid kol isha. The minhag is then to give the afikoman to one of the children who goes off and hides it. This is in order to keep the children interested and awake until the end of the seder. Later we ask the children to bring it back and we offer them a prize. I advise that an adult or older child accompany the child hiding the afikoman massa so it isn't hidden in a place where it might be destroyed or in case that child falls asleep before we need it and the secret of its hiding place goes to sleep with him.

Maggid

Magid, telling the story of leaving Misrayim, is the most important part of the seder. Women are also obligated in the hagadah like the men, preferably they should read from the hagadah even if it is in English and at the very least they should listen. Our minhag is that the entire family reads it together. We may speak throughout the hagadah only about matters relevant to the hagadah, otherwise we should refrain from talking. Before Magid we pour the second cup of wine. Then we recite one paragraph, Ha Laahmah Anya and we take the keara off the table, so that the children should ask why we are taking the keara off the table. In order to arouse their attention, be a bit dramatic when removing the keara off the table, pretending that the seder is over. Then the children will ask why you have finished the seder before the meal has been served. Our custom from Syria is to give it to a girl of marriageable age or the one closest in age, as if to say, go get married and leave the home, everyone gives her berahot and she stays in the kitchen. Then the children are really very curious and they ask, "mah nishtanah halayla hazeh mikol halelot". The custom is to allow each child to ask the mah nishtana. The halahah says to give the children gifts on the night of lel haseder to keep them curious. In the olden days they used to give the children nuts while today we give them candies and small toys. After the ma nishtana the keara is brought back in and we say avadim hayinu, which is actually the answer to the ma nishtana, the four questions. Any divrei Torah at the table must be geared toward the children and delivered in a way that they can comprehend. Allot a specific amount of time for magid, maybe thirty-five or forty-five minutes. Most of the divrei Torah said at the table should revolve around Yesiat Misrayim itself which instills emunah. Don't get too involved in the details of the introductory paragraphs. I recommend reading through the meam luaz or the midrash tanhuma on parshiot vaera, bo and beshalah and then teach it at the seder. When you reach the part of the hagadah that lists the ten plagues, our minhag is that someone stands next to the baal habayit holding a vessel, preferably a broken vessel and even plastic

is fine. Fill a cup with wine, this time the amount is insignificant, there is no shiur. As the baal habayit reads "dam vaesh vetimrot ashan" he pours out a little wine from the cup into the vessel for each of those three words. Then he continues "elu eser makot shehevi hakadosh baruh hu al hamisrim bemisrayim veelu hen" and as he utters the name of each maka he again pours some wine from the cup into the broken vessel. He also pours a little out for each of the acronyms given by Rabbi Yehuda, "desah, adash and beahav". No one should be looking into the vessel because it symbolizes the sitra ahra, the shedim and ruhot, all the evil. Don't even look at the wine in the vessel and get rid of it immediately, pour it down the sink and throw the vessel away. There are many reasons for this minhag, the idea being that the makot that G-d gave in misrayim are only a drop in the bucket compared to what He will do for us leatid lavo, at the time of the final redemption.

Pesah, Massa and Marmor

Now we reach the main part of the seder, Pesah, Massa and Marmor. Here we stop and emphasize the importance of everyone saying Pesah, Massa and Maror. We read a paragraph for each of these three items, and it is worthwhile to read it also in English so that everyone understands. When calling out the first word "Pesah", keep your hands to yourself, **don't** point to the shank bone because this isn't the real kurban Pesah, and we don't want to designate it as such. When calling out "Masa" we do point to the Masa on the keara and we also point to the marmor when we call out "Marmor". Then we sing dayenu and raise the cup for vehi sheamdah. Afterwards we uncover the masot and there are only a few more paragraphs until the end of magid. Lefihah anahnu hayavim etc.

Before reciting the final beracha "asher gealanu vegaal et avoteinu", make sure to gather everyone back around the table and announce: "Everyone sit down, now we are making a berahah on the kos, everyone take the cup in your right hand, everyone must listen and don't answer baruh hu uvaruh shemo. When I say gaal yisrael answer amen, recline to your left for haseva and drink the second cup of wine."

Follow the hagada, as it will instruct you when to fill the cups with wine and when to raise the cups. Whenever we raise the cup, we first cover the massa.

Rohsa, Mosi-Massa

No one should get up to wash their hands until they hear the baal habayit's explanation on mosi-massa because after washing we don't talk. The baal habayit explains: There is a misvah deoraitah, from the Torah to eat massa on the night of the seder. This is an obligation for both men and women. Lehathila, it is preferable to eat two kezaytim for mosi-massa, if it is too difficult then eat only one kezayit. The Sefaradim usually measure by volume and only when it is difficult to measure volume we measure the by weight. This is what the Kaf Hachayim and Haham Ovadiah say. On Lel Haseder it is important to measure by volume because measuring by weight will mean that you'll be eating a lot and you might not be able to do the other misvot properly. Haham Ben-Sion calculated that twenty grams is the volume of one kezayit. So for mosi-massa we need to eat forty grams of massa. The baal habayit raises all the massot from the keara, the top and bottom ones are whole, the middle one is not. He recites the beraha of hamotzi for which he needs the two whole massot, so that he has lehem mishnah. After this berahah, he no longer needs the bottom one so he puts the bottom one back on the keara and holds the top one and a half massot while reciting the next beraha of al ahilat massa. Then he breaks off a small piece from the top massa and a small piece from the half massa underneath it and he must dip it in salt, for massa is made without salt. He does this for everyone at the table so they get a taste from these two massot, but this is not nearly enough massa to fulfill the misva, so we add more massa from the box. I recommend that before pesah you measure forty grams of massa and prepare individual little packets or bags for each participant at the seder. Then each person will receive a little bit of massa from the top and middle massot and in addition a packet with premeasured two kezaytim of massa. This saves time at the seder and everyone knows exactly how much to eat without overeating which people often do out of doubt. Kiss the massa. Eat it nicely because there is no reason to stuff it down. You have four minutes to eat each kezayit, eight minutes for both kezaytim. We may eat the massa with salt but not anything else. The Zohar hakadosh calls the massa maichla d'asuta , bread with medicinal properties, so instead of complaining about eating the massa, consider it a cure and a gift. Eating the massa is the main misvah of the night. Haham Ben-Sion used to say halayla hazeh kulo massa, this night is all about eating the massa and all the other food is secondary. At shulchan aruh Haham Ben-Sion would eat only a kezayit of meat and a few spoonfuls of soup and then he would eat more massa because he held that every additional kezayit of massa that one eats on lel haseder is a misvah deoraita. This is also emerges from the wording of the Ramba"m.

Marror, Korech

One has to eat one kezayit of marror (30 grams). The Shulhan Aruh gives five different options of vegetables to use for marror, the best one to use is the romaine lettuce. The lettuce leaves must be checked very well for bugs. According to Jewish law a person deserves one hundred and thirty nine lashes for every bug he eats, so wash and check the marror well. This can also be premeasured to save time and overeating. We dip the marror in the haroset just a little bit and we even shake it off. The baal habayit recites the beraha al ahilat marror and everyone eats it without leaning, for leaning represents royalty and freedom yet the marror is bitter and represents slavery. Now we make a massa marror sandwich for korech with one kezayit of massa, which is twenty grams, and one kezayit of marror. Put them together in your hand, dip it in the haroset, this time we don't have to shake it off, and say "zecher lamikdash, beyamenu yehudash kehillel hazaken etc." There is no berahah on the korech. We must eat it while reclining to the left.

Shulhan Orech

Enjoy the seudah. One should have good wine and meat, divrei Torah and singing at this meal. It is said that the malachim watch from above and praise the Jewish people for this seudah. Stop eating before you are full as to leave room in your stomach for the afikoman to be eaten soon.

Our minhag is to take the besah, the egg, from the keara, cut it up, add some salt, say zeher lekurban hagigah and eat it without reclining. One is permitted to eat the zeroa, the shank bone at this point, but certainly **don't** say zeher lekorban pesah! When preparing the zeroa, we either don't roast it at all or first boil it and then roast it, for we don't want it to resemble the korban pesah which was roasted.

Tzafun (eating the afikoman), Barech, Hallel and Nirsah

Now we bring back the piece of massa that was hidden earlier, the afikoman. After we eat the afikoman we are not allowed to eat or drink anything except for water and the last two kosot. The afikoman massa has so many segulot! Small pieces of afikoman massa have been known to be carried around by Tzaddikim and used in times of danger: to calm a stormy sea, to help a woman during a difficult labor or to save someone from an enemy. If you would like to save a little piece you may but the misvah is to eat it. Everyone should

lehathila eat two kezaytim, adding massa from the box, but if you can't then eat one kezayit. Eat it reclining.

The baal habayit announces: "Now we are saying birkat hamazon at the end of which I will be reciting a beraha on the third kos. Everyone have in mind that the berahah also includes the forth kos, don't forget to say yaaleh veyavo and remember to recline to the left for haseiva when drinking the kos! If anyone forgets yaaleh veyavo on lel haseder, he must repeat birkat hamazon." Pour the third cup of wine, raise it from the bottom and say birkat hamazon. During birkat hamazon add water to the kos for mezigah at al hakol.

If you are a guest say birkat haoreah. When everyone finishes, the baal habayit says the beraha of hagefen and everyone drinks behaseiva, reclining to the left.

Now we fill the forth cup , which can either be held or placed in front of us as we recite the hallel. There is no berahah at the beginning of this hallel and therefore at the end of the hallel when we say the final berahah, "meleh mehulal batishbahot" we do not finish with amen. Only when there are berahot both at the beginning and at the end do we say amen. Anyone listening can of course answer amen, but the one reciting the hallel doesn't say that amen, even if it was accidentally printed in his hagadah. Lean on your left side and drink the forth cup. It is preferable to drink the entire kos, but if you can't, then drink at least rov kos, more than half. Then make the berahah ahronah of al hagefen veal peri hagefen.

Nirsa, may Hashem accept our tefillot berason.

The Ramba"m says that one must stay up learning the halahot of pesah until he falls asleep. If you can't stay awake, go to sleep but if you still have energy, stay up and learn hilhot pesah. Haham Ovadiah says that if one stays up to learn, he may have coffee or tea even though it is after the afikoman. Kriat Shema.