



# THE CARNEGIE SHUL SHOFAR

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## Happy Passover

### From the officers of The Carnegie Shul

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## Passover – The Holiday of Miracles

Passover is a holiday of miracles, big miracles, like the plagues set upon Egypt, the Angel of Death passing over the homes of the Jews while taking the lives of Egypt's first born, our ancestors deliverance from slavery, and the parting of the Red Sea.

Some say that such big miracles do not occur in our own everyday lives, but isn't the survival of our very own little Carnegie Shul a big miracle?

The last several weeks have been tough for our shul, especially with the recent illness of our spiritual leader and President, Dr. Larry Block, but with God's help we continue to survive, holding services every Saturday.

But we cannot rely upon God alone to continue to sustain us. We must also sustain ourselves. After all, God helps those who help themselves, doesn't He?

So please, please, if you possibly can, try to attend an occasional Sabbath service. It is a great mitzvah to help us achieve a minyan so that we can read the Torah, repeat the Amidah, and recite the Kaddish prayers.

With your help we can be sure that the miracle of the little shul in Carnegie never ends.

## The Passover Seder

We all know that the Passover seder is a mitzvah we are called upon to perform every year – to retell the story of our ancestors' bondage as slaves in Egypt and the miracle of their deliverance from slavery.

But what exactly does the word "Seder" mean? "Seder" quite literally, is the Hebrew word for "order" and is used to define the strict order of rituals that the Passover Seder service is meant to follow. Over the years, however, many families have chosen to add their own family traditions to the service, making the Seder more personalized. Still, there are many parts of the traditional Seder that the Rabbis tell us must be followed in every Seder. These include, but are not limited to, such things as the asking of the Four Questions, the four cups of wine, and Elijah's cup.

# The Seder Plate & Table



The Seder table features the **Seder Plate** which includes the following items:

- ☆ **Roasted lamb shankbone:** One of the most striking symbols of Passover is the roasted lamb shankbone (called zeroah), which commemorates the paschal (lamb) sacrifice made the night the ancient Hebrews fled Egypt. Some people say it symbolizes the outstretched arm of God (the Hebrew word zeroah can mean “arm”).
- ☆ **Roasted egg:** The roasted egg (baytsah) is a symbol in many different cultures, usually signifying springtime and renewal. Here it stands in place of one of the sacrificial offerings which was performed in the days of the Second Temple. Another popular interpretation is that the egg is like the Jewish people: the hotter you make it for them, the tougher they get. This egg isn’t even eaten during the meal; the shell just needs to look roasted.
- ☆ **Maror (“bitter herb”):** Any bitter herb will work, though horseradish is the most common. Bitter herbs bring tears to the eyes and recall the bitterness of slavery. The seder refers to the slavery in Egypt, but people are called to look at their own bitter enslavements, whether addiction or habit.
- ☆ **Charoset:** There’s nothing further from maror than charoset (“kha-ROH-set”), that sweet salad of

apples, nuts, wine, and cinnamon that represents the mortar used by the Hebrew slaves to make bricks.

- ☆ **Karpas:** Karpas is a green vegetable, usually parsley (though any spring green will do). While karpas may symbolize the freshness of spring, others say people eat it to make them feel like nobility or aristocracy. Some families still use boiled potatoes for karpas, continuing a tradition from Eastern Europe where it was difficult to obtain fresh green vegetables.
- ☆ **Chazeret:** The chazeret (“khah-ZER-et”) is a second bitter herb, most often romaine lettuce, but people also use the leafy greens of a horseradish or carrot plant. The symbolism is the same as that of maror.

Also to be included on the Seder table are:

- ☆ **Salt water:** Salt water symbolizes the tears and sweat of enslavement, though paradoxically, it’s also a symbol for purity, springtime, and the sea, the mother of all life. Often a single bowl of salt water sits on the table, into which each person dips his karpas during the seder. Then, it’s traditional to begin the actual seder meal with each person eating a hardboiled egg (not the roasted egg!) dipped in the bowl of salt water.
- ☆ **Matzah:** Perhaps the most important symbol on the seder table is a plate that has a stack of three pieces of matzah (unleavened bread) on it. The matzot (that’s plural for matzah) are typically covered with a cloth. People have come up with numerous interpretations for the three matzot. Some say they represent the Kohen class (the Jewish priests in ancient times), the Levites (who supported the priests), and the Israelites (the rest of the Jews). What symbolism you attribute to this stack of three isn’t all that important, as long as you’re thinking about it.
- ☆ **Wine cups and wine (or grape juice):** Everyone at the Seder has a (usually very small) cup or glass from which they drink four cups of wine. Traditionally, the four cups represent the four biblical promises of redemption: “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you from their slavery, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments. And I

will take you to me for a people . . .” Others say the four cups represent the four letters in the unspeakable Name of God.

Some of the symbols aren’t eaten, such as the roasted lamb shankbone and the roasted egg. However, when it comes time to eat the karpas, the charoset, and the other symbols, different families have different traditions. Some eat the symbols from the seder plate; others give each person their own mini-seder plate to eat from; at larger events, these items may be served family style, with large bowls being passed around so that people can serve themselves.

☆ ***An extra wine glass for Elijah the Prophet.***



Additionally, some families have also added a Miriam’s Cup to the Seder table. The Miriam’s cup is filled with water. It serves as a symbol of Miriam’s Well, which was the source of water for the Israelites in the desert. Putting a Miriam’s Cup on the table is done by those who want to make their seder more inclusive.

## The Four Questions

One of the highlights of the Seder occurs when the youngest child asks the Four Questions.

Actually, in most Hagaddahs, there is only one question, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” followed by four statements, but here is a rephrasing that makes questions out of the four statements:



1. On all other nights we eat either bread or matzah; on this night, why only matzah?
2. On all other nights we eat herbs or vegetables of any kind; on this night why bitter herbs?
3. On all other nights we do not dip even once; on this night why do we dip twice?
4. On all other nights we eat our meals in any manner; on this night why do we sit around the table together in a reclining position?

The rest of the participants at the Seder answer thusly:

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and God brought us out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. And if God had not brought our ancestors out of Egypt, we and our children and our children's children would still be subjugated to Pharaoh in Egypt. Even if we were all old and wise and learned in Torah, we would still be commanded to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. And the more we talk about the Exodus from Egypt, the more praiseworthy we are.

Interestingly, this response, which is found in most Hagaddahs, does not actually answer the Four Questions. So here are some actual answers:

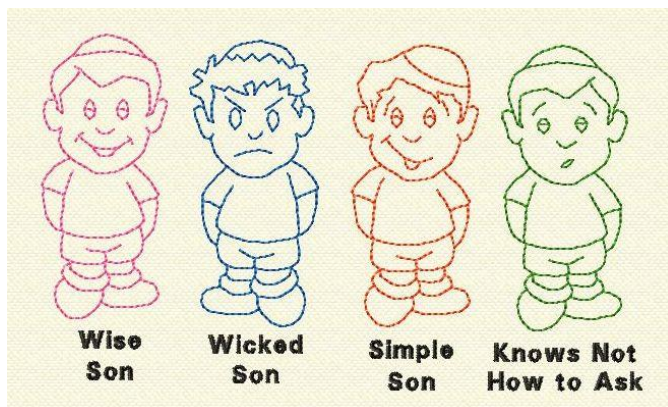
- ☆ Matzah was the bread of slaves and poor, it was cheap to produce and easy to make.
- ☆ Matzah also commemorates the fact that the bread did not have enough time to rise when the Jews hastily left Egypt.



- ☆ The maror (bitter herbs) reminds us of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt.
- ☆ The salt water into which we dip the karpas (vegetable) represents the tears we cried while in Egypt. Similarly, the charoset (fruit-nut paste) into which the bitter herbs are dipped reminds us of the cement we used to create the bricks in Egypt.
- ☆ Additionally, dipping food is considered a luxury; a sign of freedom — as opposed to the poor (and enslaved) who eat "dry" and un-dipped foods.
- ☆ And we recline in order to commemorate our freedom as reclining on cushions was reserved for royalty, not slaves.

## The Four Sons

The Torah describes four sons who ask questions about the Exodus. Tradition teaches that these verses refer to four different types of children.



**The wise son** asks, "What are the laws that God has commanded us?"

The parent should answer by instructing the child in the laws of Passover, starting from the beginning and ending with the laws of the Afikomen.

**The wicked son** asks, "What does this Passover service mean to you?"

The parent should answer, "It is because of what God did for me when I came out of Egypt. Specifically 'me' and not 'you.' If you had been there (with your attitude), you wouldn't have been redeemed."

**The simple son** asks, "What is this Seder service?"

The parent should answer, "With an almighty hand God brought us out of Egypt. Therefore, we commemorate that event tonight through this Seder."

And then there is **the son who does not know how to ask**.

The parent should begin a discussion with that child based on the verse: "And you shall tell your child on that day, 'We commemorate Passover tonight because of what God did for us when we went out of Egypt.'"

## Let My People Go



"Let my people go!"

While the Jews endured harsh slavery in Egypt, God chose Moses to lead them out to freedom. Moses encountered God at the burning bush and then returned to Egypt to lead the people out of Egypt. He demanded that Pharaoh let his people go. That part of the Passover story is described in the song **Let My People Go**:

When Israel was in Egypt's land,  
Let my people go;  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
Let my people go.

### Chorus

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egypt's land;  
Tell old Pharaoh  
To let my people go!

"Thus saith the Lord," bold Moses said,  
Let my people go;  
"If not, I'll smite your first-born dead,"  
Let my people go.

#### Chorus

No more shall they in bondage toil,  
Let my people go;  
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil,  
Let my people go.

#### Chorus

## The Ten Plagues

It is a tradition to remove ten drops of wine from our cups as we recite the ten plagues as a remembrance that, while our ancestors were redeemed through these plagues, the Egyptian people did suffer. We remove a drop of wine for each plague as we recite its name.

10  
PLAGUES



BLOOD

FROGS

GNATS

FLIES

LIVESTOCK

BOILS

HAIL

LOCUST

DARKNESS

FIRSTBORN



Following the slaying of the first born, Pharaoh allowed the Jewish people to leave. The Jews left Egypt in such haste that their dough did not rise, so they ate matzah. When Pharaoh changed his mind and chased after the Israelites, God miraculously caused the Red Sea to split apart, allowing the Israelites to cross safely. When the Egyptians entered the Sea, it returned to its natural state and the mighty Egyptian army drowned.



## Some Passover Symbols

Rabbi Gamliel, the head of the Sanhedrin (rabbinical court) near of the end of the Second Temple Period (first century CE), said one must discuss the three symbols of Passover as part of the Seder:

### Pesach

**The Passover sacrifice** represented by the shank bone (or a roasted beet). The Pesach sacrifice reminds us that God passed over the Israelite houses when the tenth plague was visited upon the Egyptians after the Israelites offered the Passover sacrifice.

### Matzah

**The unleavened bread.** The matzah represents the hurried Exodus from Egypt, wherein the Israelites left so quickly that their dough did not have time to rise.

### Maror

**The bitter herbs.** The maror reminds us of the bitter pain and suffering the Israelites went through as slaves to the Egyptians.



# The Hillel Sandwich



As the first portion of the Seder comes to a close, before we eat the Passover meal, we partake of the Hillel Sandwich. Each person makes a sandwich

using two pieces of matzah with maror and charoset, a mixture of nuts, fruit, wine, and spices that symbolizes the mortar used by the Jewish people to make bricks while enslaved in Egypt.

This is done in commemoration of an enactment made by the great sage Hillel, who lived in the time of the

Second Temple, to eat the Passover sacrifice together with matzah and maror in a sandwich.

# Welcoming Elijah

After the fourth and final cup of wine of the Seder is filled, an additional cup is filled and set aside for the prophet Elijah (Eliyahu). Tradition says that Elijah, who will precede the arrival of the Messiah, makes an appearance at every Seder. We traditionally open a door to the home to allow Elijah to enter, and we sing the song Eliyahu Hanavi.

Let us pray that this year will be the year that Elijah will herald the coming of our Messiah.

# Next Year in Jerusalem



We traditionally end our Seders by declaring, “Next year in Jerusalem!”

If you have never been to Jerusalem, why not make next year the year? And if you have been to Jerusalem, why not pay the Holy City another visit next year?

It is a modern miracle that Jerusalem has been returned to the Jewish people in our time, and it is an incredibly uplifting experience to visit the city and the nation to which our forefathers travelled after their deliverance from bondage in Egypt.