

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEDER TABLE & ITS SYMBOLS

Before this festive Passover *Seder* officially begins, the following items should be prepared in advance and briefly explained by the leader or by taking turns reading as each item is raised.

* **MATZAH:** THREE WHOLE MATZOT are to be wrapped in a napkin or matzah cover, and set at the head of the table. *Matzah* is a flat unleavened bread.

SEDER PLATE: A tray with six indentations is displayed to help explain the important symbolic foods placed upon it. These items are as follows:

* **MAROR:** Bitter herbs, (usually horseradish) are used to symbolize the bitter bondage of Israel's enslaved conditions in Egypt.

CHAZERET: Some traditions add a second bitter herb to the Seder plate such as lettuce.

KARPAS: A vegetable such as celery or parsley represents the hyssop, which Israel used to apply the blood of the Passover Lamb to the doorposts of their homes in Egypt. This action protected the first-born children from the Angel of Death. It is dipped into salt water to symbolize the tears shed by the Israelites. It also serves as a reminder of spring, and the new beginnings of resurrected life.

KHAROSET: Or *charoses*, is a mixture of nuts, chopped apples, and cinnamon, moistened with wine. It is symbolic of the mortar used by the Israelite slaves to build treasure cities for Pharaoh.

* **Z'ROA:** The Shank Bone, symbolizes the Passover Lamb. Through the sacrifice of a perfect lamb, the Israelites were spared the death of their first-born. Since there is presently no Temple, the *Pesach* Lamb is no longer used in the *Seder*, except as a reminder of the sacrifice that brought our freedom, and as a foreshadow of 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (ie., the Messiah). *Z'roa* in Hebrew literally means "arm," and refers to "the arm of *HaShem*."

BEYTZAH: A roasted hard-boiled egg is symbolic of the festival sacrifice (*Chagigah*) made in Temple times. It's charred exterior is a reminder of the destruction of both Temples. It's shape also symbolizes eternal life (having no beginning and no end).

OTHER NECESSARY ITEMS INCLUDE:

SALT WATER: Cups of salt water are placed on the table for dipping the vegetables.

WINE OR GRAPE JUICE: Wine glasses are filled 4 times for each *Seder* participant.

CUP OF ELIJAH: A special goblet filled with wine is displayed at the table to remind us of Elijah, who is referenced in the *Seder* as the forerunner announcing the coming of the Messiah. This concept is taken from the traditional understanding of the last two verses of the book of Malachi, read on *Shabbat HaGadol* (the Great Shabbat), which is the Sabbath just before Passover.

Also needed are A PILLOW, A WATER BASIN, AND A SMALL TOWEL for the leader, as well as A PASSOVER HAGGADAH for each person present.

* These **Symbols** (*) were specifically mentioned by God in the book of *Sh'mot* (Exodus).

