

THE PASSOVER TABLE

A PILLOW is placed near the left arm of the leader on which to recline during the Seder. The custom of reclining while eating is of ancient Persian origin. It symbolizes freedom, since slaves were never permitted to recline in leisure at a meal.

HAZERET is a whole bitter herb such as horseradish, radish, or onion. It is in addition to the maror since the biblical command in Numbers 9:11 is to eat the meal with bitter herbs (plural).

The ROASTED EGG in some traditions represents the required peace offering in the Temple for the second day of Passover.

The SHANKBONE of a lamb is a stark reminder of the Passover lamb sacrificed each year in the days of the Temple. The sacrificial system ceased with the Roman destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

MAROR (bitter herbs), usually ground horseradish, is a mandatory item for Passover. It is a reminder of the bitterness which the Israelites suffered as slaves in Egypt.

KARPAS, usually parsley, bitter lettuce, or watercress, is considered a bitter herb. Its green color is a reminder of the springtime during which Passover occurs and also of the hyssop plant used to apply the blood to the doorposts.

SALT WATER symbolizes the Jewish tears shed during Egyptian bondage and God's miraculous parting of the Red Sea.

The HAGGADAH (Heb. "the telling") is so named from the Lord's command to "tell your son" (Ex. 13:8). It is the book which relates the Passover story through readings, songs, and prayers in the traditional prescribed order.

ELIJAH'S CUP is the extra cup of wine poured in the hope that the prophet Elijah might come and announce the arrival of the Messiah. Rabbinic tradition holds that the Messiah will come during Passover, the season of redemption, to bring about the final redemption from dispersion. However, according to Malachi 4:5, Elijah must appear first.

WINE is a symbol of joy. Rabbinic law commands that four cups of wine be taken during the Seder to symbolize the four-fold expression of the Lord's promised deliverance (Ex. 6:6-7). According to rabbinic law, this wine must be red.

The KIPPA (Hebrew) or **YARMULKE** (Yiddish) is the small head covering worn by Jewish males to show reverence for God. There is no command for such a practice in Scripture, but it arose by tradition in postbiblical times.

HAROSET is a sweet mixture of finely chopped apple, nuts, cinnamon, and wine made to resemble the red-brown clay and mortar used by Israel in making the bricks of Pharaoh's pyramids. Its sweetness is a reminder of the sweetness of God's redemption from slavery.

The SEDER TRAY is a tray or platter which usually has six circular indentations so that the symbolic Passover foods may be individually displayed. It is the central item on the modern Passover table.

CANDLES are lit at sunset and a prayer pronounced over them by the mother of the house to begin the Passover service. The candles, with their bright, warm glow, symbolize the solemnity of the occasion and set Passover apart as a special day.

THREE MATZAHs (unleavened bread) are placed on the Passover table with one in each pocket of the embroidered matzah tash (linen bag). Some rabbinic authorities suggest that the three matzahs represent the three groups of Jewish people: the priests, the Levites, and the Israelites. However, there is no biblical basis for this explanation.

