



## MATZAH WITHOUT CHAROSET

The Halachic debate that reveals the true meaning of the seder night.

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TEACHER'S MANUAL



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

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## A. The Three Foods on the Seder Plate.....1

At the Passover Seder, we eat matzah for two reasons: (a) it is the “bread of affliction” that reminds us of our enslavement in Egypt, and (b) it recalls the dough that didn’t have time to rise as the Jews fled Egypt in haste (Source 1). Both reasons are alluded to in the Torah (Source 2).

Additionally, the Torah commands us to eat maror (Source 3) and the Haggadah explains that maror reminds us of the bitter exile (Source 4).

A third item on the Seder plate is charoset. Maimonides explains that the charoset paste is reminiscent of the cement the Jews were forced to work with in Egypt, and rules that the matzah should be dipped into charoset (Source 5).

Raavad, in his glosses on Maimonides, argues with this, calling it “nonsense” and says the matzah should not be dipped into charoset.

What is the essence of their debate?

## B. Unpacking the Meaning of the Seder.....5

The Rogatchover Gaon explains: Both Maimonides and Raavad agree that the matzah was dipped into charoset during the Temple era. This is because matzah symbolizes the bread of affliction, and the charoset represents the cement of their slavery; thus, it is fitting to dip the matzah into it.

### **The Contemporary Seder Doesn’t Recall the Exile**

The argument between these sages is only after the Temple era, when we no longer have the element of the matzah that recalls the exile. Why?

The Talmud says that after the destruction of the Holy Temple, the mitzvah of eating maror is no longer biblical, because the Torah bound maror to the Passover offering. Maror need not be consumed when the Passover offering is no longer sacrificed (Source 9).

The Rebbe explains the deeper meaning behind the loss of this mitzvah: At the Seder we observe various customs and rituals designed to help us (a) recall the exile and slavery in Egypt, and (b) recall our liberation and redemption from Egypt. Nowadays, living as we do in

a period of exile, we do not need to do any ritual to remember the exile —we live it each day! Therefore, maror is no longer biblically applicable. The Seder element of recalling the exile and slavery became redundant.

For the same reason, when we eat matzah, we aren't eating it to recall the exile—bread of affliction—because during exile we don't need to be reminded how exile feels. We eat the matzah to taste how liberation feels.

### **Maror as a Remembrance for the Holy Temple**

If so, why did the Sages institute the continued eating of maror during exile? The answer is that this is a practice established as a reminder of the Temple—to remember how things were done when the Temple stood, but not for the purpose of evoking a feeling of servitude.

Now, we can understand the disagreement between Maimonides and Raavad regarding how to act during exile:

Raavad maintains that in a state of exile, there is no longer a reason to mention the servitude, which we are already experiencing in any case. Therefore, there is no reason to dip the matzah in charoset, because matzah symbolizes freedom alone, whereas charoset symbolizes servitude, and there is no connection between them.

Maimonides, however, maintains that even during exile, we should dip the matzah in charoset as part of the custom and the desire to create a reminder of the Temple.

# Introduction

The Seder night is filled with symbols—matzah, maror, charoset—and each one is meant to tell us something about the Exodus from Egypt. But have you ever stopped to think about what exactly we are supposed to remember? Is the Seder night meant to remind us of the servitude, or rather, the freedom?

Maimonides and Raavad debated a small but profound question: "Should the matzah be dipped in charoset?" But this debate reveals a much larger question—how do we experience the Seder night during exile? Are we still living the servitude, or are we already directing our gaze toward freedom?

Let's dive into this discussion and discover how a small halachic dispute can change the entire way we view the holiday.

## השיעור לחג הפסח

משיחת אחרון של פסח ה'תשמ"ו (בעיבוד קל)  
התוועדויות ה'תשמ"ו, חלק ב' עמוד 155 ואילך, בלתי מוגה.  
שיחות קודש ה'תשמ"ו, עמוד 259 ואילך, בלתי מוגה (בתרגום המערכת).  
וראה גם לקוטי שיחות חלק ל"ב, שיחת חג הפסח  
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מדקה 40 והלאה

# A. The Three Foods on the Seder Plate

## Why do we eat matzah?

### Source 1 Passover Hagaddah

#### Remembering exile

Student's  
pg. 1

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, come eat with us! Whoever is needy, come join our Passover Seder...

הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא  
בארעא דמצרים. כל דכפין ייתי  
ויכול. כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח...

#### Remembering the redemption

This matzah that we eat, what's it all about? Because the dough of our ancestors did not have time to become leavened before the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them.

מצה זו שאנו אוכלים, על שום מה?  
על שום שלא הספיק בצקת של  
אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה עליהם  
מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך  
הוא וגאלם,

As it is said: "They baked matzah cakes from the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, because it was not leavened; for they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay, and they had also not prepared any other provisions."

שנאמר: "ויאפו את הפצק אשר  
הוציאו ממצרים עגת מצות כי לא  
חמץ, כי גרשו ממצרים ולא יכלו  
להתמהמה, וגם צדה לא עשו להם".

From these two Haggadah passages we learn that eating matzah carries with it a reminder of two things: 1. the servitude in Egypt—"the bread of affliction"— and 2. the redemption, which occurred in haste. These two reasons are hinted at in the Torah:

### Source 2 Deuteronomy 16:3

Student's  
pg. 1

You shall not eat leaven with it; for seven days you shall eat with it matzot, the bread of affliction, for in haste you went out of the land of Egypt, so that you shall remember the day when you went out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

לא תאכל עליו חמץ, שבועת ימים  
תאכל עליו מצות — לחם עני, כי  
בחפזו יצאת מארץ מצרים, למען  
תזכר את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים  
כל ימי חייך.

## Rashi

Student's  
pg. 2

**Bread of affliction:** Bread that recalls the suffering in Egypt.

**In haste you went out:** And the dough wasn't able to rise. The matzah reminds us of this. This haste wasn't ours, but the haste of the Egyptians to drive us out of Egypt.

לֶחֶם עֲנִי: לֶחֶם שְׁמֹזְכִיר אֶת  
הָעֲנִי שֶׁנִּתְעַנּוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם.

כִּי בְּחִפְזוֹן יָצָאתָ: וְלֹא הָסְפִיק  
בָּצֵק לְהִתְחַמֵּץ וְזֶה יִהְיֶה לָּךְ  
לְזִכְרוֹן; וְחִפְזוֹן לֹא שָׁלָךְ הָיָה  
אֲלֵא שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם, שֶׁכֵּן הוּא  
אוֹמֵר "וַתַּחְזֹק מִצְרַיִם עַל  
הָעָם וְגו'".

Rashi explains that the words "the bread of affliction" hint at bread that reminds us of the suffering we experienced in Egypt, and the words "for you left in haste" hint at bread that reminds us of the hasty departure from Egypt.

## Why do we eat maror?

### Source 3 Exodus 12:8

Student's  
pg. 2

On this night, they shall eat the flesh, roasted over the fire, and matzot; with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

וְאָכְלוּ אֶת הַבָּשָׂר בַּלֵּילָה הַזֶּה צֹלִי  
אֵשׁ וּמִצּוֹת, עַל מַרְרִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ.

The Torah tells us to eat the Passover offering with matzah and maror, but it does not explain why. The explanation is found in the Haggadah:

### Source 4 Passover Hagaddah

Student's  
pg. 2

This maror that we eat, what's it all about? Because the Egyptians embittered our ancestors' lives in Egypt, as it is said: "They made their lives bitter with hard service, with mortar and with bricks, and with all manner of service in the field; all their service which they made them serve with rigor."

מָרֹר זֶה שֶׁאֲנִי אוֹכְלִים עַל שׁוֹם  
מָה. עַל שׁוֹם שֶׁמָּרְרוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם אֶת  
חַיֵּי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר  
וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעִבְדָּה קָשָׁה  
בַּחֹמֶר וּבַלִּבָּנִים וּבְכָל עֲבוֹדָה  
בַּשָּׂדֶה אֶת כָּל עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ  
בָהֶם בְּפִגְרָה:

## Why do we use charoset?

One of the foods traditionally placed on the Seder plate is charoset, in which the maror is dipped.

*This ancient custom is mentioned in the Talmud.*

*Maimonides explains why charoset is placed on the plate and how it is prepared.*

## Source 5 Maimonides, Laws of Chametz and Matzah 7:11

**Student's**  
pg. 2

The charoset is a mitzvah ordained by the Sages to commemorate the clay with which our forefathers worked in Egypt.

הַחֲרֹסֶת מִצְוָה מִדְּבַרֵי סוּפְרִים,  
זָכַר לְטִיט שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹבְדִין בּוֹ  
בְּמִצְרַיִם.

**Student's**  
pg. 3

How is it made?

וְכִיצַד עוֹשִׂין אוֹתָהּ?

We take dates, dried figs, raisins, or similar fruits, crush them, add vinegar, and mix them with spices, just as clay is mixed with straw. This is placed on the table on the first two nights of Passover.

לִזְקָחִין תְּמָרִים אוֹ גְרוֹגְרוֹת אוֹ  
צְמוֹקִין וְכִיּוֹצָא בָהֶן, וְדוֹרְסִין  
אוֹתָן וְנוֹתְנִין לְתוֹכָן חֲמֶזֶק,  
וּמִתְבָּלִין אוֹתָן בְּתִבְלִין כְּמוֹ  
טִיט בְּתִבָּן, וּמְבִיאִין אוֹתָהּ עַל  
הַשֻּׁלְחָן בְּלֵילֵי הַפֶּסַח.

*Maimonides continues that both the maror and the matzah are dipped in charoset. (This is the opinion of Maimonides. However, according to current halachic standard, we do not dip the matzah in charoset.)*

Ibid, 8:6-8

**Student's**  
pg. 3

Next, we wrap matzah and maror together as one, dip them in charoset, and recite the blessing:

...בִּזְרוֹךְ מַצָּה וּמָרֹר כְּאַחַת  
וּמִטְבֵּל בְּחֲרֹסֶת, וּמְבָרֵךְ:

"Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the eating of matzah and bitter herbs." Then we eat them.

"בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו  
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצּוֹת  
וּמָרֹרִים," וְאוֹכְלִין...

Afterwards, we recite the blessing: "Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the eating of the sacrifice." We first partake of the meat of the Chaggigah offering of the fourteenth of Nissan...

וְאַחֵר כֶּן מְבָרֵךְ: "בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל  
אֲכִילַת הַזֶּבֶח," וְאוֹכֵל מִבְּשַׂר  
חֲגִיגַת אֲרֻבָּעָה עָשָׂר תַּחֲלָה....



At present, when there is no Paschal sacrifice, after reciting the blessing “hamotzi lechem,” we recite the blessing “al achilat matzah,” dip the matzah in charoset, and eat it.

בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה שֶׁאֵין שֵׁם קֶרֶבֶן, אַחֵר  
שֶׁמִּבְרָךְ: "הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם", חוֹזֵר  
וּמִבְרָךְ: "עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה",  
וּמְטִיבֵל מַצָּה בְּחַרֹּסֶת וְאוֹכֵל...

## >> The Rebbe

### Raavad's sharp critique

Student's  
pg. 4

Raavad responds to Maimonides' statement in his typically sharp style, writing that there is absolutely no requirement to dip the matzah in the charoset. In Raavad's words, “this is nonsense.”

A number of commentators have already pointed out that Maimonides' source is in the writings of the Geonim. As the Tur also cites, the source is the siddur of Rabbi Amram Gaon, which was written before the time of Maimonides, and is referenced by him in several places.

הַרְאב"ד מְתִיחַס לְדַבְרֵי הַרְמַב"ם,  
וְכֹדְרָכוּ מִתְּבַטָּא בַלְשׁוֹן חֲרִיפָה, שֶׁאֵי  
אִפְשָׁר לֹאמַר כָּלֵל וְכָלֵל שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְטַבּוֹל  
אֶת הַמַּצָּה בַּחֲרוֹסֶת, וּבַלְשׁוֹנוֹ "זֶה  
הַבֵּל".

וְכֹבֵד הָרָאוּ בַכֶּמֶה מִקוֹמוֹת, שֶׁמִּקּוּרוֹ  
שֶׁל הַרְמַב"ם הוּא בְּדַבְרֵי הַגְּאוֹנִים,  
כִּפִּי שֶׁהַטּוֹר מְבִיא, שֶׁכֵּךְ כּוֹתֵב רַבִּי  
עֶמְרֵם גֶּאוֹן בְּסִידּוּרוֹ (שֶׁנִּכְתַּב לִפְנֵי  
הַרְמַב"ם, וְהַרְמַב"ם מִצִּטָּטוֹ בַכֶּמֶה  
מִקוֹמוֹת).

### Source 6 Siddur of Rabbi Amram Gaon, Passover Seder

Student's  
pg. 4

After making the Hamotzi blessing, make the blessing on the matzah, dip in charoset and eat.

וְאַחֵר שֶׁיִּבְרַע וּמִבְרָךְ "הַמּוֹצִיא  
לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ" חוֹזֵר וּמִבְרָךְ: "לְאֹכֵל  
מַצָּה", וּמְטִיבֵל בְּחַרֹּסֶת וְאוֹכֵל.

The question arises: What caused the Raavad's angst? What is the basis of his disagreement with Maimonides? Why, according to Maimonides, should we dip the matzah in charoset, while according to the Raavad, "this is nonsense"?

## B. Unpacking the Meaning of the Seder

### >> The Rebbe

#### Between Temple and exile times

Student's  
pg. 5

An explanation of the debate between Maimonides and the Raavad can be found in Tzafnat Paneach, by the Rogatchover Gaon.

The Rogatchover explains that Raavad actually agrees with Maimonides that during the time of the Temple, the matzah was dipped in the charoset. His disagreement is only with Maimonides' ruling that this practice should be followed in the present day as well.

*Raavad does not oppose the practice of dipping the matzah in charoset itself, which is why he does not criticize Rabbi Amram Gaon or the other early authorities who ruled this way. Raavad's opinion is that dipping the matzah in charoset was appropriate only when the Temple existed, but in exile, there is no logical basis for doing so. Why?*

Student's  
pg. 5

Regarding the difference between the time of the Temple and the present day in dipping matzah in charoset, the Rogatchover explains that there are two reasons for the mitzvah to eat: one as a reminder of hardship ("the bread of affliction") and the other as a reminder of freedom ("for you left Egypt in haste"). Maror, however, has only one purpose, as a symbol of slavery, and charoset also represents slavery (as a reminder of the clay used for bricks).

הביאור במחלוקת הרמב"ם והראב"ד  
נמצא בספר צפנת פענח להגאון  
הרוגוצ'ובי:

הרוגוצ'ובי מבאר שהראב"ד אכן  
מסכים עם הרמב"ם שבזמן הבית  
היו מטבילים מצה בחרוסת, והוא  
רק חולק על פסקו של הרמב"ם  
שמטבילים את המצה בחרוסת גם  
בזמן הזה.

ובטעם החילוק בין זמן המקדש לזמן  
הזה בנוגע לטיבול מצה בחרוסת  
- מבאר הרוגוצ'ובי שלגבי מצה  
יש שני טעמים על מצוות אכילתו,  
אחד משום זכר לעוני (כפי שהמצה  
נקראת "לחם עוני") ואחד משום זכר  
לחירות<sup>1</sup> ("כי בחפזו יצאת מארץ  
מצרים"), ובמרור יש רק טעם אחד  
משום עבדות, והחרוסת גם היא  
משום עבדות (זכר לטיט).

1. פסחים ד' ק"ח ע"א.

Student's  
pg. 5

Therefore, during the time of the Temple, matzah was certainly dipped in charoset (even according to the Raavad), since matzah also shares that significance as a reminder of hardship.

והנה, בזמן המקדש בודאי מטבילין המצה גם כן בחרוסת (גם לפי שיטת הראב"ד, משום שגם במצה ישנו ענין שהוא "זכר לעוני").

*In the time of the Temple, everything was in place: the charoset was a reminder of the mortar, as it symbolized the servitude; the maror also reminded of the bitterness of the servitude, so it is straightforward why the maror was dipped in charoset.*

*Matzah is a reminder of both poverty and freedom, so it makes sense that the matzah would also be dipped in charoset. The poverty represented by the matzah corresponds to the servitude symbolized by the charoset.*

*The issues begin in exile, when the commandment of maror is no longer applicable, as follows:*

## Nowadays maror isn't Biblical

Student's  
pg. 6

However, in the post-Temple era, we see that the mitzvah that serves as a reminder of the slavery is no longer in effect, as maror today is only a rabbinic obligation.

אך בזמן הזה רואים אנו שהמצווה שהיא זכר לעבדות בטלה, משום שהמרור בזמן הזה הוא מדרבנן.

## Source 7 Talmud, Pesachim 120b

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Rava said: The mitzvah of matzah today, even after the destruction of the Temple, is by Torah law; but the mitzvah to eat bitter herbs is by rabbinic law. The Gemara asks: In what way is the mitzvah of bitter herbs different from that of matzah? The verse states regarding the Paschal lamb: "They shall eat it with matzot and bitter herbs" (Numbers 9:11). We derive from this that when there is an obligation to eat the Paschal lamb, there is likewise a mitzvah to eat bitter herbs. However, when there is no obligation to eat the Paschal lamb, there is also no mitzvah to eat bitter herbs.

אמר רבא: אכילת מצה בזמן הזה, אף לאחר חרבן הבית, היא מן התורה, ומרור חיובו רק מדברי סופרים. ובמה שונה המרור? שכן נאמר בקרבן הפסח, "על מצות ומררים יאכלהו", ומכאן למדים: בזמן שיש חובת קרבן פסח – יש גם חובת מרור מן התורה, ובזמן שאין פסח – אין גם חובת מרור מן התורה.

But if so, the same reasoning should apply to matzah as well, as it is written: "With matzot and bitter herbs."

אם כן גם במצה נאמר, "על מצות ומררים", הרי שאף המצה טפלה לקרבן הפסח! ודוחים: בנוגע למצה – חזר בו המקרא על חובת אכילתה

[The Gemara rejects this argument:] The verse

**Student's** repeats the obligation to eat matzah, as it  
pg. 6 states: "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, you shall eat matzot" (Exodus 12:18). This verse establishes a separate obligation to eat matzah, unrelated to the Paschal lamb.

בפסוק אחר, שנאמר,  
"בְּרֵאשִׁוֹן בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם  
לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעֶרֶב תֹּאכְלוּ מַצֹּת",  
וְקִבַּע בֵּזָה חֻכָּה מִיַּחַדָּת  
לְאֲכִילַת מַצָּה שְׂאִינָה תְלוּיָה  
בְּקֶרֶב.

## >> The Rebbe

### Maror as a reminder of the Temple, not slavery

**Student's** The reason the sages enacted a requirement to eat  
pg. 6 maror and dip in charoset is to serve as a reminder of the Temple.

רק במרור תיקנו לאכול ולטבלו  
בחרוסת משום זֵכֶר לזמן הבית.

### Source 8 Shulchan Aruch Harav, Laws of Passover 475:15

**Student's** The biblical obligation to eat maror is only  
pg. 7 applicable in Temple times.... Nowadays, it is a rabbinic commandment enacted by the sages to remember the Temple era.

מִצְוַת מָרֹר מִן הַתּוֹרָה אֵינָה  
אֲלָא בְּזִמָּן שֶׁהִפְסִח נֶאֱכַל,  
שְׁנֵאמַר: עַל מִצְוַת וּמֵרִים  
יֵאָכְלָהּ. אֲכַל בְּזִמָּן הָיָה אֵינוֹ  
אֲלָא מִדְּבַר סוּפְרִים, שֶׁתִּקְנֶה  
זֵכֶר לְמִקְדָּשׁ.

Biblically, there is no obligation to eat maror in exile. Nonetheless, the Sages instituted that we should continue to eat maror and dip it in charoset so we do not forget how we acted in the time of the Temple.

The institution of "a reminder of the Temple" was established in many areas. For example, on Sukkot, when the Temple stood in Jerusalem, they would take the lulav every Sabbath during the festival. However, outside of Jerusalem, they would bless the lulav only on the first day of the holiday. After the destruction, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted that a blessing should be recited on the lulav everywhere for all seven days of the holiday, as "a reminder of the Temple."

Another example is the mitzvah of counting the Omer. According to Rashi, the obligation to count the Omer was only in effect when the Temple stood, and today, we do so only as a reminder of the Temple.

What is the deeper meaning? Why, indeed, was the mitzvah of maror nullified? The Gemara explained the technical reason, but what is the underlying explanation for this?

## >> The Rebbe

### Why don't we commemorate slavery?

Student's  
pg. 7

The reason why in the present day “the mitzvah associated with remembering slavery is no longer in effect” can be understood simply: A “reminder of slavery” is only relevant when there is no actual slavery. Under such circumstances a commemoration of the past makes sense.

Therefore, during the time of the Temple, when there was no state of slavery, there was a need for a “reminder of slavery”—through maror and dipping in charoset. However, in the present day, since we are in exile, which is itself a state of slavery, there is no need for a “reminder of slavery,” as the experience of slavery is felt in reality. For this reason, “the mitzvah associated with remembering slavery is no longer in effect,” and thus, the biblical requirement for maror no longer applies. Instead, the sages instituted it as a commemoration of the Temple.

ובטעם הדבר שבזמן הזה “המצוה של זכר לעבדות בטלה” - יש לומר בפשטות: “זכר לעבדות” - שייד רק כאשר נמצאים במצב שאין בו עבדות, שאז צריכים לעשות “זכר” לענין העבדות שהיה בעבר.

ולכן, בזמן המקדש, כשלא היה מצב של עבדות - היה צורך ב“זכר לעבדות” (מרור וטיבולו בחרוסת), מה שאין כן בזמן הזה - מכיון שנמצאים בגלות, מצב של עבדות, אין צורך ב“זכר לעבדות”, מכיון שמרגישים את ענין העבדות בפועל, ומטעם זה, “המצוה שלזכר לעבדות בטלה”, שלכן, בטל החיוב של מרור מן התורה, אלא שחכמים תיקנו “משום זכר” (זכר למקדש).

*At the Seder, we are meant to experience two feelings: (a) the feeling of servitude, as our forefathers experienced in Egypt, and (b) the feeling of freedom, similar to their departure from exile. Throughout the years when the Temple stood, the Jewish people performed rituals that reminded them of these two extremes.*

However, after the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish people experience servitude every day. We were expelled from their land, our Temple was destroyed, and we were sold into slavery. Throughout history, we have been exiled from country to country. Every local ruler could do as they pleased with us, throwing Jews into a pit for no reason, and subjecting us to pogroms and persecutions of various kinds. In exile, we feel the servitude the same way our ancestors did in Egypt. There is therefore no need to perform rituals that are meant to help us experience servitude, since we are already deeply in servitude.

*In these times in particular, during the war in the Holy Land after the horrors of October 7th and the suffering of our brothers and sisters—may G-d protect and save the hostages—does anyone need maror to feel bitterness and servitude? Does anyone need charoset to remind them that we are deep in the mud?*

*Therefore, says the Rogatchover Gaon, the mitzvah of eating maror and dipping it in charoset has become obsolete. We don't need them in order to feel the servitude and bitterness.*

*As for the matzah, the mitzvah of eating it has not been nullified, because we eat it in remembrance of freedom. However, the element of the matzah that was meant to remind us of the "bread of poverty" has been nullified, along with the maror. In our times, we eat matzah only in remembrance of freedom.*

*Nevertheless, the Sages instituted that we continue to eat maror and dip it in charoset "in remembrance of the Temple," so that the laws of the Seder night will not be forgotten by Israel, and so we remember how it was supposed to be.*

*There is a novel idea here: In the time of the Temple, the Jewish people needed to emphasize on the Seder night both the servitude and the redemption. However, in exile, we no longer need to emphasize servitude, because we experience it day by day. We must emphasize only the miracles, freedom, and redemption. The fact that we eat maror is only a remembrance of the Temple—a remembrance of something good.*

## **Story - There Was Plenty of Maror...** (Teacher's guide only)

**Rabbi Nissen Mangel shares his experience of the Seder night in a concentration camp during the Holocaust:**

**It was a regular evening, like all the others. We were lying on the bunks, 1,200 Jewish prisoners crowded into a single barrack. Suddenly, at 8:00 PM, the word spread: Tonight is Passover!**

**Quickly, everyone jumped off the bunks and sat together in the center of the barrack. We didn't have matzah, but we had plenty of maror... We decided to read the Haggadah. Lacking books, everyone who remembered a part of the Haggadah recited it aloud, and everyone responded after him. "I was the youngest in the group, only ten years old. I stood up and read aloud, 'Mah nishtanah halayla hazeh...' and everyone repeated after me. We were slaves; our situation was much worse than what the children of Israel experienced in Egypt, but we were determined to celebrate the Festival of Freedom!"**



Suddenly, the door opened, and an SS officer entered. 'What's going on here?' he shouted. 'Everyone get back to your beds immediately!'

Everyone rushed in panic back to their bunks, but no sooner had the officer left the barrack than we all jumped back into the center of the barrack, continuing to recite parts of the Haggadah...

The officer continued to inspect from barrack to barrack, and when he finished, the sounds of singing and the Haggadah reading once again reached his ears. In a fit of rage, he hurried back to our barrack. 'I told you to get back to your beds!' he barked. 'If you get out of bed again, I'll shoot all of you!'

The officer left, and after a few moments, everyone got out of the bunks again. We knew very well that this was not an idle threat, but nothing would stop us from celebrating our Passover... We continued singing, reciting parts of Hallel...

We sang and rejoiced until 4 AM. Then it was time to get up and go to work.

To this day, I think to myself: Along with me in the barrack were nearly 1,200 people. Many of them were Jews who considered themselves non-believers. Yet none of them asked us to stop our celebration because we were risking our lives! Everyone joined in, despite the high personal risk. It was a moment when the Jewish soul shone, despite the hell and horror. We celebrated the Festival of Freedom: our soul was truly free.

Indeed, in the horrors of the Holocaust, no one thought they needed help to feel the servitude. They gave their lives to feel freedom. The truth is, this is true for all times of exile. Therefore, on the night of the Seder, we must emphasize and experience only the freedom. We have plenty of maror...

## >> The Rebbe

### Don't mention slavery

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pg. 7

Based on the above, the difference between the time of the Temple and the present day regarding dipping matzah in charoset becomes clear.

ועל פי זה מובן החילוק שבין זמן המקדש לזמן הזה בנוגע לטיבול מצה בחרוסת.

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According to the Raavad: During the time of the Temple, since matzah also contained an element

לדעת הראב"ד: בזמן המקדש - מכיון שהיה במצה גם ענין העבדות, יש

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of slavery, there was reason (and necessity) to dip matzah in charoset, which also symbolizes slavery—"a reminder of the clay they worked with in Egypt." However, in the present day, since "the mitzvah associated with remembering slavery is no longer in effect," matzah now represents only freedom. As a result, there is no logic for dipping matzah in charoset, which represents slavery.

מקום (וצורך) לטבול מצה בחרוסת, שאף היא משום עבדות - "זכר לטיט שהיו עובדין בו במצרים": מה שאין כן בזמן הזה - מכיון ש"מצוה שהיא זכר לעבדות בטלה", ובמילא, יש במצה ענין החירות בלבד, אזי "לא שייך לטבול בחרוסת", שהיא משום עבדות .

*Raavad says that in times of exile, the reason for customs that remind us of servitude no longer applies. We don't need help to remember the bitter taste of exile. Therefore, we eat the matzah for only one reason – to remember freedom. Dipping it in charoset?! "This is nonsense!"*

*Indeed, we leave the maror and charoset on the Seder plate as a reminder of the Temple, but we need not dip the matzah in charoset because we do not perform customs to remember servitude.*

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However, Maimonides maintains that even in the current era we should dip matzah in charoset.

אמנם, לדעת הרמב"ם, גם "בזמן הזה... מטבול מצה בחרוסת".

*Why? According to the Rambam, nowadays we dip the matzah in charoset, not to evoke the feeling of servitude, but as a remembrance of the Temple, because that is what was done when the Temple existed.*

*Thus, we learn that both the Rambam and the Raavad agree that today we do not do things to remind us of servitude. Therefore, according to the Torah, we would not need to eat maror, nor would we need to dip the matzah in charoset. The dispute is only about what the Sages instituted to keep in place as a remembrance of the Temple. The Raavad argues that only the commandment of maror was kept as a remembrance of the Temple, but not the dipping of the matzah in charoset. On the other hand, according to the Rambam, even the dipping of the matzah in charoset was kept as a remembrance of the Temple.*

Why?

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Raavad's reasoning is that we only institute practices as a "remembrance of the Temple" for central obligations that existed during the Temple era, not for secondary matters.

סברת הראב"ד היא, שעושים תקנה "זכר למקדש", רק על עניינים עיקריים שהיו בזמן המקדש, אך לא על עניינים טפלים.



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Therefore, maror, which was an independent biblical commandment during the Temple period, was appropriately reestablished to serve as a remembrance of the Temple. However, when it comes to dipping matzah in charoset, even during the time of the Temple, this dipping was secondary. This is evident from the fact that no blessing was recited over charoset, despite its being a mitzvah, because it was secondary to maror. Similarly, charoset has no fixed measurement, and beyond that, the charoset must actually be shaken off the matzah so that it doesn't diminish the taste of the matzah itself.

Since the practice of dipping in charoset was only a secondary custom to begin with, Raavad maintains that there is no reason to establish a special enactment to continue dipping matzah in charoset today as a remembrance of the Temple.

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On the other hand, Maimonides holds that even for secondary practices, it is appropriate to establish a remembrance of the Temple.

ולכן, בשלמא מרור, שבזמן המקדש היה מצוה בפני עצמה מן התורה, ועכשיו בטל, מתאים לחדש ולתקן, שממשיכים לאכול מרור בזמן הזה זכר למקדש. משא"כ בנוגע לטיבול המצה בחרוסת, הרי גם בזמן המקדש הטיבול בחרוסת היה טפל, שלכן לא מברכים על החרוסת אף על פי שהיא מצווה לפי שהיא טפלה למרור, וכמו"כ לחרוסת אין שיעור, ויותר מזה, שהרי צריך לנער את החרוסת מהמצה בכדי לא יתבטל טעם המצה.

ומכיון שמנהג הטיבול בחרוסת היה מנהג טפל בזמן המקדש, אין מקום לעשות תקנה מיוחדת שימשיכו להטביל את המצה בחרוסת גם בזמן הזה משום זכר למקדש.

לאידך, סברת הרמב"ם היא, שגם בענינים טפלים שייך הענין של תקנה זכר למקדש.

*A sharp student might ask: According to the Raavad, why do we dip the maror in charoset? The answer is that because the Sages instituted the return of the maror to the Seder plate, they reinstated it as it was originally – with the dipping in charoset. On the other hand, the matzah had never been removed from the Seder plate, because it is also a remembrance of freedom, and therefore the Sages did not make a special decree to dip the matzah in charoset.*

## Story - A Remembrance of the Temple (Teacher's guide only)

During the early years of his leadership, the Rebbe traveled three times to visit the new summer camps that had been established in the New York mountains. These visits were historic, as throughout his entire leadership, the Rebbe never went on vacation and never left the city.

The excitement in the camp was at its peak, and the staff worked hard to clean and beautify the camp in preparation for the important visit.

The Rebbe toured the camp, showing interest in every detail, and visited every room and building. In one building, there was a room that served as a storage area for work materials, but it was locked. The Rebbe requested to see this room as well. When they opened the door, they saw quite a mess, and on the unpainted wall was a sign that read, "A Remembrance of the Destruction." The Rebbe smiled and said, "A remembrance of the destruction?! A remembrance of the Temple!"

*This story encapsulates the theme of the lesson. On the night of the Seder, we do not remember the servitude but the freedom. Even when we eat the maror, we do not recall the bitterness of slavery but rather the fact that when the Temple stood, this is what we would do: a remembrance of the Temple!*

*In order to further clarify the Rebbe's idea, let's read a paragraph of another talk where the Rebbe emphasises the same concept:*

## >> The Rebbe

### Source 9 Sicha, Last day of Passover, 1952

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The reason why during exile there's no biblical obligation to eat maror is because exile itself is maror, and there's no need to further stress the bitterness, something that can lead to despondency. During the Temple era, however, there's a need to remember and contrast the redemption to the preceding exile.

Nowadays, the main thing is to remember the redemption, which gives us strength to bring about the ultimate redemption from our current exile.

הטעם שבזמן הגלות אין חיוב מן התורה על אכילת מרור, הוא, לפי שהגלות עצמו הוא ענין של מרור, שלכן אין צורך להדגיש יותר את ענין הגלות על ידי אכילת מרור (דבר שיכול להביא לרגש של יאוש כו'), מה שאין כן בזמן שבית המקדש קיים, יש צורך וחיוב באכילת מרור כדי לעורר ולהדגיש את זכרון הגאולה ממעמד ומצב של הגלות.

והענין העיקרי שבו היא עיקר ההדגשה בזמן הגלות, הוא, זכרון הגאולה ממצרים שנותנת כח לכללות העבודה בזמן הגלות כדי לבוא להגאולה העתידה – כמודגש בהחיוב מן התורה על אכילת מצה הקשורה עם הגאולה.

## Key Points:

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- On the night of the Seder, we eat several foods: matzah – "the bread of affliction" – as a reminder of the harsh servitude and the rapid redemption from Egypt; maror, which represents the bitterness of life in Egypt; and charoset, symbolizing the mortar with which our ancestors labored.

The Rambam rules that we should dip the matzah in charoset, but the Raavad disagrees and believes that we should not dip the matzah in charoset. What is the disagreement about?

When the Temple stood, everyone agreed that the matzah should be dipped in charoset. The reason for this is that matzah is a reminder of both servitude and redemption, making it appropriate to combine it with the charoset, which represents the servitude.

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### **Not Mentioning the Servitude**

In the time of exile, the obligation to mention the servitude as part of the Seder night was nullified. Why?

The Rebbe explains that during the Seder, the tradition was established to eat certain foods to help us experience both the servitude our ancestors endured in Egypt and the freedom they gained during the Exodus. However, in exile today, there is no need for special actions to remind us of the servitude since we live it daily! Therefore, the part of the Seder that was meant to symbolize "the remembrance of servitude" is no longer necessary.

This is also the reason why, according to Torah law, there is no obligation to eat maror during this time. And for this reason, when we eat matzah today, we no longer do so as a reminder of the "bread of affliction" but only as a reminder of the redemption.

### **Remembering the Holy Temple**

So why did the sages decree that we continue to eat maror even in this time? To remember the days of the Temple.

Now we can understand the difference of opinion between the Rambam and the Raavad: According to the Raavad, in exile, there is no reason to dip the matzah in charoset, since matzah in exile symbolizes only freedom, while charoset symbolizes servitude, and there is no place to combine the two.

According to the Rambam, even in exile, we should preserve the custom of dipping the matzah in charoset as a reminder of the days of the Temple, when they dipped it in charoset to feel servitude, similar to how the sages instituted the eating of maror even in the time of exile.

## **Takeaway (Teacher's guide only):**

*There are two ways to live life – remembering servitude or remembering freedom.*

*Remembering freedom or remembering the Temple is focusing on the good – on beautiful moments, happiness, and freedom. It's about the holiness that characterized the Holy Temple, like the holidays and the joy that existed there. In contrast, remembering destruction and servitude is focusing on loss, pain, and the tragedy of the Egyptian exile.*

*The Rebbe explains that on Passover, we commemorate and experience only things that are a reminder of freedom and the Holy Temple. We do not try to relive the servitude of Egypt, and we do not bring the person to sadness; on the contrary – we tell the story of the Exodus, and we evoke longing for the beautiful days of the Holy Temple.*

*This is the Chassidic approach: to focus on the positive – not the negative.*

*This can also be applied to observing a Yahrtzeit. A person can choose to remember the day of loss itself – the separation, the pain, the last moments, which leads to sadness – remembering servitude. But they can also choose another approach: to remember the good days – the holidays spent together, the family Seder nights, the trips during the intermediate days of the festival. Memories that revive the beautiful moments and bring comfort – remembering freedom and the Holy Temple.*

*Chassidim always prefer to emphasize remembering freedom – because when focusing on the good, it grows and illuminates the entire path.*