

Maimonides' Seder
Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Chametz Umatzah Chapter 8
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Halacha #1

הלכה א

סדור עשיית מצוות אלו בליל חמשה עשר כך הוא: בתחלה מוזגין כוס לכל אחד ואחד ומברך בורא פרי הגפן ואומר עליו קדוש היום וזמן ושותה, ואחר כך מברך על נטילת ידים ונוטל ידיו, ומביאין שלחן ערוך ועליו מרור וירק אחר ומצה וחרוסת וגופו של כבש הפסח ובשר חגיגה של יום ארבעה עשר, ובזמן הזה מביאין על השלחן שני מיני בשר אחד זכר לפסח ואחד זכר לחגיגה.

The order of the doing of these *mitzvot* (commandments) on the night of the fifteenth is thus: At the beginning, they mix¹ a cup for each and every person, and he² blesses "who creates the fruit of the vine," and says *kiddush hayom*³ and "the time"⁴ on it⁵ and he drinks (as do the others), and then he blesses "(Blessed are You . . . and commanded us) regarding washing the hand" and he washes his hands.⁶ And they⁷ bring a set tray, and upon it (there is) *marror*, another vegetable, matzah,⁸ charoseth, the body of the Passover lamb,⁹ and the meat of the *chagigah* (festival offering) of the fourteenth.¹⁰ Nowadays, they bring on the tray two kinds of meat, one as a reminder of the paschal offering, and one as a reminder of the *chagigah*.

¹ Ancient wines were diluted in order to become properly drinkable.

² I.e. the leader of the seder. Note that often throughout this Chapter Maimonides uses verbs in the masculine singular, though they presumably mean that everyone at the seder does what is being described.

³ *Kiddush Hayom*, AKA "*Kiddush*", "the Sanctification of the Day", is a blessing sanctifying the given Shabbat or holiday. Normally, when one says a blessing on food or drink, one says the blessing and then eats or drinks. In *Kiddush*, one says the blessing on the wine, but delays drinking until after the *kiddush hayom* is recited, thus making the wine part of the sanctification of the day.

⁴ I.e. *shehecheyanu*, which thanks God for bringing us to this time.

⁵ See footnote above re: *Kiddush Hayom*. Here, the wine becomes the context both for *kiddush hayom* and *shehecheyanu*.

⁶ Saying a blessing before washing for the vegetable is consistent with ancient hagadah manuscripts, per Daniel Goldschmidt, Hagadah shel Pesach, p.7. See also Maimonides Laws of Blessings 6:1-2. Per Goldschmidt, this was also Rashi's opinion, and the opinion of all of the early medieval Rabbis (Geonim). Per Goldschmidt, this was also Rashi's opinion, and the opinion of all of the early medieval Rabbis (Geonim). This washing is required because Rabbi Oshaya in Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 115a says that one must wash hands before eating anything dipped into a liquid (Wine, blood, olive oil, milk, dew, bee honey, and water). Over time, this washing became less observed, although it remained a part of the seder. Perhaps because they were not familiar with the halachic origins of this washing of the hands, many people developed the practice of not saying a blessing before washing their hands for the green vegetable. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 473:6) also says not to say a blessing on this washing. Personally, I say a blessing before this washing of the hands.

⁷ The servants, presumably.

⁸ As to the number of matzas used, see below Halacha 6.

⁹ As will be the case throughout this chapter, Maimonides first describes how the seder would be done were there a Temple and Paschal sacrifices, and then tells us what we do in absence of that situation.

¹⁰ Note the function of the seder plate is more than ceremonial. It is the tray of food that will make up the person's meal, complete with all those items that must be eaten on Passover. Maimonides pictures each person at the meal having their own seder plate, which is also indicated in Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 115b.

Halacha #2

הלכה ב

מתחיל ומברך בורא פרי האדמה ולוקח ירק ומטבל אותו בחרוסת ואוכל כזית הוא וכל המסובין עמו כל אחד ואחד אין אוכל פחות מכזית, ואחר כך עוקרין השולחן מלפני קורא ההגדה לבדו, ומוזגין הכוס השני וכאן הבן שואל, ואומר הקורא מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת והלילה הזה שתי פעמים, שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה והלילה הזה כולו מצה, שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בשר צלי שלוק ומבושל והלילה הזה כולו צלי, שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות והלילה הזה מרורים, שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בין יושבין בין מסובין והלילה הזה כולנו מסובין.

He starts and blesses "(Blessed . . .) who creates the fruit of the earth," and takes [a] vegetable and dips it in charoseth¹¹ and eats an olive's bulk, he and all those reclined with him (i.e. those participating in the seder), each and every one does not eat less than an olive's bulk.¹² Then they remove the tray from before only the reader¹³ of the Hagadah, and we mix the second cup, and here the son asks (questions about the seder), and the reader says "How different is this night than all other nights.¹⁴ On all other nights we don't dip even once, this night we dip twice. On all nights we eat *chamet* or *matzah*, tonight [we eat] all *matzah*. On all nights we eat meat that is roast, stewed, or boiled, tonight [we eat] all roast [meat]. On all other nights we eat all vegetables, on this night [we eat] *merorim*. On all nights we eat either sitting or reclining, tonight we are all reclining."

Halacha #3

הלכה ג

בזמן הזה אינו אומר והלילה הזה כולו צלי שאין לנו קרבן, ומתחיל בגנות וקורא עד שגומר דרש פרשת ארמי אובד אבי כולה. Nowadays, he does not say "this night all roast," because we do not have sacrifice. And he begins [to tell the story of Passover] with denigration until he finishes expounding the entire [paragraph of] "an Aramean enslaved my father."¹⁵

¹¹ Today, we use salt water. Maimonides charoseth recipe is given in "Laws of Chametz and Matzah" 7:11 and includes chopped dates, dry figs or raisins with vinegar and spices.

¹² Generally, all mitzvot that involve eating require that one eats at least enough of the food involved that would be equivalent to the volume of an olive. Many modern Hagadahs say to eat less than an olive's bulk. However, Goldschmidt notes that most of the ancient hagadas included a grace to be said after *karpas*, which would only be said if a person ate an olive's bulk. Others concluded that we should not eat an olive's size of the vegetable, so as not to ruin our appetite for the Matzah to come. Personally, I follow Maimonides on this matter.

¹³ Talmud Pesachim 115b mentions taking the seder plate away from the one who recites the hagadah as a ploy to pique the interest of children.

¹⁴ Note that for Maimonides, it is the leader of the seder who recites *Mah Nishtanah* in order to point out to children the different rituals of the night. The Babylonian Talmud in Pesachim 115b also indicates that if children have already asked why this night is different, then *Mah Nishtanah* need not be recited. The current practice of having children recite the Mah Nishtanah is probably halachically fine, since in any event the children are asking questions. However, children should be encouraged to ask more than just the "stock" questions.

¹⁵ Maimonides' reference is to the section of the Hagadah that discusses the verses of Deuteronomy 26:5-8, which is a brief history of the Israelites going to, and leaving from Egypt. This discussion is one of the more vital parts of the hagadah. Discussing Deut. 26:5-8 is mentioned in Mishnah in Pesachim (BT Pesachim 116a., Mishnah 10:4).

Halacha #4

הלכה ד

ומחזיר השלחן לפניו ואומר פסח זה שאנו אוכלין על שם שפסח המקום על בתי אבותינו במצרים שנאמר ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה', ומגביה המרור בידו ואומר מרור זה שאנו אוכלין על שם שמררו המצרים את חיי אבותינו במצרים שנאמר וימררו את חייהם, ומגביה המצה בידו ואומר מצה זו שאנו אוכלין על שם שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה עליהם מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא וגאלם מיד שנאמר ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים וכו', ובזמן הזה אומר פסח שהיו אבותינו אוכלין בזמן שבית המקדש קיים על שם שפסח הקדוש ברוך הוא על בתי אבותינו וכו'.

And he brings back the table and he says¹⁶: "This paschal offering which we eat, [we eat] because there the omnipresent passed on the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, as it says, 'And you shall say it is a paschal offering to God etc.'"¹⁷ And he raises the *marror* in his hand and says: "this *marror* that we eat [we eat] because the Egyptians embittered (*merreru*) the lives of our ancestors in Egypt, as it says: 'And they embittered their lives.'"¹⁸ And he raises the matzah in his hand and says: "This matzah that we eat [we eat] because the dough of our ancestors did not have enough [time] to leaven before the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He appeared to them and saved them immediately, as it says 'and they baked the dough that they took out of Egypt.'"¹⁹ And nowadays, he says " "The paschal offering which our ancestors would eat when the Temple was in existence [they would eat] because there the omnipresent passed on the houses of our ancestors," etc.

Halacha 5

הלכה ה

ואומר לפיכך אנו חייבין להודות להלל לשבח לפאר להדר לרומם לגדל ולנצח למי שעשה לנו ולאבותינו את כל הנסים האלו והוציאנו מעבדות לחירות מיגון לשמחה ומאפלה לאור גדול ונאמר לפניו הללוי-ה, הללוי-ה הללו עבדי ה' וגוי' עד חלמיש למעיני מים, וחותרם ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים והגיענו ללילה הזה לאכול בו מצה ומרורים, ובזמן הזה מוסיף כן ה' א-להינו ואלהי אבותינו יגיענו למועדים ולרגלים אחרים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום שמחים בבנין עירך וששים בעבודתך ונאכל שם מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים שיגיע דמם על קיר מזבחתך לרצון ונודה לך שיר חדש על גאולתנו ועל פדות נפשנו ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל, ומברך בורא פרי הגפן ושותה הכוס השני.

And he says, "Therefore, we are obligated to thank, praise, laud, glorify, honor, to raise up, magnify and acclaim the one who did for our ancestors all these miracles and took us out from slavery to freedom, from despair to joy, from darkness to great light, and we will say before him: *HalleluY-ah* (praise God) *HalleluY-ah, praise oh servants of the LORD*" etc. through "a flintstone into flowing water."²⁰ And he concludes, "Blessed are You A-donay Our God, Sovereign of the universe, who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors and brought us to this day to eat matzah and *marrors*," and nowadays he ads, "so too A-donay our God and God of our ancestors, (may you) bring us to holidays and other pilgrimages that come to great us in peace, happy in the building of your city (Jerusalem) and joyful in your worship, and we will eat there from the sacrifices and paschal offerings whose blood will reach the walls of your altar by your will, and we will thank you with a new song for our redemption and the saving of our souls. Blessed are You A-donay, Redeemer of Israel' And he blesses "(Blessed are You . . .) who creates the fruit of the vine" and drinks the second cup.

¹⁶ This halacha tells us about mentioning the three items which Rabban Gamliel (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5, BT 116a-b) says must be mentioned at the seder - the Passover offering, the Matzah and the *marror*. Most of this Halacha is a quote from the Mishnah. Lifting the matzah and *marror* while talking about them is mentioned by in the Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116b: "Rava said: The matsah, he needs to raise it. And bitter herbs, he needs to raise it. Meat he does not need to raise it, and moreover it would appear as if he eats sacrifices outside [the Temple]."

¹⁷ Exodus 12:27. The complete verse reads: " וְאָמַרְתֶּם זֶבַח פֶּסַח הוּא לַה' אֲשֶׁר פֶּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת בְּתֵינֵינוּ הִצִּיל " And you shall say it is a paschal offering to the LORD who passed over the houses of Israel in Egypt when he struck the Egyptians and spared our houses and the nation bowed and prostrated."

¹⁸ Exodus 1:14.

¹⁹ Exodus 12:39. The complete verse reads: " וַיֹּאפּוּ אֶת הַבֶּצֶק אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם עֲגַת מִצּוֹת כִּי לֹא חָמֵץ כִּי גָרְשׁוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְהִתְמַהֵמֵה " And they baked their dough which they took out of Egypt into matzas because it did not leaven, because the Egyptians chased them and they could not wait, nor had they made themselves any provisions."

²⁰ I.e. he recites Psalms 113-114, the first two paragraphs of Hallel.

Halacha #6

הלכה ו

ואחר כך מברך על נטילת ידים ונוטל ידיו שניה שהרי הסיח דעתו בשעת קריאת ההגדה, ולוקח שני ריקיקין חולק אחד מהן ומניח פרוס לתוך שלם ומברך המוציא לחם מן הארץ, ומפני מה אינו מברך על שתי ככרות כשאר ימים טובים משום שנאמר לחם עוני מה דרכו של עני בפרוסה אף כאן בפרוסה. ואחר כך כורך מצה ומרור כאחד ומטבל בחרוסת ומברך ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת מצות ומרורים ואוכלן, ואם אכל מצה בפני עצמה ומרור בפני עצמו מברך על זה בפני עצמו ועל זה בפני עצמו.

Afterward, he blesses "(Blessed are You . . . and commanded us) regarding washing the hand" and he washes his hands a second time because he distracted his attention²¹ during the time of the reading of the Hagadah, and he takes two loaves and breaks one of them and places the piece into the whole and blesses "(Blessed are You . . .) who brings forth bread from the earth." And why does he not bless on two loaves like on the other holidays, because it states "poor bread,"²² just as a pauper's manner is with broken [bread,] so to here (we eat) with broken [bread]. And then he sandwiches matzah and *marror* as one and dips them in charoseth and blesses "Blessed are You A-donay our God Sovereign of the Universe who sanctified us through His commandments and commanded us regarding eating matzah and *marror* and eats them. And if he eats the matzah on its own and the *marror* on its own, he blesses on this one individually and that one individually.

Halacha #7

הלכה ז

ואחר כך מברך ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת הזבח ואוכל מבשר חגיגת ארבעה עשר תחלה, ומברך ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת הפסח ואוכל מגופו של פסח, ולא ברכת הפסח פוטרת של זבח ולא של זבח פוטרת של פסח.

Then he blesses "Blessed are You, A-donai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who sanctified us through His commandments and commanded us regarding the eating of the sacrifice" and he first eats of the meat of the *chagigah* (festival offering) of the fourteenth, and he blesses "Blessed are You, A-donai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who sanctified us through His commandments and commanded us regarding the eating of the Paschal offering" and he eats from the body of the Paschal offering, and the blessing on the Paschal offering does not exempt [one from the need to say the blessing] on the sacrifice (i.e. the *chagigah*), nor does [the blessing] on the sacrifice exempt [one from the need to say the blessing] on the Paschal offering.

²¹ From keeping his hands in a state of purity.

²² Deuteronomy 16:3. The complete verse reads: " לא תאכל עליו חמץ שבועת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עני כי בחפזו יצאת מארץ מצרים למען " Do not eat upon it (the Passover offering) chametz, for seven days you shall eat upon it *matzas*, poor bread, because you left from Egypt in haste, [eat *matzas*] so that you may remember the day of your departure from Egypt all the days of your life." Ironically, one could argue that having two and a half matzot makes us look even richer than on other Shabbats and Yom Tavs. Note that the Vilna Ga'on also ruled to have only 1 and a half matzot.

Halacha #8

הלכה ח

בזמן הזה שאין שם קרבן אחר שמברך המוציא לחם חוזר ומברך על אכילת מצה, ומטבל מצה בחרוסת ואוכל, וחוזר ומברך על אכילת מרור ומטבל מרור בחרוסת ואוכל, ולא ישהה אותו בחרוסת שמא יבטל טעמו, וזו מצוה מדברי סופרים, וחוזר וכורך מצה ומרור ומטבל בחרוסת ואוכל בלא ברכה זכר למקדש.

Nowadays, where there is no sacrifice, after he blesses "who brings forth bread" (i.e. the blessing for eating bread or matzah), he continues and blesses "[. . . and commanded us regarding] the eating of the matzah," and he dips his matzah in charoseth²³ and eats, and he continues and blesses "[. . . and commanded us regarding] the eating of the *marror*," and he dips *marror* in charoseth and eats, and he should not keep it (the *marror*) in the charoseth lest it lose its flavor, and this is a commandment from the scribes,²⁴ and he continues and sandwiches matzah and *marror* and dips it in charoseth and eats [the sandwich] without a blessing²⁵, as a reminder of the Temple.

Halacha #9

הלכה ט

ואחר כך נמשך בסעודה ואוכל כל מה שהוא רוצה לאכול ושותה כל מה שהוא רוצה לשתות, ובאחרונה אוכל מבשר הפסח אפילו כזית ואינו טועם אחריו כלל, ובזמן הזה אוכל כזית מצה ואינו טועם אחריה כלום, כדי שיהיה הפסק סעודתו וטעם בשר הפסח או המצה בפיו שאכילתן היא המצוה.

Then he continues with his meal and eats whatever he wants to eat, and drinks whatever he wants to drink, and in the end he eats from the meat of the Paschal offering, even if [he only eats] an olive's bulk, and he does not taste anything else after it. And nowadays, he eats an olive's bulk of matzah and does not taste anything else after it, so that it be the end of his meal and the taste of the meat of the Paschal offering or the matzah should be in his mouth, since eating it is the *mitzvah* (commandment).

Halacha #10

הלכה י

ואחר כך נוטל ידיו ומברך ברכת המזון על כוס שלישי ושותהו, ואחר כך מווג כוס רביעי וגומר עליו את ההלל, ואומר עליו ברכת השיר והיא יהללך ה' כל מעשיך וכו', ומברך בורא פרי הגפן ואינו טועם אחר כך כלום כל הלילה חוץ מן המים, ויש לו למזוג כוס חמישי ולומר עליו הלל הגדול והוא מהודו לה' כי טוב עד על נהרות בבל, וכוס זה אינו חובה כמו ארבעה כוסות, ויש לו לגמור את ההלל בכל מקום שירצה אע"פ שאינו מקום סעודה.

Then one washes his hands and blesses the Grace After Meals on a third cup, and he drinks (the third cup), and then he mixes a fourth cup and completes the Hallel²⁶ and says the "blessing of the song," which is "May all your creations praise You," etc. and he blesses "who creates the fruit of the vine," [and drinks the wine] and afterward does not taste anything the whole night except water. And one may mix a fifth cup to say the "great Hallel,"²⁷ which is from "Give praise to the LORD for He is good until "by the rives of Babylon," but this cup is not an obligation like the four cups. And one may finish the Hallel in any place, even if it is not the place of the meal.

²³ This is a matter of some controversy. Some argue that the matzah should be eaten plain. Those who say that you should have have something on the matzah follow the Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 40a which says that one should not break bread without having something to put on the bread (especially necessary for matzah, which is fairly tasteless). Rabbi Yosef Karo, the Sephardi voice in the Shulchan Aruch mentions dipping the matzah in salt, while the Ashkenazi voice, Rabbi Moshe Isserless says not to (Orach Chayim 475:1).. I side with Maimonides and the Rabbi Karo.

²⁴ I.e., the eating of *marror* is a rabbinic, rather than a biblical commandment today. This is per BT Pesachim 120a that the only times that the Torah mentions eating *marror* is when it says to eat *marror* with matzah and the Paschal offering. Therefore, it is reasoned that without the Paschal offering, there is no Torah requirement to eat *marror*, whereas Matzah remains a biblical commandment because Exodus 12:18 mentions eating Matzah without mentioning the Paschal offering.

²⁵ I.e. the sandwich is eating without saying a blessing "[. . . and commanded us regarding]" as is required before doing most *mitzvot*. The sandwich is not considered a requirement, but rather a symbolic act, reminding us of the way the Paschal offering would be eaten in a sandwich with matzah and *marror*.

²⁶ Which was begun before the meal, see Halacha #5

²⁷ Note that it is common practice today to not drink the fourth cup of wine until after the Great Hallel.

Halacha #11

הלכה יא

מקום שנהגו לאכול צלי בלילי פסחים אוכלים, מקום שנהגו שלא לאכול אין אוכלין גזירה שמא יאמרו בשר הפסח הוא, ובכל מקום אסור לאכול שה צלוי כולו כאחד בליל זה מפני שנראה כאוכל קדשים בחוץ, ואם היה מחותך או שחסר ממנו אבר או שלק בו אבר והוא מחובר הרי זה מותר במקום שנהגו.

In places where they are practiced²⁸ to eat roast [meat] on Passover evening we eat [roast meat], in places where they are practiced not to eat meat [roasted meat], we do not eat roasted meat, a decree lest one say "it is the Paschal offering" (that the person is eating). And in any event, it is forbidden to eat a whole roasted sheep all together as one on this evening since it appears as he is eating holy food (i.e. the Paschal offering) outside [the Temple in Jerusalem], and if it were cut up or he stewed one of the limbs and it is attached, this is permitted in the places where they are practiced [to eat roast meat].

Halacha #12

הלכה יב

מי שאין לו יין בלילי הפסח מקדש על הפת כדרך שעושה בשבת ועושה כל הדברים על הסדר הזה, מי שאין לו ירק אלא מרור בלבד, בתחלה מברך על המרור שתי ברכות בורא פרי האדמה ועל אכילת מרור ואוכל, וכשגומר ההגדה מברך על המצה ואוכלה וחוזר ואוכל מן המרור בלא ברכה.

One who does not have wine on Passover eve makes *kiddush* on bread (i.e. matzah) just as he does on Shabbat and does everything in this order.²⁹ One who has no other vegetable, only *marror*, at the beginning he makes two blessings on the *marror*, "Who creates the fruit of the earth," and "[. . . and commanded us] regarding the eating of the *marror*," and eats, and when he finishes the Hagadah (i.e. the telling of the story of leaving Egypt," he blesses on the matzah and eats it and then continues and eats of the *marror* without a blessing.

Halacha #13

הלכה יג

מי שאין לו מצה משומרת אלא כזית כשגומר סעודתו ממצה שאינה משומרת מברך על אכילת מצה ואוכל אותו כזית ואינו טועם אחריו כלום.

One who only has an olive's bulk of watched over matzah³⁰, after he completes his meal with matzah that was not watched, he blesses "[. . . and commanded us] regarding the eating of the matzah" and eats that olives bulk and does not taste anything after it.³¹

Note: The final Halacha in Chapter 8, which deals with what happens if one falls asleep during the seder is omitted from this compilation.

²⁸ *Nahagu*, from the same word as *minhag* is sometimes used to denote common practice and sometimes used to denote halachic instructions given by the local rabbinic authority.

²⁹ I.e. the rest of the seder is carried out in the order indicated above.

³⁰ I.e. *matzah shemurah*. Matzah made of wheat that was watched since it was cut, as opposed to being guarded from the time that it was ground..

³¹ I.e. the blessing regarding eating matzah would not be said in this scenario until the Afikoman is eaten, since the mitzvah of matzah is done with *shemurah* matzah, and we have this matzah eaten last, so its taste remains in our mouth.