

Korekh

Contributed by [Pardes](#)

Source: Leah Rosenthal in <http://elmad.pardes.org/2016/04/the-pardes-companion-to-the-haggadah/>

After performing most of the central mitzvot of the evening (telling the story of the Exodus eating matza and maror, etc.) and just before we are about to enjoy the festive holiday meal, the haggadah structures a moment in which we symbolically repeat the practice of Hillel the Elder who would “wrap” his portion of the paschal offering with matza and maror and eat it as a type of sandwich, in literal fulfillment of the verse “it shall be eaten on matzot and maror”. We too prepare a combination of matza and maror (and haroset) and eat in remembrance of this practice and of the Pesach tradition during the time when the Temple still stood.

Let us pause a moment to consider the character of Hillel, a central and formative personality within the pantheon of Rabbinic figures, and to consider why, perhaps, the haggadah asks us to spend a moment recreating Hillel’s personal practice of eating the Pesach sacrifice.

Hillel, founder of the great and influential Beit Hillel, is well known for his personal qualities of tolerance, humility and pursuit of peace. Many of the tales of Hillel and his teachings reflect this characterization. This is expressed in famous citations such as: “Hillel says: Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures and drawing them near to the law.” The quality of being a *rodef shalom* (pursuer of peace) requires the ability to recognize the value of different perspectives and the skill of unifying conflicting truths into a harmonious whole. It requires the recognition that single individuals perceive only a portion of the complete truth. Hillel says: “If I am not for myself, who is for me? And when I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

The Rabbis of the Talmudic world joined Hillel in this understanding, promoting this view and ruling that Halakha (Jewish law) should follow Beit Hillel as “...they were kindly and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of Beit Shammai (Hillel’s halakhic opponent), and were even “...so [humble] as to mention the actions of Beit Shammai before their own.” Appropriately, the haggadah depicts Hillel as requiring the consumption of the Pesach sacrifice the food of redemption, through an act of combining – the *korekh*. Only the harmonious merging of a variety of components produces the true redemptive experience

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