

Tzafun

Contributed by [Pardes](#)

Source: Rabbi Michael Hattin in <http://elmad.pardes.org/2016/04/the-pardes-companion-to-the-haggadah/>

Tzafun from the Hebrew root צפנ, means "hidden" and refers to the afikoman. This piece of the matza, ceremonially broken earlier in the seder, is consumed at the conclusion of the meal in memory of the paschal sacrifice of Temple times. Early on, the custom developed to hide this matza away in order to maintain the younger participants' interest during the lengthy proceedings, as they would attempt to find it in order to earn a prize.

While we no longer are able to offer the paschal sacrifice with our Temple in ruins, the practice of the afikoman reminds us of former days. In a similar vein, the ceremonial washing for the karpas, or dipped vegetable that takes place early in the seder is also a vestige of ancient Temple laws this time relating to ritual tuma (impurity) and tahara (purity). Foods were regarded as susceptible to tuma if they had come into contact with certain liquids and this necessitated (especially for the priests consuming teruma or "priests' due") a special ritual hand washing.

It seems, therefore, that the seder is not just about the Exodus from Egypt but also about the Temple at Jerusalem. As we retell the ancient story of our ancestors' ascent from slavery we also consciously trace the long arc of that journey. It was a divinely-orchestrated trek that brought Israel from a place of acute vulnerability to one of safety and permanence in their own land. Sitting at our own seders in such uncertain times as these, we are strengthened by those ancient memories that saw us overcome helplessness in order to dream of triumph! Next year in rebuilt Jerusalem.

Rabbi Michael Hattin teaches Bible and Jewish Law.