

Pesach, Matzah, Marror

Contributed by [VBS](#)

Source: Valley Beth Shalom Haggadah

The matzah for the Seder is baked out of wheat, rye, oats, barley, or spelt. When moistened and allowed to ferment and rise, these five types of grains become "chametz:" leavened foods which are prohibited on Passover. Matzah derives from the same grains which are chametz. So, too, are the vices and virtues of our lives interwoven; our energies for good and evil intricately connected. Of itself, the grain is neither good nor evil, neither matzah nor chametz. What makes it one or the other is the intention and use to which it is assigned. Each, in its proper place, has its purpose. It is we, not the neutral grain, who consecrate or desecrate, who turn it into leavened bread or matzah.

-On Passover, we eat theology and drink ethics. On our plates, in our cups, with the posture of our bodies, in the gesture of our hands, in the way we eat, drink and sing, in the way we converse with one another are found the teachings of our people.

-The bitter herbs may not be simply swallowed. They must be chewed and tasted. It is not enough to talk abstractly about oppression, to analyze the causes which led to slavery, to read about the forced labor camps. To the best of our ability we are to experience the lives embittered by totalitarian punishment. To taste the bitter herbs is part of the process of feeling the affliction of body and spirit which a subjugated people suffers.

-Yet, when the maror is eaten, it is mixed with the cinnamoned charoset, perhaps to teach us that memory cannot be immersed only in darkness and despair. The sweet mixture is not to be the dominant taste as the maror is dipped in the charoset. The charoset is not meant to eradicate the bitter, only to remind us that there is goodness in the world, however small, and hope in the future, however slight. Without the charoset, the only lasting memory would be that of torture and shame.