

Maror

Contributed by [Uri L'Tzedek](#)

Source: <http://www.utzedek.org/socialjusticetorah/uri-ltzedek-food-a-justice-haggadah-supplement.html>

By: Rabbi David Jaffe

In Talmud Bavli Pesachim 115b, Rava teaches, "[One who] swallows the matzah [without chewing] has fulfilled the obligation [of eating matzah]. [However, one who] swallows the maror [without chewing] does not fulfill the obligation [of eating maror]." Rashbam explains that even though ideally one should taste the matzah, after the fact, even swallowing without tasting is a form of eating and thus one has fulfilled the mitzvah. Maror is different. Actually tasting the maror, and not just eating it, is the essence of the mitzvah because the maror should remind us of how our lives were embittered by the oppression of the mitzrim. (See also Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayyim 475:3; Mishnah Berurah 475: 29, 30.)

We need to slowly chew our horseradish or romaine lettuce, letting the burning juices sink into our tongues and open our sinuses! We live in a fast food culture. Except on Shabbat, our meals are often rushed; an efficient meal is something we can finish in under five minutes or eat while doing something else. The ba'alei mussar teach that the yetzer harah's main strategy is to keep us busy, moving so fast that we absorb neither our own reality nor the reality of the world around us.

There is so much suffering in the world, both our own and others', such as the migrant workers who harvest our food, exposing themselves to dangerous pesticides while being paid less than a living wage. They contract illnesses and do not have the health insurance needed to heal. Subsistence farmers in Central and South America are forced by economic need to produce only one type of crop and no longer have the ability to feed their own families. Or, closer to home, a relative may be silently suffering health problems, family strife, or economic vulnerability. This halachah is teaching us that suffering is something to be absorbed and felt if it is to have a cathartic and motivating impact. Our business urges us not to look, not to dwell, not to really feel. However, it is that bitter taste of suffering that makes it impossible for us to accept things the way they are. We must act, we must reach out, we must make change!