

The Bitter sweet in Every Passover



This year, Moving Traditions invites you to focus on two of the foods on the seder plate – the *maror*, bitter herbs, and the *haroset*, the sweet mixture that symbolizes the mortar used by the enslaved Israelites to bind bricks. We choose these symbols to affirm the fullness of the experience of being alive and Jewish today, both the bitter and the sweet. The haroset itself is a paradoxical symbol – sweet on the tongue; it also carries a meaning associated with hard labor. What a perfect symbol to support a both/and approach at your seder table. We hope this reading helps you invite guests to engage with one another with the goals of connection, learning and understanding one another's perspectives.

The Materials: *What do you need?*

- **Maror** – bitter herbs – horseradish root is the popular modern choice – but you can also use bitter greens like romaine, endive or chicory.
- **Haroset**- a mixture of fruits and nuts whose name is derived from the Hebrew word for clay. Many of us have a family recipe. Try a second option this year to add even more sweetness to your table and/or to remind us of all the places Jews have lived over the centuries. You can find plenty of options online.

The Place in the Order

Eating maror is a ritual of the Passover seder intended to evoke the memory of slavery's bitterness. The haroset is symbolic of the bricks the Israelites made during slavery – but it's sweet to remind us of hope and redemption. You bless and dip the maror in the haroset shortly before the festive meal – a small appetizer that we hope will create some space for you to use the reading on the other side and/or discuss these four extra questions.

- Why does Jewish tradition ask us to taste these two flavors at the same time? What does it feel like?
- What is something happening in the world or in your life that is leaving you with a bitter taste in your mouth?
- What is something happening in the world or in your life that is giving you a taste of sweetness?
- How can we balance the bitterness and sweetness of life in this moment?

Maror and Haroset- A Pesach Reading for 5786/2026

By Rabbi Tamara Cohen

As we turn to the maror, the bitter herbs, potent symbol of the harshness of ancient forced labor,
let's take a few moments to name some of this year's harsh realities, personal and communal:

Painful divisions in our communities and sometimes families.
The suffering and fear of neighbors,
friends and communities whose rights are under attack,
Despair at seeing our values and sense of safety profoundly challenged.
Rising antisemitism and intolerance in our country and world.

Invite others around the table to add to this list and then continue

As we dip *maror* into *haroset*,
we affirm sweetness as part of our reality alongside bitterness.

In the mix and mash of spices, nuts, and fruit,
in the tartness of the apple and the honey of the date,

We affirm our resilience in the face of challenge,
the strength and diversity of our People's traditions,
the ancient wisdom we carry about how to adapt and stay steady.

Let us call to mind the many ways we have cared for one another and been cared for,
name the courage we have lent and found in community,
standing up to affirm our vision of what is holy and true.

We honor the enduring nourishment of our sacred teachings,
expressions of Jewish hope, joy and connection,
affirmations of shared humanity across difference.

Tonight, we dip bitter into sweet, tasting what is familiar and also what is new.
We awaken to the ways we want things to be different, and sit with the ways things are right now.

We offer gratitude for the mixing of pleasant and uncomfortable,
of what agitates and what calms.

We commit to not hiding from the *maror* around us,
nor ignoring all that is good and life-giving in our lives.

May we savor the mix of tastes in our mouths, finding balance as we walk ahead.

Like our ancestors, let's bravely part the waters,
heading forward together into the unknown.

For more Passover resources, please visit us online:



www.MovingTraditions.org/Passover

