

# The Symbolism of the items on the Passover table

**The Candles** represent the light of God's face shining upon us. They symbolise the shekinah glory of God which appeared in the Tabernacle. There are always at least two candles on the Passover table, one for *observe*, the other for *remember*. God commanded the feast's annual observance in order that Israel would remember his mercy. The two candles also remind the Jews that God is not only their Creator but also their Redeemer.

**Three unleavened loaves (matzo)** placed together in a special cover with three compartments, represent the bread which did not have time to rise that the Israelites took for sustenance on their journey out of Egypt.

**Red wine** is a symbol of joy. Four cups are drunk by each participant to symbolise four expressions of redemption found in Exodus 6:6-7.

- 'I will bring you out from under their burdens.'
- 'I will deliver you out of bondage.'
- 'I will redeem you with great judgments.'
- 'I will take you to myself and I will be your God.'

**A roasted shankbone** represents the lambs slain in Egypt and the Passover sacrifice in Temple times.

**A roasted egg** is a reminder of the special festival sacrifice (the haggigah) that took place in Israel when the Temple was standing. It is a symbol of mourning for the Temple, and stems from the Eastern custom of giving eggs at funerals. The thought was this – an egg is round and therefore had no beginning and no end; so life, even in the face of death, goes on. The egg has long been used as a Christian symbol of the resurrection.

**Parsley (or celery)** is a symbol of the hyssop that was used by the slaves in Egypt to apply the blood of the Passover lambs to their doorways. It is dipped twice in the salt water before being eaten.

**Bitter herbs (horseradish, onions)** symbolise the bitterness of slavery.

**Lettuce** is considered a bitter herb. It is a symbol of hope and new life. New life emerges out of sorrow.

**Charoset** is a mixture of grated apple, ground nuts, raisins, cinnamon and wine. It looks like the clay which the Israelites used to make bricks for Pharaoh in Egypt. Thus it symbolises hard labour.

**Salt water (or vinegar)** represents the tears of bitterness shed in Egypt. Thus it symbolises sorrow.

**The Cup of Elijah** is an ornamental goblet which is filled at the end of the Seder in the hope that Messiah will come.



## Charoset

1 apple, peeled and grated  
½ cup ground walnuts, almonds or pecans  
Cinnamon  
Red wine or grape juice

Mix all ingredients together using a little grape juice or wine to moisten. Minced raisins, dates or figs can be added. Mixture should have a clay-like texture.

## The Roasted Egg.

Traditionally, the symbolic egg for the Seder plate is roasted. An egg can be hardboiled in dark tea for 15 minutes to give it a 'roasted' appearance.