

Rav Pincus: Esser Sfiros (Seder Plate)

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Below is the Seder plate of the Arizal. Each one of the components of the plate represent one of the 10 Sfiros that make up our relationship with Hashem. (The Seder plate is made up of the 6 components below, the 3 matzahs, and the Seder Plate itself.):



- 1) The **Matzahs** represent (From top to bottom) **Chochma/Wisdom, Bina/Understanding and Daas/Knowledge**. Chochma is the pure knowledge of the fact that Hashem exists and created the world that we are in. Bina is a deeper understanding of that knowledge and how we internalize it. Daas is the connection of the Chochma and the Bina, applying the above to our everyday lives. Daas allows us to figure out what Hashem wants from us so that we may serve Him on a daily basis. Chametz represents the grasp that the Yetzer Harah has on us. By contrast, Matzah represents the ability to free ourselves from that grasp and live a life of Avodas Hashem. Just like the Matzah is symbolic of Klal Yisroel being freed from the slavery of Mitzrayim, so too it symbolizes our need to free ourselves from the slavery of the physical world and to heal our spirituality. The best way to do this is with Chochma, Bina, and Daas as we remind ourselves of our purpose in this world. Hence, the Matzahs are the perfect embodiment of our understanding of The Creator of the World and what he wants from us.
- 2) The **Zroah/shank bone** represents **Chesed/Kindness**. Chesed is the concept of unmatched giving. Hashem is constantly giving us life and the ability to serve Him. Generally, Chesed can be seen in the spiritual gifts that Hashem bestows upon us, as Hashem never holds back when it comes to our spiritual growth. The shank bone is symbolic of the Korban Pesach that we are no longer able to bring. The entire concept of a sacrifice is the connection between the physical world and the spiritual world. An animal has life and is totally physical until it is brought to serve Hashem, transforming it into a totally spiritual object. That connection that we make between the earth and Shamayim allows us to receive various gifts from Hashem. One of the most important gifts that Hashem bestows upon us is a clear understanding of his Existence and how we

must approach our Avodas Hashem (e.g., connecting Chochmah, Bina, and Daas to Chesed). As Chesed represents the spiritual gifts from Hashem, we can see how the Zroah/Korban Pesach is the embodiment of Chesed.

- 3) The **egg** represents **Gevurah/Strength**. This is basically the concept of a gift with limitations placed upon it. Generally, these gifts take the form in a physical manner which is inherently limited. The egg is symbolic of the Korban Chagigah which was brought to every Yuntif. This was a “Shelamim” offering which means that it was enjoyed by the people as well. (The most “physical” type of Korban that may be brought.) An egg’s shape shows a cap, as a rounded shape is limited. An egg is the ultimate representation of physicality, as an egg gives birth to life in the form of a chick. Even the physical must be used for Kedusha/Holiness such as a Korban. Thus an egg/Korban Chagigah is the embodiment of Gevurah.
- 4) The **Maror** represents **Tiphères/Beauty**. There are two main characteristics in which Hashem interacts with us. Midas HaDin (Gevurah), which revolves around judgment, and Midas HaChesed, which revolves around forgiveness. Each of these Midos is used for its own purpose, and each has its own benefit. Tiphères is the combination of the two seemingly opposite Midos into one single Midah. Everything Hashem does for us is totally good and beneficial. There are times that life is bitter as we go through hardships and challenges, however it is all for the best. The bitterness of life, that is good in reality, is the Chesed hidden within the Din, which is Tiphères. Without the bitterness of life we would never really come to appreciate the sweetness. That is the idea behind the bitterness of Mitzrayim, which the Maror symbolizes. It was a means to an end; its purpose was to cleanse us of all of our impurity and prepare us for the giving of the Torah. We see clearly that Maror is the ultimate embodiment of the Tiphères/Beauty of Hashem which is total goodness.
- 5) The **Charoses** represents **Netzach/Eternity**. Netzach is Hashem’s constant Presence in our lives. Even in the bitter times, He is present to the fullest extent. The Charoses is inherently a Rabbinic concept as there is no commandment from the Torah to dip into the Charoses. Like all rabbinic laws, it shows our love of Hashem as we look for more ways to serve Him above what was commanded in the Torah. As we said above, the entire concept of bitterness in life is a means to an end. Hashem is trying to give us a gift on the other end- a gift far greater than anything we could have imagined before the challenge. Man must recognize this, thus sweetening the bitter times in life. That is the idea behind the Charoses, the dipping is meant to remove some of the bitterness from the Maror. The idea of Netzach, Hashem’s constant Presence, is clear when we view even the bitter as sweet.
- 6) The **Karpas** represents **Hod/Glory**. There are two components of Emunah. The first being a simple understanding of Hashem that anyone with a basic intellect can come to. The second being more complex, consists of an understanding that Hashem is totally in

control of all facets of life, both good and bad. The second builds off the first. That simple understanding is usually obtained at a young age in the years of adolescence. The Karpas represents the basic form of Emunah as it is a basic vegetable that slowly grows in the ground. (Also, the reason given by the Gemara for Karpas is so that the children should ask, sparking this basic form of Emunah to grow within the young one.) The perception of Hashem's glory grows within us as time goes on, much like the vegetable in the ground.

- 7) The **Chazeres** represents **Yesod/Foundation**. This is another Maror used for the Korech sandwich. This however, is a Rabbinic enactment unlike the original commandment of Maror. The Maror commanded from the Torah represents the hardships and challenges sent from Hashem. This Maror represents the bitterness that we ourselves brought upon us. As we overcome the issues that we caused, we can bring ourselves closer to Hashem. Through this we are able to tap into the good that Hashem has placed in our lives for us to find. The Yesod/Foundation of life is connecting earth and Shamayim. Through overcoming our personal challenges we get closer to Hashem, connecting this world to the heavens. We see that Chazeres is the embodiment of Yesod.
- 8) The **Seder Plate** itself represents **Malchus/Kingship**. Malchus is the infinite power and ability of Hashem. All of the other Sfiros are encompassed within Malchus. We see how Hashem uses the other Sfiros to interact with us. So too by the Seder Plate, as all the different aspects of the plate combine into one purpose.