What to Use for Marror at the Pesach Seder
Halachically Speaking

Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former chaver kollel of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and a musmach of Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary halacha with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant shittos on each topic, as well as the psak of Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita on current issues.

WHERE TO SEE

Halachically Speaking is distributed to many shuls in Flatbush, Lakewood, Five Towns, Far Rockaway, and Queens. It is sent via email to subscribers across the world.
What to Use for Marror at the Pesach Seder

Weeks before Pesach the newspapers are full of advertisements for romaine lettuce that does not need to be inspected for insects. What is the ideal item to use for marror on Pesach? Horseradish? Lettuce? Romaine lettuce? Is one preferred over the other one? Is hydroponically grown lettuce permitted for marror? Does the marror need to be bitter? Is it permitted to mix different kinds of marror? All these and other related issues will be addressed in this issue.

Marror - The Mitzvah

The Torah¹ requires us to eat the korbon Pesach with marror. When there is no Bais Hamikdosh and no korbon Pesach, there is an obligation d’rabbanan² for both men and women to eat marror on the seder night(s).³

What is Marror?

The Mishnah in Meseches Pesachim⁴ lists five species that may be used for marror: chazeres, tamcha, charchavina, ulshin and marror.⁵ The Gemorah⁶ identifies chazeres as “chasah,” which is lettuce.⁷ The poskim identify tamcha as

---

4. 39a.
7. Rashi Meseches Pesachim 39a “chasah,” Hago’es Maimonies Hilchos Chometz U’matzah
horseradish (see below),\(^8\) and \textit{ulshin} as endives.\(^9\) The \textit{Chayai Adam}\(^{10}\) says that only the items listed in the \textit{Mishnah} may be used, even if another item may be bitter. The \textit{Gemorah}\(^{11}\) adds that \textit{marror} has to be similar to \textit{matzah} (grain), which grows from a seed in the ground (this will be discussed later as it relates to hydroponically grown lettuce).

We are not familiar with the other types of \textit{marror};\(^{12}\) therefore, we will only be focusing our attention to the two popular species: lettuce and horseradish.

\textbf{Why Lettuce}

Lettuce does not have a bitter taste to it, but is still used as \textit{marror} (see below). Why is this so? The \textit{Gemorah}\(^{13}\) (and this is quoted as well in the \textit{poskim}) says that lettuce (generally assumed to mean romaine lettuce) is used for \textit{marror} because it reminds us of the work done by the Jews in \textit{Mitzrayim} in the following manner: When lettuce grows, it is sweet, but at the end it is hard (and bitter). Similarly, in the beginning the work was soft, and at the end it was hard.\(^{14}\) In addition, lettuce in Hebrew is \textit{"chasah"} which serves as a reminder that \textit{Hashem} had pity (\textit{chas}) on the Jews in \textit{Mitzrayim}.\(^{15}\) Others say that lettuce is preferred because it is

---


\(^{9}\) Magen Avraham 473:10, Chok Yaakov 18, Pri Megadim Y.D. 84:5.D. 34, Chacham Tzvi 119, Shulchan Aruch Harav 473:27. Refer to Vayaged Moshe page 204.

\(^{10}\) 130:3.

\(^{11}\) Meseches Pesachim 39a.

\(^{12}\) Chayai Adom 130:3.

\(^{13}\) Meseches Pesachim 39a, see Rashi “techila,” and “marror.”

\(^{14}\) Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 118:3, Mishnah Berurah 473:42. Refer to Yecheveh Daas 1:18.

\(^{15}\) Meseches Pesachim 39a, Aruch Hashulchan 13.
the first in the list of acceptable marrors in the Mishnah. In addition, it is difficult to eat a kezayis of bitter horseradish, but this is not so with lettuce.

**Which Lettuce**

It is reported that Harav Aron Kotler zt”l used iceberg lettuce for marror at the seder, while Harav Moshe Feinstein zt”l and Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt”l used romaine lettuce. It is the opinion of other poskim as well that romaine lettuce is preferred over iceberg. The Chacham Tzvi zt”l and the Chasam Sofer zt”l ate lettuce for marror. Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt”l used lettuce, as did Harav Benzion Abba Shaul zt”l.

The consensus is that romaine lettuce should be used for the seder.

**Lettuce and Insects**

There are poskim who maintain that lettuce should be avoided since it is difficult to check properly for insects. Therefore, one should either buy lettuce with a good hechsher that it was grown in such a way that there is no

---

17. Ibid.
20. Divrei Chachamim page 147.
22. 119.
23. O.C. 1:132.
25. He ate the stalk as well (Chuko Mamakim 1:page 336).
concern of infestation, or one should learn how to check for insects.29

Lettuce - Sweet Taste

The Gemorah30 says that marror must have a bitter taste. The Chazon Ish zt"l was of the opinion that if lettuce is not bitter it may not be used for marror.31

Although lettuce does not have a bitter taste, many use it for the seder. As mentioned before, most poskim say that even if lettuce is sweet it is the preferred marror for the seder.32 This does not contradict the Gemorah, for there is no need to actually eat something bitter, as long as one tastes the food that is defined as maror. To be sure, one who swallows marror is not yotzei because he has not tasted any marror, but there is no requirement to have a bitter experience when consuming marror. Furthermore, the comparison to marror and Mitzrayim does not mention anything about “bitter,” just that in the beginning the work there was soft and at the end it was “hard.”

Some suggest that lettuce may have a bitter taste at the first bite.33 In reality romaine lettuce does have a slight bitterness to it.34

Others suggest using the stalk of the lettuce instead of the leaves, since it is bitterer.35 In addition, there are those

33. Orchos Rabbeinu 2:page 75:64.
who maintain that any item identified as marror may be eaten, even if it is not bitter.\textsuperscript{36}

The Torah never mentions eating marror because it is bitter. In fact the Ibn Ezra\textsuperscript{37} says that the reason why marror was eaten was because it was served as a side dish to be eaten at the meal. This would not refer to something that is so bitter that it is nearly inedible.\textsuperscript{38}

**Leaves or Stalks**

One fulfills the mitzvah of marror with lettuce leaves or the stalk.\textsuperscript{39} However, it is preferable to use the leaves,\textsuperscript{40} because it is easier to eat the correct shiur (kezayis).\textsuperscript{41}

When using romaine lettuce leaves one should use a size of 8 inches by 10 inches.\textsuperscript{42}

Others were afraid of infestation on the leaves so they ate the stalks.\textsuperscript{43}

**Lettuce vs. Others**

The best way to fulfill the obligation of marror is with lettuce.\textsuperscript{44} Even if lettuce is more expensive, one should use it for marror as opposed to other items.\textsuperscript{45} In addition, in many cases horseradish is so bitter that one is not able to consume the correct shiur and has not fulfilled the mitzvah

\textsuperscript{36} Teshuvos V’hanhagos 2:238.
\textsuperscript{37} Shemos 12:8.
\textsuperscript{38} Ritvah Meseches Pesachim 39a.
\textsuperscript{39} Meseches Pesachim 39a, Shulchan Aruch 473:5.
\textsuperscript{40} Taz 5, Magen Avraham 12, Mishnah Berurah 38.
\textsuperscript{41} Taz 5, Elya Rabbah 17.
\textsuperscript{42} Natei Gavriel Pesach page 249:footnote 14.
\textsuperscript{43} Orchos Rabbeinu 2:page 74:60, Mekadesh Yisroel Pesach 408.
\textsuperscript{45} Leket Yosher 1:page 92:2, Levush 5, Chok Yaakov 22, Mishnah Berurah 473:42.
of *marror* properly. Therefore, one should use lettuce if it is available.\(^{46}\)

**Berachah of Marror and Lettuce Grown in Pot / Water / Greenhouse\(^{47}\)**

No *berachah* of *hoodama* is recited on *marror*. It is not eaten as part of the meal, but rather for *mitzvah* purposes. Therefore, it should require its own *berachah*. In order to resolve this issue we make a *hoodama* on *karpas* and have the *marror* in mind.\(^{48}\) However, if *marror* is grown in a way which would require a *shehakol*, then there would be a problem with the *berachah*. We will explain the different methods of planting lettuce below.

**Lettuce Grown in a Pot**

Lately, it has become the practice to grow lettuce in a pot above the ground in order to avoid insect infestation. The question arises if one is *yotzei* his obligation of *marror* by using such an item.

The *Chayai Adam*\(^{49}\) says that one does not recite *hoodama* on an item which is planted in a pot since it is not connected to the ground. However, there are many *poskim* who maintain that the *berachah* on such an item is still *hoodama*. Therefore, one may use lettuce which grows in a pot for *marror* on the night(s) of the *seder*.\(^{50}\) Their logic is that as long as an item is from a class of produce which is grown in the ground, then even if one particular specimen

---

\(^{46}\) Yechaveh Daas 1:18.

\(^{47}\) For an in-depth discussion on this topic see Machzei Eliyahu 25-30.

\(^{48}\) Aruch Hashulchan 473:18, see Mishnah Berurah 473:20, 55.


\(^{50}\) Shalmei Moed pages 394-395, opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt”l quoted in Halichos Shlomo Moadim 7:20, Avnei Yushpe 7:65:1, Vezos Haberachah page 262 quoting the opinion of the Chazzon Ish zt”l and others.
is grown in a pot the *berachah* status does not change. The *Chayai Adam* holds that it is not viewed as a plant that grows in the ground and the *berachah* is *shehakol*.

**Lettuce Grown in Water – Hydroponics**

Hydroponics refers to produce that is grown in water. “Hydro” means water and “ponos” is labor. Today it is common for many vegetables to be grown hydroponically, such as lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers.

What *berachah* is made on such products? Are they considered grown from the ground?

This may affect the status of *marror* as it would impact the *berachah*.

The opinion of a few *poskim* is that the *berachah* made on these products is *hoadama*. Some explain this with the same reasoning that applies to produce grown in a pot. Since the basic item generally grows from the ground, the fact that this particular specimen was grown in water does not affect its status. Others do maintain that the *berachah* for such produce is a *shehakol*. Even according to this view, if one recited a *hoadama* he does not have to recite a new *berachah*.

Some suggest that one should take lettuce that grows from the actual ground, and if none are available then he can use the hydroponically grown lettuce.

---

51. Refer to Vezos Haberachah pages 261-262.
52. 51:17.
53. For a discussion on this topic see Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society 27:pages 112-119. Also see Rivevos Ephraim 5:237.
55. Teshuvos V’hanhagos 2:149.
58. Kinyan Torah 4:54.
Lettuce Grown in Greenhouses

Today it is very common for lettuce to be grown in a greenhouse. There are different methods of growing lettuce in greenhouses. Some growers put the plant in the ground and surround the area with a cloth to prevent insects from attacking the lettuce. On these products one recites a hoadama.59 Others grow the produce on a nylon sheet covering the ground. This may be considered as growing a plant in a pot without holes as discussed above. It would seem that the nylon is botel to the ground, and the lettuce is considered grown in the ground. Therefore, the berachah is hoadama.60

Romaine Lettuce and Cleaning for Insects61

Romaine lettuce is known as an open leaf lettuce. This means that it grows in the ground like a flower and then closes up toward the end of its growth. Since the lettuce grow open it is more common to find insects in this lettuce, as opposed to other lettuce which grows closed like a ball. Aphids and thrips often infest the lettuce, and their green color creates an excellent camouflage. These bugs can be present on the inner layers of the lettuce as well. One can use a light box to check for infestation. The poskim speak about the importance of checking lettuce for bugs.62

This is the manner for checking that is advised by the KOF-K Vegetable Guide:

Separate leaves from head and open all folds. Fill basin with water and enough liquid soap to make the water feel soapy. Place the leaves in the water but do not overload the

61. Refer to Halichos Shlomo Moadim 2:pages 172-178, Shalmei Moed page 395.
basin. The leaves must float freely in the water. Allow to soak for 3-5 minutes.

**First rinse** – Place the leaves in another basin of fresh water. Agitate vigorously for several minutes and then allow them to soak for three minutes.

**Second rinse** – Hold each leaf and spray with strong stream of water, making sure that entire surface of every leaf is hit. Remember, both sides of each must be washed.

Those who do not wish to check for insects may purchase romaine lettuce which have a good *hechsher* and that come from a company which either grows it in a way that there are no insects, or has a very rigorous cleaning process.

**Using Horseradish**

Many people use ground horseradish for *marror*. If one has a custom to use horseradish, but is concerned that ingesting it will damage him (because of the sharpness), he may use lettuce.

A case against using horseradish can be made based on the fact that we use the root, and the *halacha* clearly says that one should fulfill the *mitzvah of marror* with the leaf or the stem of the plant and “not the root.” Others explain that this only applies to a small root, but large roots are permitted since they are considered extensions of the stem.

---


64. Chayai Adom 130:3.


66. Shulchan Aruch 473:5.

Is Horseradish Really Tamcha?

Many Gedolim say that “tamcha” is not horseradish. Rashi\(^{68}\) identifies it as horehound. The Rif\(^{69}\) says it is el shalim. Early literature does not categorize tamcha as horseradish, and it was not used until many years later.\(^{70}\)

One issue with horseradish is that it seems to be sharp rather than bitter, which is not mentioned in the poskim as an issue. It is possible that the sharpness masks the bitterness.\(^{71}\)

Why Horseradish Was Used

Many poskim mention that the only reason why horseradish was used was that the other kinds of marror were not available.\(^{72}\) One has to understand that in colder climates it was uncommon to find lettuce; therefore, the only item that was available in those locales was horseradish.\(^{73}\) In addition, those who were concerned about insects on lettuce used horseradish for marror.\(^{74}\)

Custom of Those Who Used Horseradish

Many had the custom to use horseradish for marror,\(^{75}\) including Rav Akiva Eiger zt”l.\(^{76}\) It appears that the Chofetz

---

68. Meseches Pesachim 39a “tamcha.”
70. For an in-depth discussion on this refer to Gesher (journal) 8:pages 217-231. A thank you to Dan Rabinowitz for giving me a copy of the article.
74. Chacham Tzvi 119.
75. Darchei Chaim Vesholom 590:page 188.
76. Quoted in Ohr Yisroel 23:page 106.
Chaim zt”l used horseradish for marror at the seder.

**Ground Horseradish**

Whole horseradish is too strong to ingest, and it is dangerous to do so. In addition, eating it whole is not the normal way to eat it. Therefore, we grind it and let it sit open to lose some of its sharpness. Others had the custom to eat it whole, but this is not the overwhelming custom.

Some take issue with the fact that if it is ground it does not look like horseradish, in which case it would be a shehakol. However, since no berachah is recited on the marror, it is good enough to consider it a hoadama and have it in mind during karpas.

**When to Grind the Horseradish**

Some have the custom to grind the horseradish after coming home from shul on the seder night and cover it until the seder begins. Once the seder begins, one removes the cover so that the horseradish lose some of its sharpness (this does not apply when Pesach falls out on Shabbos).

Others say that this is not practical, for it would be too sharp to eat. Therefore, it should be ground earlier in the

---

77. Hanhagos of the Chofetz Chaim page 184.
78. One should not grind the lettuce if he uses it for marror (Eishel Avraham Butach 473).
80. Mishmeres Shalom 35:2.
83. Mishnah Berurah 36. This was the custom of the Steipler zt”l and the Chazzon Ish zt”l as well as others (Orchos Rabbeinu 2page 73:60).
There is no need for *maror* to be so strong that it causes vomiting, as long as it has some bitterness.85

**Why is a Horseradish *Hoadama***

As mentioned above, there is no *berachah* of *hoadama* made on *maror* since the *berachah* of *hoadama* made on *karpas* exempts it. One might argue, however, horseradish should be a *shehakol*, since it is not normally eaten raw. It is possible that it is defined as an important food since it is used for a *mitzvah*; therefore, one recites the *berachah* for food which grows from the ground (*hoadama*), regardless of whether it is the normal manner to eat it raw. This is especially true since our custom is to grind it.86

**Different Items**

As mentioned before, the *Chayai Adam* says that one may not use any item for *maror* other than those mentioned in the *Mishnah*. One may use a different bitter item,87 but no *berachah* is recited on it.88

**Eating Horseradish Against a Doctor’s Orders**

If one usually uses horseradish, and his doctor advises him to avoid it for health reasons, he should discuss this matter with his local halachic authority.89

85. Teshuvos V’hanhagos 2:238 (end).
86. Biur Halacha 475 “b’tibul.”
87. Rama 473:5.
89. Teshuvos V’hanhagos 2:241.
Soaking the Marror

Regardless of which item one uses for marror, it should not be soaked for a period of twenty-four hours, since it will make the marror less sharp.90 If nothing else is available, one can use it.91 One should lechatchilah not soak the marror in vinegar.92 It is questionable whether one may soak lettuce in vinegar to cleanse it from insects.93 However, those who use the stalks can soak them or even use dry stalks, since their thickness will prevent them from losing their bitterness.94

Cooked marror may not be used, as it loses the bitterness.95

Commercially Made Horseradish (Marror)

Commercially made horseradish with vinegar may not be used, since the vinegar removes the bitterness of the marror.96

Using Different Marror Together

One may mix and match the different types of marror and end up with a kezayis of marror for the seder.97

---


91. Sharei Teshuva 11, Mishnah Berurah 38.


96. Rabbi Eider zt”l on Pesach page 238.

Some poskim frown on this practice, as we are not sure which is the correct marror, and the improper type might nullify the bitterness of the true marror.\textsuperscript{98}

Based on the above, some have the custom to take some lettuce and some horseradish for their marror obligation at the same time,\textsuperscript{99} while others have the custom to take lettuce for marror and horseradish for korach.\textsuperscript{100}

**Sick Person**

One who is sick and cannot have a specific kind of marror should try to take another kind. For example, if he cannot eat horseradish he should take lettuce. If he can’t eat any marror at all, he should take a drop. He should see to it that he is not mevatel a mitzvah.\textsuperscript{101}

---

\textsuperscript{98} Opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt”l quoted in Halichos Shlomo Moadim 9:48:footnote 96.

\textsuperscript{99} Aruch Hashulchan 14. See Mekadesh Yisroel Pesach 407.

\textsuperscript{100} Vayaged Moshe pages 201, 302, Moriah 3:page 74.

\textsuperscript{101} Chok Yaakov 473:21.
From America’s Oldest Matzo Bakery that you love & remember

Celebrating Passover Together
Business Accounting
Financial and Tax Planning
Business Management and Consulting

Mutty Lebovits, CPA
Of Saul N. Friedman and Company

*Having a team with over 35 years of experience makes a difference.*

347-268-8085
Email me at - mlebovits@snfco.com
1351 Coney Island Ave. Brooklyn, NY

NOW under KOF-K

Any questions please call
Rabbi Moishe Lebovits
Rabbinical Administrator KOF-K Kosher Supervision
at 718-744-4360 • email: mlebovits@kof-k.org

Dedicated machine for Kleins yogurt
Matzolah is healthy, delicious and wholesome. Kosher for Passover and year-round!

- Sodium free  
- Good source of fiber  
- Cholesterol free
Lakewood Organic Fresh Pressed

Nature's Finest Juices

- No Sugar Added
- No Evaporated Cane Juice
- No High Fructose Corn Syrup
- No Artificial Ingredients
- Low Glycemic Values
- Kosher
- Vegetarian, Vegan
- Gluten FREE
- Casein FREE
- GMO FREE

Organic Pure Concord Available in Kosher for Passover!

To actively contribute to the well being of our local and global communities, and show appreciation for our customers, Lakewood is proud to contribute 10% of proceeds from the sale of our juices to over 33 charitable organizations through our Helping Hands Program.
PROTECT YOUR BRAIN
AND PROVE YOU HAVE ONE.

Statistics relating to bicycle safety help riders understand the importance of wearing a helmet.

- Bicycle helmets protect your head and reduce the incidence of traumatic brain injury and death whether riding on the sidewalk, street or while mountain biking.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that less than half of all Americans who ride bicycles wear helmets.

- In a twelve month study 800 bicyclists were killed and 515,000 bicycle-related injuries required emergency-room care. Of those, 26,000 of were some type of traumatic brain injury that might have been prevented by wearing a helmet.

- The Insurance Institute of Highway Safety reports that approximately 650 people die annually from brain injury due to bicycle accidents. Of which on average over 92% were not wearing a helmet.

Regardless of age or level of experience, EVERYONE must wear a helmet whenever they ride.

This public awareness message is brought to you by KOF-K Kosher Supervision and BINA in memory of Dr. Heshy Rosenbaum A"H who was tragically taken from us, before the need for bike helmets was recognized, due to a fatal injury while riding a bicycle. Help spread the word and save lives.
EXCITING NEWS!
Cakes, Cookies, Muffins, Pastries and Croissants at BJ's Bakery are now KOF-K Kosher Certified

A large variety of pre-packaged kosher pareve products are available in our bakery

Coming Soon! Kosher pre-packaged Chicken, Meat, Cheese and Appetizers!!

To have your local BJ's bakery included in this program please email mlebovits@kof-k.org or call 718-744-4360.

COMING SOON:

500 N State Road 7
Royal Palm Beach, FL

1540 W Boynton Beach Blvd
Boynton Beach, FL

4000 Oakwood Blvd
Hollywood, FL

5901 W Hillsboro Blvd
Parkland, FL

1155 Palm Bay Road
Melbourne, FL

5100 NW 9th Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL

610 Exterior St
Bronx, NY

825 Pelham Pkwy
Pelham, NY

125 Green Acres Road
Valley Stream, NY

100 Mill Road
Freeport, NY

3635 Hempstead Turnpike
Levittown, NY

711 Stewart Avenue
Garden City, NY

26 Whittier St,
Framingham, MA

3303 Crompond Road
Yorktown Heights, NY

901 Technology Center Dr.
Stroughton, MA

66 Seyon Street
Waltham, MA

66-26 Metropolitan Ave
Middle Village, NY

137-05 20th Ave
College Point, NY

50 Daniel St.
Farmingdale, NY

4000 Nesconset Hwy, (Rte. 347)
East Setauket, NY

339 Gateway Drive
Brooklyn, NY
(off Belt Parkway, Exit 15)

6000 Brush Hollow Road
Westbury, NY

232 Larkin Dr.
Monroe, NY

55 Music Air Road
Owings Mills, MD

Any questions please call
Rabbi Moishe Lebovits
Rabbinical Administrator KOF-K Kosher Supervision
at 718-744-4360 • email: mlebovits@kof-k.org

2013 BJ's Wholesale Club, Inc.