

What practical things should I take care of before the Seder?

- Prep the Seder Plate Since the Seder this year is on Shabbat, it's best to prepare all the items for the Seder plate before lighting candles.
- Set Aside a Cup If you need to keep ritual drinking to a minimum, find the smallest cup you can that holds at least a *revi'it* (86 mL at minimum).

Any ideas for addressing pre-Seder exhaustion?

- Even if you're exhausted, the goal is to be joyful. Women are obligated in Simchat Yom Tov, rejoicing in the festival. Taking a moment to enjoy new purchases made for the holiday can help awaken an internal state of rejoicing.
- Since rejoicing should also contribute to the joy of others in the wider community—as we voice at the Seder in “*ha lachma anya*”—you could also spread joy by reaching out to others in need, and you may find this energizing.

Anything special to keep in mind with candle-lighting this year?

- Candle-lighting on this night is a way both of fulfilling Simchat Yom Tov and of honoring, taking pleasure in, and fostering Shalom Bayit on Shabbat.
 - On the first night, mention both Shabbat and Yom Tov in the *beracha*.
 - Although it is preferable to recite *she-hechiyyanu* over wine as part of Kiddush, many women have the custom to recite it at candle-lighting.
- On the second night (if you observe it), wait until nightfall to light. Before lighting, say “*baruch ha-mavdil bein kodesh le-kodesh.*” (Havdala will be later, integrated with Kiddush.)
- When lighting's just for Yom Tov, some recite the *beracha* first, since lighting a candle from a pre-existing flame is permissible on Yom Tov (Rebbitzin Bayla Falk). Others recite it after lighting, to keep things consistent with Shabbat (Magen Avraham).
- After lighting, you can disseminate the light of *ge'ula*, redemption, by reciting a personal *tefilla*, for yourself and others.
- If you can find the time now, recite Ma'ariv, (including Hallel where reciting it before the Seder is customary).

What are my obligations at the Seder?

- Overall, women are obligated in all of the mitzvot of the Seder. *Af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes*—women were included in the miracle of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, and helped bring it about. Here is a rundown of the key *mitzvot*:
- Kiddush (Kadesh) recognizes the sanctity of Shabbat and Yom Tov and adds to it. You should recite *she-hechiyyanu* here if you didn't over candles (or are making Kiddush to discharge another's obligation) and can say “*amen*” to *she-hechiyyanu* now regardless. On the second night this year, Kiddush ends with Havdala.
- Arba Kosot, four cups of wine or grape juice, starting with Kiddush, that we drink as an expression of freedom.

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- Sippur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim (Maggid), to relate and relive the story of the Exodus. Women's obligation here might be on a Torah level, based on the related mitzva to eat matza.
- Eating Matza is a mitzva in two ways:
 - We are obligated to eat matza specifically on this night, as reflected in the *beracha* "al achilat matza." A woman is obligated in eating matza even though it is positive time-bound commandment, because a woman is subject to the closely-related prohibition of eating *chametz*.
 - Matza forms the core of a Shabbat and Yom Tov meal in fulfillment of the *mitzvot* of taking pleasure in Shabbat, Simchat Yom Tov, and *lechem mishneh* (two loaves in commemoration of the manna), as reflected in the *beracha* of "ha-motzi."
- Eating Maror at the Seder is rabbinic, and is obligatory for women because it is modeled on the Torah-level mitzva of eating *maror* along with the Pesach offering. We eat it on its own and as part of Korech, dipping it in *charoset*. *Charoset* may symbolize the apple trees in whose shade the enslaved Jewish women enticed their husbands to continue to procreate and keep faith.
- Simchat Yom Tov includes enjoying the meal, usually with meat. Don't force yourself to eat foods harmful to you on Shabbat or Yom Tov, though, since that would not be simcha.
- Birkat Ha-mazon (Barech)
- Reciting Hallel, a song of praise and thanksgiving for our miraculous redemption.

Do I need to recline?

- Heseiba, reclining, while drinking the four cups and eating matza, is a way of enacting our freedom. According to the Talmud, a woman in the presence of her husband would only recline if she was "important." Rema cites a view that all women have become important, but justifies the practice of many Ashkenazi women not to recline, because free people no longer eat while reclining.
- Whether a woman reclines in practice often depends on whether she has a clear family custom. For women, reclining can be seen as a stringency to fulfill the *mitzvot* of matza and the four cups optimally.

I don't drink wine and don't particularly care for grape juice. What is the minimum that I can drink for the cups?

- For each cup, drink a revi'it of wine or grape juice or, at minimum, most of a *revi'it* (44 mL). Ideally, this should be most of the cup.

I'll have my hands full caring for a family member during Maggid. What do I absolutely need to say?

- At minimum, Maggid should include reciting or hearing *Ma Nishtana* and *Avadim Hayyinu* (questions and answers about our progress from slavery to freedom), noting the miraculous ten plagues and the symbolism of Pesach, Matza, and Maror. We also must recite the beginning of Hallel, to envelop our eating in praise of God, and conclude Maggid with the second cup.

Too much matza doesn't agree with me. What is the minimum amount of it that I can eat? What about maror?

- The obligation includes eating matza three times: after the *berachot* (ideally, two measures—one for each mitzva), at *Korech* and at *Tzafun* (the *afikoman*), in commemoration of the Pesach offering, which was eaten with matza and maror.
- A minimum, a ke-zayit measure of matza for each eating is at least $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ of a machine matza, preferably eaten within a short period of time (not longer than 9 minutes, at best within 4). If this is too much, consult your halachic authority.
- The *ke-zayit* minimum measure for maror in *Maror* and *Korech* translates to about a small to medium-sized leaf of romaine lettuce each time.

I don't usually make Havdala for myself, but I do say Kiddush in unison with my family at the seder. Kiddush at the second seder this year incorporates Havdala. What do I do?

- Fundamentally, a woman can recite her own Havdala (according to many authorities, including *borei me'orei ha-eish*), though she should generally not recite it for a man, and there is some preference to hear it from a man if one is readily available. In keeping with your custom, you can simply pause and listen to Havdala after reciting kiddush and before drinking, or you can rely on the fundamental Halacha and say it together with the family.

**May this be a seder of redemption!
Le-shana ha-ba'ah bi-Yerushalayim!**

To learn more from the sources, see Deracheha's articles on Pesach & Yom Tov, available [here](#).