**Why Do We Do That?  
Pesach pt 1: Charoset, Spilling Drops**

Charoset:

1. **Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 116a**

אף על פי שאין חרוסת מצוה. ואי לא מצוה - משום מאי מייתי לה? - אמר רבי אמי: משום קפא. ..רבי אלעזר ברבי צדוק אומר מצוה וכו'. מאי מצוה? רבי לוי אומר: זכר לתפוח. ורבי יוחנן אומר: זכר לטיט, אמר אביי: הלכך צריך לקהוייה, וצריך לסמוכיה. לקהוייה - זכר לתפוח, וצריך לסמוכיה - זכר לטיט.

**And if** it **is not a mitzva, for what** reason does one **bring it** to the seder? **Rabbi Ami said:** It is brought **due to** the **poison** in the bitter herbs, which is neutralized by the *ḥaroset*… **Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Tzadok, says** that eating *ḥaroset* is **a mitzva.** The Gemara asks: **What** is the nature of this **mitzva?** The Gemara answers: **Rabbi Levi says:** It is **in remembrance of the apple,** as apple is one of the ingredients in *ḥaroset*. The verse states: “Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, reclining upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you” (Song of Songs 8:5), which is an allusion to the Jewish people leaving Egypt. **And Rabbi Yoḥanan says:** The *ḥaroset* is **in remembrance of the mortar** used by the Jews for their slave labor in Egypt. **Abaye said: Therefore,** to fulfill both opinions, one **must** prepare it **tart and** one **must** prepare it **thick.** One must prepare it **tart in remembrance of the apple, and** one **must** prepare it **thick in remembrance of the mortar.**

1. **Tosfot, Ibid.**

ובירושלמי אמר אית דעבדי זכר לדם ומשום הכי קרי ליה טיבולו במשקה וכן עמא דבר לסמוכי ובשעת אכילה מקלשין אותו ביין וחומץ

In the Jerusalem Talmud it is says that there are those who make it in memory of the blood and this is why [dipping in it] is refered to as dipping in a liquid. And it has become common practice to make it thick, and then, when it is time to eat it, it is thinned out with wine and vinegar.

1. **Rambam, Laws of Chametz and Matzah, 8:2,8**

(ב) מתחיל ומברך בורא פרי האדמה ולוקח ירק ומטבל אותו בחרוסת ואוכל כזית

(ח) בזמן הזה שאין שם קרבן אחר שמברך המוציא לחם חוזר ומברך על אכילת מצה, ומטבל מצה בחרוסת ואוכל, וחוזר ומברך על אכילת מרור ומטבל מרור בחרוסת ואוכל

(2) He begins blessing “who creates the fruit of the earth” and then takes a vegetable and dips is in *charoset* and eats an olive-sized piece.  
(8) In our day when there is no Pesach sacrifice after one blesses *hamotzi* he then blesses “on eating matzah”, and he dips the matzah in the *charoset* and eats, and then he blesses “on eating *maror*” and then dips the *maror* into *charoset* and eats.

1. **Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, Laws of Pesach, 473:6**

ויקח מהכרפס פחות מכזית ומטבלו בחומץ He takes less than an olive’s worth of *karpas* and dips it into vinegar.

1. **Mishnah Berurah, Ibid, 473:54**

בחומץ - או ביין או במי מלח ולא אתי אלא לאפוקי שלא יטבול בחרוסת כי חרוסת אינו אלא לטיבול שני שמטבל המרור בחרוסת [ב"י]:

**Into vinegar** – Or wine or salt water. He only said this to exclude *charoset* so that he should not dip in it because *charoset* is only for the second dipping when he dips *maror* into it.

1. **Tosfot, Pesachim, 117a**

ובתשובת הגאונים מפרש לעשות חרוסת בפירות שנדמה לכנסת ישראל בשיר השירים תחת התפוח עוררתיך כפלח הרמון התאנה חנטה אמרתי אעלה בתמר אגוז אל גנת אגוז ושקדים על שם ששקד הקדוש ברוך הוא על הקץ.

In the responsa of the Geonim it explains that one should make *charoset* out of the fruits that the Jewish People are compared to in the Song of Songs: “beneath the apple tree did I arouse you”, “like the peel of a pomegranate”, “the young fig forms on the tree”, “I said, letme climb the date palm”, the nut “to the nut grove”, and almonds because G-d strove (*shakad*) for the end.

What is a תפוח?

1. **The Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906**

There is perhaps no Biblical plant-name that has given rise to more discussion than has the identification of the תפוח. Four distinct fruit-bearing trees, the Apple (*Pyrus malus*), the citron (*Citrus medica*), the apricot (*Prunus Armeniaca*), and the quince (*Cydonia vulgaris*), have been suggested as its equivalent. Of these, two may be dismissed at once—the Apple and the citron. The Apple, far from being a native of Palestine, is, on account of the tropical climate, but rarely cultivated there, and with no success. The fruit is small, woody, and of very inferior quality… The claims of the quince to represent the tappuaḦ of the Hebrew Scriptures have been ably set forth by the Rev. W. Houghton ("Proceedings of Society of Biblical Archeology," xii. 42-48). This is the only one of the four species suggested that is undoubtedly indigenous to this general region.

1. **Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 edition:**

APPLE (Heb. תַּּפוּחַ ), mentioned several times in the Bible. In the Song of Songs it is described as a shady tree bearing sweet fruit (2:3). The odor of the beloved is reminiscent of the delicate aroma of the apple (7:9). It was an important product of Palestinian agriculture, and is mentioned as one of the victims of the locust plague described in Joel (1:12). The shapeliness of the golden apple served as a model for artistic ornamentation (Prov. 25:11). The custom of sending apples to the sick is mentioned in rabbinic  
literature (Tosef., bm 7:4; tj, Shev. 8:4, 38a). Several localities in Israel bore the name “Tappu’aḥ,” giving evidence, incidentally, of its widespread growth and popularity. The tappu’aḥ of the Bible has been variously identified as peach, citron, and even mandrake. Yet it undoubtedly refers to the apple – Pirus malus (sylvestris). This is confirmed by the references to its characteristics in rabbinic literature, for instance, the season of its ripening, the trees on which grafting would be permitted, the preparation of applesauce and apple cider, etc. (see Tosef., Kil. 1:3; tj, Ma’as. 1:4, 49a; tj, Ter. 10:2, 47a; Tosef., Ber. 4:2). In Arabic the apple is called tufaḥ. In ancient times the aromatic strains apparently were most widely cultivated, and the odor evoked high praise...In recent times the apple was not cultivated extensively by the Arabs in Palestine. From the middle of the 20th century, however, apples of various strains were grown in many areas of Israel, and are even an export crop.

Spilling Drops

1. **The Family Participation Haggadah: A Different Night** by Noam Zion and David Dishon, p. 101.

By spilling a drop of wine from the Pesach cup for each plague, we acknowledge that our own joy is lessened and incomplete, for our redemption had to come by means of the punishment of other human beings. Even though these are just punishments for evil acts, it says, “Do not rejoice at the fall of your enemy.”

1. **Artscroll Mesorah Series Haggadah** by R Joseph Elias, p 127

Abarbanel, however,explains that we should remove the wine because “You should not rejoice when your enemy falls” (Mishlei 24:17).

1. **Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (1176-1238): Drasha l'Pesach** p. 101, Translation, Ron;

For each word a finger [goes] into the cup of wine and they spill out a drop, matching the sword of the Holy One, blessed be He, which has sixteen sides. And the sixteen mentions of plague in Jeremiah. [This custom] teaches us that we will not be injured. Based upon [this] our ancestors created this custom. And sixteen times the word hayyim [appears in Psalm 119], and sixteen people read the Torah each week, matching the sixteen lambs that are sacrificed in a week. Also, “She is [16 =הי"א] a tree of life to those who grasp her” (Proverbs 3:18). And one should not ridicule the custom of our holy ancestors.

\***Maharil** notes that we pray for G-d’s protection

1. **Darchei Moshe, Orach Chayim, 473**

נראה שרומזים כאן שחרבו של הקדוש ברוך הוא נקרא יוה"ך והוא מלאך הממונה על הנקמה כידוע למקובלים (עי' זהר אחרי סב א) ונוהגים לזרוק מן הכוס באצבע לרמוז על מה שנאמר (שמות ח טו) אצבע אלהים היא ודלא כמו שמצאתי כתוב בהגהות מנהגים (טירנא עמ' נ אות צח) דיש לזרוק בזרת שהוא הקטן:

It appears that we are hinting here to the sword of G-d which is called *יוה"ך* which is the angel appointed to take vengeance as is known to the kabbalists. Our practice is to use the index finger to spill based on what it says “it is the finger of G-d”, and not to practice as I have found written in the *Hagahot Minhagim*, that one should use the *zeret* which is the smallest finger.

1. **Beit Yosef, Orach Chayim, 490**

ושבלי הלקט (סי' קעד סט:) כתב בשם מדרש הרנינו פרשת סוכה שהטעם שאין גומרין ההלל כל ימי הפסח הוא לפי שנטבעו המצריים וכתיב (משלי כד יז) בנפול אויבך אל תשמח.

The *Shibolei Haleket* wrote in the name of Midrash Harninu that the reason why we don’t complete Hallel during all of Pesach is because the Egyptians drowned and it is written “do not rejoice over the downfall of your enemies.”

1. **Our Own Joy is Lessened and Incomplete”: The History of an Interpretation of Sixteen Drops of Wine at the Seder, *Hakirah,* by Zvi Ron**

In the 1940s, 50s and 60s this explanation became ubiquitous in American Haggadot. The explanation is presented in the “Introductory Note” by Louis Finkelstein to a 1942 English-translation Haggadah: “The spilling of wine at the mention of the plagues is interpreted as a symbol of regret that the victory had to be purchased by the death of the Egyptians.” Finkelstein was “the dominant figure of Conservative Judaism in the twentieth century” and was chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary at the time he wrote that introduction. The Haggadah edited by David and Tamar De Sola Pool, first published in 1943 by the National Jewish Welfare Board “for members of the armed forces of the United States,” similarly explains that “a drop of wine of rejoicing is diminished from the cup in sign of pity for the suffering Egyptians.” This Haggadah, composed by a committee of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis for Jewish soldiers who were fighting in World War II, addresses the “compatibility of Jewish and American values.” The American value here is “the liberal ethic, believing that all people are essentially good,” so that punishing the Egyptians “seems so vindictive and vengeful.” The Haggadah edited by Philip Birnbaum for the Hebrew Publishing Company in 1953 also states that the custom “is intended to stress the idea that we must not rejoice over the misfortunes that befell our foes.” The Birnbaum Haggadah was considered the standard traditional Haggadah for English speakers until the first Artscroll Haggadah was published in 1977 and, as noted above, also included this explanation….

**Sefer Divrei Yirmiyahu** – Drashot, R. Yirmiyahu Löw (1812–1874)

Since the Jewish people are merciful, and since through the rescue from Egypt many of God's creations were destroyed and drowned, although it is a great joy for us that God took us out of Egypt and redeemed us, it is still painful for us that through this others were destroyed…and if God would have rescued us without the destruction and death of others it would be a greater joy for us. Therefore our joy is a little diminished, and to show that Israel are merciful and the children of merciful, we pour out

a little at every plague.

**“Our Own Joy is Lessened”**

It would seem that the ultimate origin of the “incomplete joy” explanation is R. Yirmiyahu Löw. Although the “incomplete joy” explanation seems to express modern sensibilities and possibly political correctness, R. Yirmiyahu Löw was not known for these characteristics, and in fact was known as a “recognized leader of Hungarian Orthodoxy” who was a vigorous opponent of Hasidism, Reform and Haskalah.