

Karpas/Vegetable Greens

As one of the items displayed on the seder plate, karpas occupies a prominent position in the Seder. It is the first food eaten during the Seder, this occurring just after the first washing of hands. The most common vegetable used is parsley although other vegetables such as celery, lettuce, and according to some, potatoes or radishes, may be used. The determining factor is whether one may pronounce the benediction “Bore pri ha-adamah” over it.¹

The karpas represents springtime and renewal of life, reminding celebrants of the renewal of freedom and life for their ancestors when they were delivered from Egyptian slavery.² When it is eaten, it is dipped into salt water. This reminds celebrants that both the tender greens of the earth and the salts of the sea were joined together to sustain life.³ It also reminds celebrants that in slavery the brine of tears and sweat released the strength to survive.⁴ The amount that is dipped and eaten should be less than the bulk of an olive or ¼ the size of an egg.⁵

¹ Davis, Rabbi Avrohom. *The Metsudah Linear Passover Haggadah* (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1993) 9

² Silverman, Rabbi Morris, ed. *Passover Haggadah: New Translation with explanatory notes and original readings* (Hartford: Prayer Book Press, 1959) 5

³ Levin, Meyer. *An Israel Haggadah for Passover* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, no date) 28

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Klein, Mordell ed. *Passover* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973) 60