

# Haroset: A World History (with recipes)

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**Instructor: Steven Lipton M.Ed. LEHP, CFSP**

This course follows the history of this Passover condiment from its rabbinic origins to the Seder table of today. What might seem like a simple story will turn into a journey where we will encounter many important texts from Tanach and Talmud through the work of Maimonides and Rashi determining the hidden significance of this observance. We will also discuss the Hillel sandwich from the Talmudic tradition to its modern incarnation and its relationship to Haroset. Recipes for haroset in various traditions will also be discussed and sampled.

Time: Tuesday nights 2 1.5 hour sessions.

Course materials: Handouts provided by instructor

Suggested books and references:

Nathan, Joan *The Jewish Holiday Kitchen* (New York: Schocken books, 1988)

Nathan, Joan, "A Social history of Jewish Food in America" *Food and Judaism* Leonard J. Greenspoon et.al. ed. Omaha NE: Creighton University Press, 2005

Roden, Claudia *The Book Of Jewish Food: An Odyssey From Samarkand to New York* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999

Web: <http://www.cyber-kitchen.com/rfcj/category.cgi?category=PESACH-haroset>

Web: <http://www.shlomosdrash.com/holidays.html>

## **Objectives:**

By the end of the class students will be able to:

1. Identify differing types and relationships of Jewish legal texts
2. Identify the reasons for regional differences in haroset
3. Know differing traditions for matzah, maror, and Haroset
4. Recognize the dynamic nature of halakah
5. Make really good Haroset!

## **Four questions:**

- 1) What do you use for maror / hazeret?
- 2) Do you place it on matzah?
- 3) How many people use apples for Haroset?
- 4) How many people eat haroset and matzah as the Hillel "sandwich"?

## מצה

# Blessing for the Matzah

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha olam ha motizi lechem min ha aretz*

Blessed are you oh Lord, Ruler of the universe, who brings out bread from the earth

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו,

וצונו על אכילת מצה

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al acilat matzah*

Blessed are you oh Lord, Ruler of the universe, who makes us holy with his commandments and commands us to eat unleavened bread.

## מרור

# Maror

Lets us now take the bitter herbs dip them into haroset and say:

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו,

וצונו על אכילת מרור

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al acilat maror*

Blessed are you oh Lord, Ruler of the universe, who makes us holy with his commandments and commands us to eat bitter herbs.

## כורד

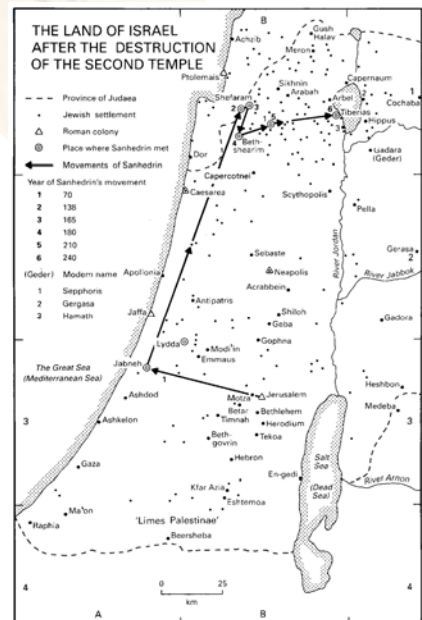
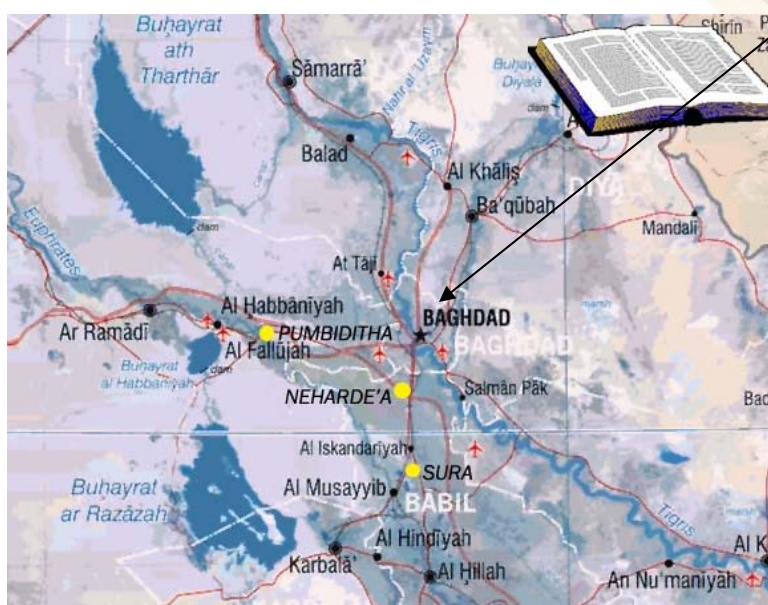
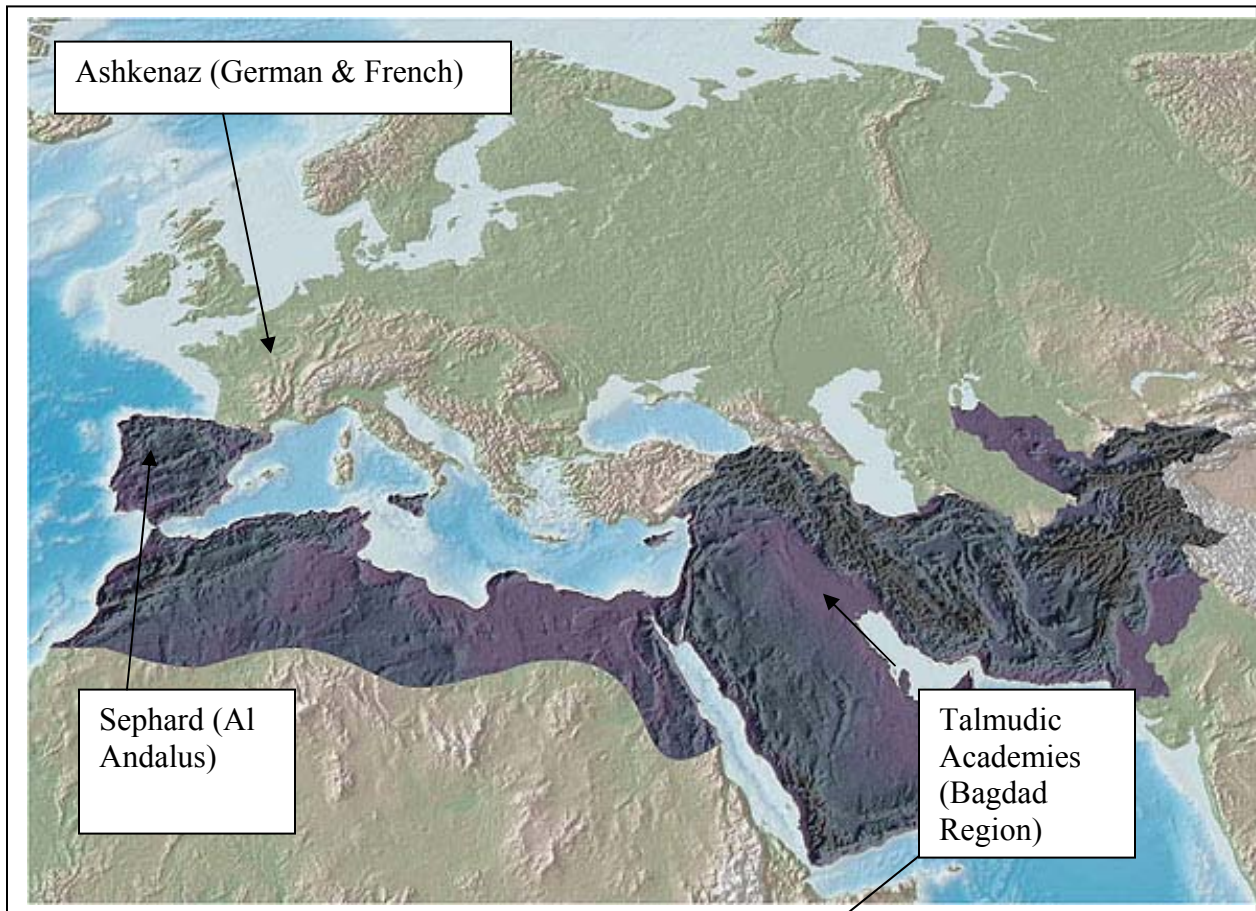
# Hillel's Sandwich

Break the bottom matzah. Each person takes two pieces and places some bitter herbs between them. All say together:

זכר למקדש כהלל. בן עשה הלל בזמן שבית המקדש היה קים היה כורד  
(פסח) מצה ומרור ואוכל ביחד לקים צה שְנֵאָמַר: (במדבר ט) על מצות  
ומרורים יאכלהו.

Now we repeat the practice of Hillel, the great rabbi who lived in the days of the second temple in Jerusalem. He would eat Matzah and Maror together with the Pesach lamb. In that way he fulfilled literally the Torah's command (Numbers 9): They shall eat the Pesach lamb together with Matzah and Maror.

# Maps



Source: Judaism: History, belief and practice

# Biblical Verses:

## 1. *exodus 12:8-11*

8. And they shall eat the meat in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.
9. Eat it not raw, nor boil with water, but roast it with fire; its head with its legs, and with its inner parts.
10. And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire.
11. And thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

## 2. *numbers 9:9-12*

9. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
10. Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean because of a dead body, or is in a journey far away, he shall still keep the Passover to the Lord.
11. The fourteenth day of the second month at evening they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
12. They shall leave none of it to the morning, nor break any bone of it; according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.

## 3. *psalm 68:8-14*

8. O God, when you went forth before your people,  
when you marched through the wilderness; Selah;
9. The earth shook, the heavens dropped at the presence of God;  
even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
10. You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, to strengthen your inheritance, when it languished.
11. Your flock found a dwelling in it;  
you, O God, have prepared of your goodness for the poor.
12. The Lord gives the word;  
great is the company of those who bear the tidings.
13. Kings of armies flee, they flee;  
and she who dwells in the house divides the booty.
14. **Though you lie among the sheep folds  
you shall shine like the wings of a dove covered with silver,  
and her pinions with yellow gold.**

#### 4. song of songs ch 2:3

3 Like a *tapuach* in the trees of the forest  
Thus is my beloved between the young men  
In its shade I sit in great delight  
Its fruit is sweet to my palate

כַּתְּפוּחַ בְּעֵצֵי הַיַּעַר  
כֵּן דּוּדִי בֵּין הַבָּנִים  
בְּצֵלוֹ חַמְדִּיתִי וַיִּשְׁבְּתִי  
וּפְרִיו מְתוֹק לְחַפְי:

#### 5. song of songs ch 4:13-14

12 A Locked garden is my sister, my bride  
A locked spring, a sealed well  
13 Your branches are an orchard of pomegranate trees  
With excellent fruit  
With Henna and Spikenard  
14 Spikenard and Saffron  
Cane and cinnamon  
With all the trees of Frankincense  
Myrrh and aloes  
With all the prime spices

גֵּן | נְעוּלָה אַחֲתִי כְּלָה  
גַּל נְעוּלָה מְעֵן חֲתוּם:  
שְׁלֵחֶיךָ פְּרֻדִּים רְמוּזִים  
עִם פְּרֵי מְגֻדִים  
כַּפְרִים עִם־נְרָדִים:  
נְרָד | וְכַרְפֹּם  
קָנָה וְקַנְמוֹן  
עִם כָּל־עֵצֵי לְבוֹנָה  
מֵר וַאֲהָלוֹת  
עִם כָּל־דְּאֵשֵׁי בְשָׁמִים:

#### 6. song of songs ch 5:1

1 Enter into my garden my sister my bride  
I gather my Myrrh with my spices  
I ate my honeycomb with my honey  
I drink my wine with my milk  
Eat friends  
Drink and become drunk on Love!

בָּאתִי לְגַנִּי אַחֲתִי כְּלָה  
אֲרִיתִי מוֹרִי עִם־בְּשָׁמִי  
אֲכַלְתִּי יַעְרִי עִם־דְּבַשִּׁי  
שָׁתִיתִי יַיִן עִם־חֵלְבִי  
אֲכַלּוּ רְעִים  
שָׁתוּ וַיִּשְׁכְּרוּ דוּדִים:

## 7. song of songs ch 7:8-11

- 8 *Your height, it resembles a date palm*  
*Your breasts are clusters*
- 9 *I said, I will go up in a date palm*  
*To take hold of its fruit stalk*  
*Please, may your breasts*  
*Be like clusters of the vine*  
*And the scent of your face is like tapuachs*
- 10 *Your tongue is like good wine*  
*Bring for my love smoothness*  
*Gliding lips of sleep*
- 11 *I am my beloved's*  
*Over me is his longing.*

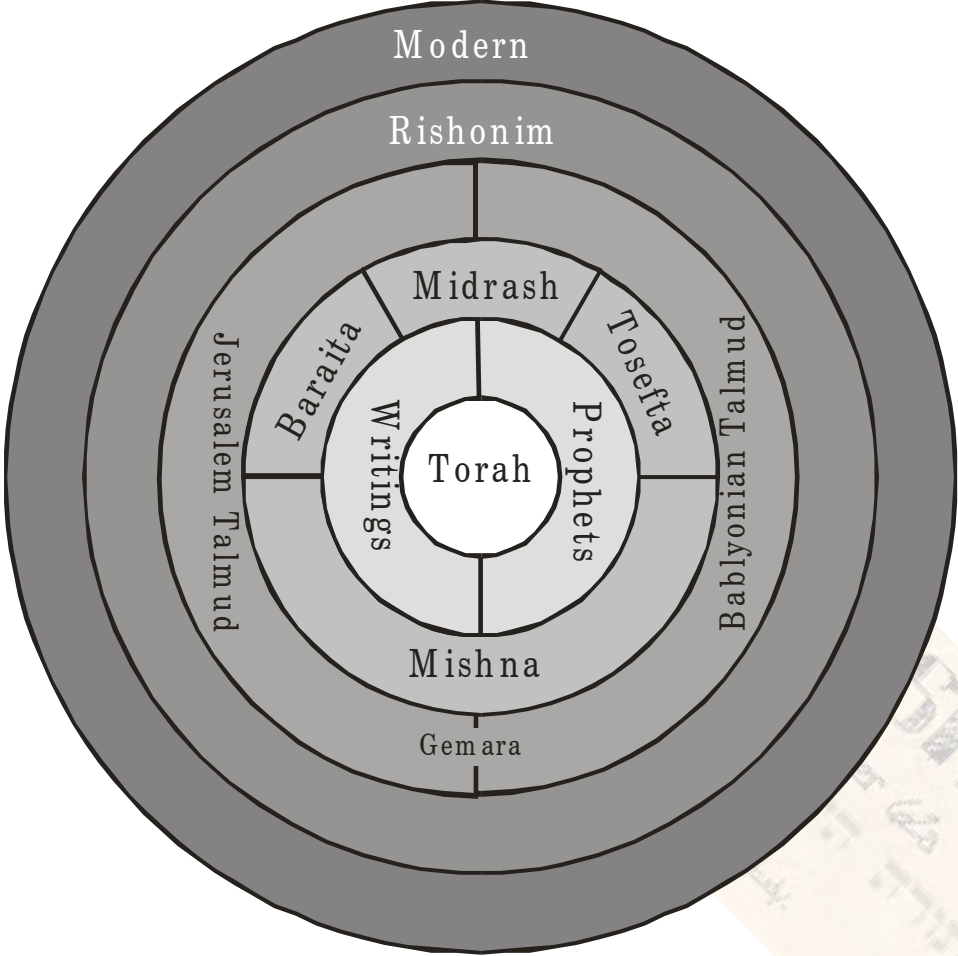
זאת קומתך דמתה לתמר  
ושדיך לאשכולות:  
אמרתי אעלה בתמר  
אחזה בסנסניו  
והירנא שדיך  
כאשפלות הגפן  
וריח אפך כתפוחים:  
וחכך כיון הטוב  
הולך לדודי למישרים  
דובב שפתי ישנים:  
אני לדודי  
ועלי תשוקתו:

## 8. song of songs ch 8:5

- 5 **Who is this rising from the wilderness**  
**Leaning on her beloved?**  
Under the *tapuach* I awakened you.  
Here, your mother conceived you.  
Here she was in travail, giving birth to you.

מי זאת עלה מן-המדבר  
מתרפקת על-דודה  
תחת התפוח עוררתניך  
שמה חבלתך אמך  
שמה חבלה ילדתך:

**The structure of Rabbinic law - The 'Halakic Onion'**



Notes:

1. Time Increases out from the core with the most ancient as the core and the most recent at the surface
2. Authority of a passage increases *in theory* the closer to the core it is.
3. Thus in debate citing a proof text closer to the core i.e. Torah, generally has a better chance of winning a debate.
4. However, that proof text might have been refuted by a later authority, and that might be used as an objection.

## Talmudic Passages

### Hillel Sandwich - B. Pesachim 115a

Rabina said, R. Mesharsheya son of R. Nathan told me: **Thus did Hillel say on the authority of tradition: A man must not make a sandwich of *matza* and *maror* together and eat them, because we hold that *matzah* in this age is a Biblical obligation, whereas *maror* are a Rabbinical requirement and thus the *maror*, which are Rabbinical, will come and nullify the *matzah*, which is Biblical.** And even on the view that precepts cannot nullify each other, that applies only to a Biblical [precept] with a Biblical [precept], or a Rabbinical [precept] with a Rabbinical [precept], but in the case of a Scriptural and a Rabbinical [precept], the Rabbinical [one] comes and nullifies the Scriptural [one]. Which Tanna do you know [to hold] that precepts do not nullify each other? — it is Hillel. **For it was taught, it was related of Hillel that he used to wrap them together, for it is said, *they shall eat it with matza and maror* (Num 9).** R. Johanan observed: Hillel's colleagues disagreed with him. For it was taught: You might think that he should wrap them together and eat them, in the manner that Hillel ate it, therefore it is stated, *they shall eat it with matza and maror*, [intimating] even each separately. To this R. Ashi demurred: If so, what is [the meaning of] ‘even’? Rather, said R. Ashi, this Tanna teaches thus: You might think that he does not discharge his duty unless he wraps them together and eats them, in the manner of Hillel therefore it is stated, they shall eat it with *matza* and *maror*, [intimating] even each separately. **Now that the law was not stated either as Hillel or as the Rabbis, one recites the blessing. ‘[Who hast commanded us] concerning the eating of *matza*’ and eats; then he recites the blessing, ‘concerning the eating of *maror*,’ and eats; and then he eats *matza* and lettuce together without a blessing, in memory of the Temple, as Hillel [did].**

### Zevachim 79b

Raba said: The Rabbis (of the Mishna) have said that taste [is the determining factor]; and the Rabbis have said [that we decide] by the majority; and the Rabbis have said that [we go] by appearance. **[When] one kind [is mixed] with a different kind, taste [is the determining factor].** [When] one kind [is mixed] with the same kind, the greater part [determines its status]; and where there is appearance, [we go] by looks. Now, [Resh Lakish] disagrees with R. Eleazar. For R. Eleazar said: Just as precepts cannot nullify one another, so can interdicts not nullify one another.<sup>10</sup> Whom do you know to maintain that precepts cannot nullify one another? — **It is Hillel. For it was taught: It was related of Hillel the Elder that he used to wrap them together,** for it is said, *they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.*

### Mishnah for Haroset - B. Pesachim 115b

**Mishnah.** They then set [it] before him. He dips the *hazeret* before yet he has reached the aftercourse of the bread. They set before him *matza*, *hazeret*, and *haroset* and two dishes, though the *haroset* is not a mitzvah. R. Eleazar son of R. Zadok said: it is a mitzvah, and in the temple they used to bring the body of the Passover-offering before him.



## **Kappa - B. Pesachim 115a-b**

R. Eleazar said in R. Oshaia's name: Whatever is dipped in a liquid requires the washing of the hands. Said R. Papa: Infer from this that the lettuce [115b] must be plunged right into the haroseth<sup>1</sup> to counteract the kappa. For if you should think that it need not be sunk into it, why is the washing of the hands required? Surely he does not touch [the haroset]? Yet perhaps I may maintain that in truth it need not be sunk [into the haroset], the kappa dying from its smell; yet why is washing of the hands required? In case he plunges it in.

## **Not A Mitzvah - B. Pesachim 116a**

Though haroset is not a *mitzvah*. Then if it is not a religious requirement, on what account does he bring it? — Said R. Ammi: On account of the *kappa*. R. Assi said: The *kappa* of lettuce [is counteracted by] radishes; the *kappa* of radishes, [by] leeks; the *kappa* of leeks, [by] hot water; the kappa of all these, [by] hot water. And in the meanwhile let him say thus: 'Kappa kappa, I remember you and your seven daughters and your eight daughters in law.'

## **Is A Mitzvah - B. Pesachim 116a**

R. Eleazar son of r. Zadok said: it is a *mitzvah*. Why is it a religious requirement? R. Levi said: In memory of the *tapuach* (fruit-tree); R. Johanan said: In memory of the clay. Abaye observed: Therefore one must make it acrid and thicken it: make it acrid, in memory of the *tapuach*; and thicken it, in memory of the day. It was taught in accordance with R. Johanan: The condiments are in memory of the straw; [and] the haroset [itself] is a reminder of the clay.

## **Under the Tapuach - Midrash Exodus Rabbah 1:12**

R. Akiba said in a discourse: Israel was redeemed from Egypt on account of the righteous women of that generation. What did they do? When they went to draw water, God deposited small fishes in their pitchers, with the result that they found them half filled with water and half with fishes. These they brought to their husbands, and then put on two pots, one for hot water and one for fish, and they used to feed them, wash them, anoint them and give them to drink, and cohabited with them between the mounds in the field, as it is said: *When ye lie between the mounds, the wings of the dove are covered with silver* (Ps. LXVIII, 14); because they lay between the mounds, did Israel merit to obtain the plunder of Egypt, as it is said: ' *The wings of the dove are covered with silver.*' And as soon as they became pregnant, they went back to their homes; **and when the time of their giving birth was due, they went into the field and gave birth under the tapuach, as it is said: Under the tapuach I awakened thee; there thy mother was in travail with thee** (S.S. VIII, 5[#8]).

## Recipes

### Haroset, Yemenite - pareve

From "The World of Jewish Cooking," by Gil Marks:

15 dried figs, chopped	Dash of ground coriander or cardamom
2 to 3 tablespoons sesame seeds, lightly toasted	1 small chili or pinch of cayenne
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	Dry red wine
1 teaspoon ground ginger	

1. Finely chop the figs, dates, sesame seeds, cinnamon, ginger, coriander or cardamom, and chili or cayenne. Stir in enough wine to make a paste. Store in the refrigerator. Serve at room temperature.

### Haroset, Rambam's - pareve

(about 1 cup)

This is taken from the recipe given by Moses Maimonides.

1 cup pitted dated, chopped dried figs, or raisins	1/4 cup wine vinegar
2 cups water	2 tablespoons fresh or 1 tablespoon dried hyssop leaves (not ground)

1. Pour water over fruit and let soak overnight.
2. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring frequently, until mixture forms a paste-like consistency. Cool.
3. Stir in hyssop and vinegar.

### Haroset, Venetian - pareve

1-1/2 cups chestnut paste	1/2 cup pine nuts
10 oz. dates, chopped	1/2 cup golden raisins
12 oz. figs, chopped	1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
2 TBSP poppy seeds	1/2 cup brandy
1/2 cup chopped walnuts	honey, to bind
1/2 cup chopped almonds	

1. Combine all ingredients, using just enough honey and brandy to make everything bind together.

Source: "The Jewish Holiday Kitchen," by Joan Nathan, Schocken Books, New York, 1988

## **Haroset, Provençal - pareve**

(about 8 cups)

This is from Sefer Ha'Menuha, a work of the 13th century Provençal scholar, Rabbi Manoach.

1 pound chestnuts	1 cup dried figs
1 cup blanched almonds	1 cup raisins
2 medium tart apples, cored and chopped	1 to 3 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
1 cup pitted dates	wine vinegar

1. Cut an X in the shell of chestnuts. Place in boiling water and cook for 15 minutes. Drain. When able to handle, peel off shells.
2. Finely chop chestnuts and almonds. Add fruits and finely chop. Stir in enough wine vinegar to make a thick paste. Add ginger.

From an article by Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network,

## **Haroset, Piedmontese - pareve**

1/2 lb (250 g) cooked chestnuts	About 3/4 cup (175 ml) sweet red kosher wine
2/3 cup (125 g) blanched almonds	
2 hard-boiled egg yolks	1/3 cup (75 g) sugar or more to taste
Grated zest of 1 orange	
Juice of 1 orange	

1. Boil the chestnuts for a minute or two, and drain. Grind the almonds fine in the food processor, then add the rest of the ingredients, including the chestnuts, and blend to a paste.

Source: "The Book of Jewish Food," by Claudia Roden

## Haroset, Italy - pareve

In Italy there are various regional versions of haroset. The following is a general version.

3 apples, sweet or tart	1/4 cup (100 g) yellow raisins or sultanas
2 pears	4 oz. (100 g) prunes, pitted and chopped
2 cups sweet wine	1/2 cup (100 g) sugar or * cup (125 ml) honey or to taste
1/3 cup (50 g) pine nuts	1 teaspoon cinnamon
2/3 cup (50 g) ground almonds	
1/2 lb (250 g) dates, pitted and chopped	
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger	

1. Peel and core the apples and pears and cut them in small pieces.
2. Put all the ingredients into a pan together and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 1 hour, until the fruits are very soft, adding a little water if it becomes too dry.

Variations:

Other possible additions: chopped lemon or candied orange peel, walnuts, pistachios, dried figs, orange or lemon juice, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves.

Source: "The Book of Jewish Food," by Claudia Roden

## Haroset, Halek (Calcutta Date Syrup) - pareve

(about 2 cups syrup/3 cups haroset)

Many Iraqi Jews prepare a syrupy variation of date honey and Middle Eastern immigrants in Calcutta make a similar syrup called halek. Since this version requires a great deal of effort to prepare, it is usually made in a large quantity only once a year just before Passover. The leftover halek is then used throughout the rest of the year to add a distinctive touch to desserts.

4 cups (about 24 ounces) pitted dates  
about 8 cups water  
1 cup finely chopped walnuts or almonds

1. Place the dates in a large bowl and add enough water to cover. Soak until soft, at least 24 hours. In a food processor or blender, puree the dates and soaking liquid. Let stand overnight.
2. In batches, place a little of the date mixture in a linen towel and squeeze out the liquid. Discard the solids left in the towel. (Some people use a small manual wine press in place of the more tedious towel.)
3. In a saucepan, bring the date liquid to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and boil, skimming the surface and stirring occasionally, until thickened and reduced to about 2 cups, about 1 hour.

4. Cool, then pour into a jar. Store in the refrigerator for up to 1 year. If sugar crystallizes, place the bottle in a bowl of hot water until the syrup is smooth.
5. To make the haroset, stir the nuts into the 2 cups of halek.

From an article by Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network,

### **Haroset, Aunt Vicki's Greek - pareve**

The following is a family recipe from Faith Wolf. The Aunt Vicki immortalized in this recipe is her aunt -- not mine. (Karen Selwyn)

#### Aunt Vicki's Greek Haroset

	1/2 pound moist dried figs
1/4 cup golden raisins	1/2 pound dates
1/2 pound dried apricots	2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts	dash ground cinnamon

Soak raisins and apricots together in water to cover overnight or cook them in water to cover until the apricots are tender but not mushy. Drain fruit, reserving liquid.

Toast pine nuts on a cookie sheet in a 250-degree oven for 10 minutes. Cool. Grind pine nuts in food processor until fine but not pureed.

Add remaining ingredients, including raisins and apricots, in small batches, processing after each addition, until desired consistency is reached. If too stiff, add apricot cooking water or plain water.

Source: "Mediterranean Meal: Passover foods are rooted in Judaic history" Gerri Kobren  
BALTIMORE SUN/SUN SPOT

### **Haroset: Turkish - pareve**

Serves 6.

2 sweet apples, peeled, cored and chopped	1/2 cup ground almonds
1 tablespoon lemon juice	1 tablespoon lemon zest
1 cup large golden raisins or sultanas	1 tablespoon brown sugar or honey
1/2 cup white figs, coarsely chopped	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 cup dried cherries (optional)	1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 cup walnuts, shelled and chopped fine	pinch of cayenne pepper
	2 to 3 tablespoons sweet red Passover wine or more, if necessary.

1. Cover apples with lemon juice in bowl. Chop fruit and nuts by hand, in blender or food processor. Stir in zest, sugar and spices; taste and adjust seasonings. Moisten with wine to make thick paste.

Source: "Food: Telling the Story of Passover" Beverly Levitt [PITTSBURGH] TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Haroset: Pear and Pecan - pareve

Yield: About 2 1/2 cups or 20 balls.

2 pears, unpeeled, cored and finely chopped

1 cup finely chopped pecans

1/2 cup minced raisins

2 tablespoons honey

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 cup sweet Passover wine

1. Combine pears, pecans, raisins, honey and cinnamon in bowl; mix well. Add enough wine to bind mixture.
2. Serve in bowl or roll into 1-inch balls and arrange balls on serving plate.

Source: "Passover Seder Vegetarian-Style" Judy Zeidler ST. LOUIS POST DISPATCH (on-line edition), 4/2/90