

At Passover time Rabbi Julius Funk (z'l) often said “We Jews are the only people who sing the table of contents.” Many people do have the custom of reciting or singing this short list. The list itself is a mnemonic poem.

The earliest Hebrew texts were not printed; they were written and most people could not afford to own one. It could be difficult for people to remember everything written in them, so mnemonics were often devised. There are three such mnemonics contained in the *Hagaddah* and this list is the first.

This particular mnemonic is attributed to Rashi, but it was most likely written by Rabbi Shmuel of Provence, a tosefist of the 13th Century. There are, however, at least 13 other mnemonics that are preserved in other *Hagaddot*. The version that appears in our *Hagaddah* probably became popular because it was attributed to Rashi.

Why continue reciting this poem if we now have printed *Hagaddot*? One reason might be to preserve a tradition that extends back many years. A second reason may be because of our children. As we go through the *Hagaddah* we find that many of the strange customs are included for one purpose along; to spark questions in our children. One of the *Mitzvot* of *Pesah* is to “Tell your children.” What better way to tell our children than by answering their question; “*Abba*, why are we beginning our meal with this song?”

A beautiful interpretation was offered by Rabbi Meir of Premishlan a chassidic master who lived in the early 1700s. He read the entire list not as a poem, but as prose with his additions:

“**Kaddesh** - If you wish to be sanctified; **U-rechatz** - and to cleanse yourself of sin; **Karpas** - take the pillow under your head and your bread (kar means pillow and pas sounds like the word for bread); **Yachatz** - and give half to the poor; **Maggid** - If a poor person comes to your home, tell him; **Rahtzah** - to wash for the meal; **Motzi** - and to break bread with you; **Matzah** - by this you will remove (traslating matzah phonetically); **Maror** - all the bitterness from your home; **Korech** - Sit down with the poor man at; **Shulchan Orech** - the table, and do not leave him to sit alone; **Tzafun** - The reward for this will be that you will find yourself earning a living form sources of which you were unaware, that were “hidden” from you; **Barech** - and you will thank God; **Hallel** - and praise Him for all the good He has done for you; **Nirtzah** - and you will be accepted by both man and God”

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| Kiddush | Wash | וְרַחַץ | קַדֵּשׁ |
| Greens | Break | יַחַץ | כַּרְפָּס |
| Tell | Wash | רַחַץ | מַגִּיד |
| Lift | Matza | מִצָּה | מוֹצֵיא |
| Bitters | Sandwich | כּוֹרֵךְ | מָרוֹר |
| | Festive Meal | | שֵׁלְחַן עוֹרֵךְ |
| Hidden | Bless | בָּרַךְ | צָפוֹן |
| Praise | Conclusion | נִרְצָה | הַלֵּל |