
**The History of Horseradish
as the Bitter Herb of Passover**

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Introduction

Many Ashkenazic Jews specifically use the root of the horseradish plant at least one of the two times that bitter herbs are called for at the Passover *seder*. Surprisingly, horseradish has not always been used for *maror*. Only since the Middle Ages, as Jews migrated northward and eastward into colder climates, has horseradish taken its place on the *seder* table. The possibility even exists that horseradish was not present in Israel in Biblical and Talmudic times and hence could not possibly be identified with *maror*.¹ In addition, it can be argued that the characteristics of horseradish do not even fit the Talmudic requirements for bitter herbs since horseradish is not bitter (מר) but rather is hot and sharp (חריף).² In this paper I will trace and

1. A number of scholars come to this conclusion. See G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palastina* (Hildesheim, 1964 repr. of Gutersloh, 1928) II, 274; J. Feliks, *Kil'ei Zera'im VeHarkavah* (Jerusalem, 1967) pg. 59; I. Low, *Die Flora der Juden [DFD]* (Hildesheim 1967, repr. Wien and Leipzig, 1928) I, 431. Ephraim Hareuveni, *Leshonenu* 9 (1938) pg. 220, writes:

בגולה כשהתרחקנו מעל אדמותינו ומעל צמחנו נהגנו לאכול כמרור את ה"חריץ" המר אשר בשעות קרא לו חזרת.

2. See J. Feliks, *ibid.* The Babylonian Talmud (*Pesahim* 39a) mentions

account for the history of the widespread use of horseradish for the bitter herbs of Passover.³

I

The Mishnah mentions five species that may be used for *maror*:

ואלו ירקות שאדם יוצא בהן ידי חובתו בפסח
בחזרת ובעולשין ובתמכא' ובחרחבינה ובמרור.⁴

three characteristics of *maror*: כל ירק מר יש לו שרף ופניו מכסיפין.
(See R. Rabbinovicz, *Dikdukei Soferim* [DS] to *Pesahim* 39a, especially note ב). It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these characteristics. However, in a private, unscientific study comparing the tastes of horseradish and cultivated endive in its mature stage (development of seed stalk), I found that their respective tastes were sensed by different areas of the tongue, implying that physiologically they are different tastes. The bitter element of the endive, which is found in many plants of the Composite family, is related to its white latex sap (the שרף) found in the leaves and the stems, a characteristic which horseradish lacks. The pungency of horseradish is due to two volatile sulfur-containing oils which are released upon grinding. For this reason, ground horseradish loses its pungency when left out in the air for a period of time.

3. I would like to emphasize that לא באחי להורות אלא להראותו.
Whether horseradish could have halakhically been used to fulfill the requirement for *maror*, see comment of R. Moses Isserles to *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 473/5, and the commentaries thereto. Also see the comment of R. Menahem Ha-Meiri in *Bet ha-Behira* to *Pesahim*, ed. Klein (Jerusalem, 1966) pg. 124. The Meiri is one of many *Rishonim* who interpret the fifth species of the mishnah, מרור, as a generic term for any bitter plant.
4. Throughout the *Rishonim* and *Aharonim*, תמכא is spelled at times with an א and at times with a ה. For the sake of consistency it will be spelled throughout this paper with an א.
5. *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah, Pesahim* 2:6, ed. H. Albeck (Jerusalem, 1958). The same order is found in *Ha-Mishnah Al Pi Ketav Yad Kaufman* (Jerusalem, 1967) pg. 113. The mishnah found in the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud lists תמכא second and עולשין fourth. See R. Rabbinovicz *DS to Pes.* 39a, note ל. This change in order has significant halakhic bearing since the order in the mishnah is taken to imply an order of priority. Thus, if חזרת (lettuce) cannot be found, the next plant listed should be used, and so on. See, for example *Sefer Ra'avyah*

Our use of horseradish is predicated on its identification with תמכא. Both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds identify תמכא in their respective vernaculars. The Babylonian is of little help when it states חנה תמכתא שמה.⁶ However, the Jerusalem Talmud is a bit more helpful and defines תמכא as גנגידין.⁷ Seemingly a word of Greek origin, its identification has been the object of some discussion and suggestions, but it is certainly not identified with horseradish.⁸

Whether or not horseradish even existed in the Middle East during Mishnaic or Talmudic times is a difficult question to answer.⁹ The general assumption is that it did not.¹⁰

(Jerusalem 1964 repr.) II, 101, who seems to be the first to mention this rule.

6. *TB, Pesahim* 39a.
7. *TJ, Pesahim* 29c.
8. See Feliks, op. cit., pg. 59, who mentions the views of Löw (endive) and Dalman (member of the parsley [umbellifer] family). But see Dalman, op. cit., II, 275-276, who is more descriptive. Dioscorides, a first-century C.E. Greek botanist, describes a plant *Gingidion* which seems typical of an umbellifer. See *The Greek Herbal of Dioscorides*, ed. by R.T. Gunther (New York, 1959) pg. 178. Also see Pliny, *Natural History* (Loeb Classical Library, London, 1950) XX:16, who writes, "They [Syrians] sow a vegetable called by some, gingidion, that is very much like staphylinus, only it is slighter and more bitter." Staphylinus seems to be an umbellifer and not related to horseradish.
9. It is far easier to be certain that a species did exist in a certain area and time than to be certain that it did not. There are few cases where one can be absolutely sure that the plant in question was not present in the area under study. The best examples are those plant introductions that were brought from the new world to the old world after the Spanish discoveries. Thus, for example, we know that tomatoes and potatoes were not found in Europe until the 1500's and hence we can be certain that the *Rishonim* did not use boiled potatoes for *karpas* on Passover. For interesting histories of many plants see "Our Vegetable Travelers" by V. Boswell, in *National Geographic* 96 (1949) 145-217. For more detailed studies, *Evolution of Crop Plants*, ed. N.W. Simmonds (New York, 1976), is by far the most comprehensive work of its nature.
10. Horseradish does not seem to be mentioned by any of the early Greek or Roman botanists. A. De Candolle in *The Origin of Cultivated Plants* (New York, 1959, repr. of 2nd edition, 1836), pgs. 33-36, charts the probable place of origin and later migrations of horseradish, based

However, there is a questionable reference to it by Dioscorides, an early Greek botanist (first century C.E.), which may be taken to mean that it at least was present in his area of the Mediterranean.¹¹

The most fruitful sources we have that can serve as indicators of what plant material was considered acceptable for *maror* by Jewry in various periods and geographic locations are the commentaries, codes, books of customs, lexica and responsa composed over the years in a variety of localities. It is to these that we will now turn our attention.

Rabbi Nathan of Rome (1035-c.1110),¹² in his Talmudic dictionary, defines תמכא as קרדו,¹³ which most likely is cardoon (*Cynara cardunculus* L.), a close relative of the globe artichoke (*C. scolymus* L.). It is a thistle-like plant of the Composite (Daisy) family (which also includes lettuce, endive, chicory and wormwood) whose leafstalks may be blanched and eaten.¹⁴ R. Nathan continues ריש אומרים מרובי"ו,¹⁵ which is undoubtedly *Marrubium vulgare* L., or horehound. This is a member of the Labiate (Mint) family, with whitish hairy leaves and a bitter taste, and was often mentioned by the Greek, Roman and medieval herbalists.¹⁶

Rashi (1040-1105), a contemporary of R. Nathan living in North France, also defines תמכא as horehound,¹⁷ as do the various books attributed to his school.¹⁸ In Provence (South France), in the late twelfth century, R. Issac b. Abba Mari likewise defines תמכא as horehound.¹⁹ In North Africa, at about the same time as Rashi, R. Isaac Alfasi (1013-1103) defines תמכא as אל שלים,²⁰ which is possibly a form of rape.²¹ Oddly,

Classical Library, Mass. 1955) III, 39, "And it has also profited to drench the plants in horehound's bitter sap." Dioscorides, op. cit., pg. 349, refers to it by its Greek name *Prasion* and also describes it as bitter. It is also mentioned by many medieval herbals, including one of the most important, the *Circa Instans* of the 12th century (in *The Herbal of Rufinus*, ed. L. Thorndike, Chicago, 1946, pg. 231). In a thirteenth-century Hebrew translation of the *Circa Instans*, *Sefer ha-Ezer* (J.T.S. MS. micro. 5517), its description is as follows:

מארורתיאום הוא עשב נקרא גם כן טראשיאום.

In a later copy of the *Sefer ha-Ezer* (J.T.S. MS. micro. 5518) it is spelled, מרובי. I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Tobias of the J.T.S. library, who brought this manuscript to my attention. For the origin of the name horehound see A.H. Hareuveni in *Sinai* 22 (1948) pgs. 302-303. For alternative interpretations see *The Englishmen's Flora* by G. Grigson (London, 1955) pg. 328; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. horehound and J. Lust's *The Herb Book* (New York, 1974), which states that horehound was dedicated by the ancient Egyptians to the god Horus, the god of the sky and light.

- largely on philological considerations. His conclusion is that horseradish originated in eastern Europe and later moved westward. Also see the article by J.W. Courter and A.M. Rhodes, "Historical Notes on Horseradish" in *Economic Botany* 23 (1969) 156-164 and the sources in note 1. of this paper.
11. Dioscorides, op. cit., pg. 197. Under the description of what he calls *Thlaspi* (Shepherd's purse) he writes, "Crateuas reckons up another kind of *Thlaspi* which some call *Persicum Sinapi*, broad leaved and big rooted." See also Courter and Rhodes, op. cit.
 12. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* has been used for spelling of names and dates of personalities, unless otherwise noted.
 13. *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. תמכא. ed. Kohut (New York, 1915).
 14. Pliny (XIX:43) did not have much regard for cardoon, considering it "a monstrosity of the earth" used "for purposes of gluttony." He relates that it was often preserved in honey, vinegar and spices.
 15. See *Arukh ha-Shalem*, ed. Kohut. See note 5 for variant readings of the crucial final word.
 16. Horehound is described as bitter by Columella, *De Re Rustica*, (Loeb

17. Rashi's commentary to *Pes.* 39a. See A. Darmestater and D.S. Blondheim, *Les Gloses Francaises dans les Commentaires Talmudiques de Raschi* (Paris, 1929) I, no. 687 for variant readings. Also see I. Low, "Pflanzennamen bei Raschi" in *Festschrift zum 70th geburstage A. Berliners* (Frankfurt a.m. 1903) p. 246.
18. See *Sefer ha-Pardes*, ed. Ehrenreich (Budapest, 1924) pgs. 46, 52; *Sefer ha-Oreh* (Jerusalem, 1967 repr. of Buber edition Lvov, 1905) vol. II, pg. 192; *Siddur Rashi* ed. Freimann and Buber (New York, 1959 repr. by Menorah) pg. 183; *Maḥzor Vitry*, ed. S. Hurwitz and A. Berliner (Berlin, 1896) pg. 270.
19. *Sefer ha-Ittur* (Lemberg, 1860) II, 54a.
20. *Hilkhot ha-Rif* (Constantinople, 1509) to *Pes.* 39a. The J.T.S. ms. Rab. 692 (facs. repr. by Makor Publishers, Jerusalem, 1974) fol. 45b reads מרובי ובלעו מרובי ואל שלים which is undoubtedly a post-Alfasi addition. The manuscript has been described as thirteenth-century Provençal and the additional vernacular definition coincides well with this origin. Pseudo-

though, nowhere in the rest of rabbinic literature is there a mention of such a plant as a bitter herb.²² Maimonides (1135-1204), who wrote largely in Egypt during the latter half of the twelfth century, defines חמכא as סריס (seris),²³ a Greek word for a form of endive.²⁴ According to Maimonides, at least four of the five types of bitter herbs in the mishnah are lettuces and endives.²⁵

- Rashi on the Rif contains no translation of חמכא, while it does translate the other species, possibly due to the fact that the author was dealing with a manuscript of the Rif which already had this definition incorporated into the text.
21. *Brassica napus* L. See *An Arabic-English Lexicon* by E.W. Lane (London, 1867) III, 1402; Maimonides' *Biur Shemot ha-Refu'ot* ed. by S. Muntner (Jerusalem, 1969) pg. 79 (273). But, see also the description of *Tanhum ha-Yerushalmi* in *Leshonenu* 33 (1969) pg. 293, Lane, III, 1592 and Muntner pg. 49 (143) who describe a bitter grain under the word אל שלים. Various manuscripts of Alfasi differ in their reading of this word, some placing the יד before the ל and some after.
 22. R. Asheri quotes the Rif in a corrupt form, של"ה. The אל שלים of the Rif is quoted by later commentaries (see later in text) who add their own vernacular definition of either a form of lettuce or horehound to it. But, see end of note 25.
 23. *Mishnah Im Perush R. Moshe b. Maimon*, ed. J. Kafah (Jerusalem, 1964) II, pg. 168. Our printed version of Maimonides' *Perush ha-Mishnayot*, found in the back of the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud (see the Mekorot repr. Jerusalem, 1970 of the first edition, Napoli, 1492 of the *Mishnah Im Perush ha-Rambam*, *Pes. 2:6*) has the additional phrase גרל בגנות שהוא אלא עולשין אלא, which is lacking in the original used by Kafah. Also see footnote 25.
 24. Dioscorides, op. cit., pg. 173. "Seris (some call it Picris, the Egyptians Agon, the Romans Intybus agrestis) is of two kinds, wilde and Sative, of which the wilde is called Picris or Cichorum, but ye other kinde broader leaved . . . which is that of ye garden. And this is of a twofold kinde, for the one is more like lettuce, the other is narrow leaved, and bitter." Also see Maimonides' *Biur Shemot ha-Refu'ot* ed. by S. Muntner (Jerusalem, 1969) pg. 81 (285); Columella, op. cit., II, 389; Feliks, op. cit.
 25. See J. Kafah, op. cit., note 34, who writes that Maimonides' translation of the fifth species, מרור, is not כוסברתא (coriander) as is found in the printed version in the Talmud, (see note 23), but rather כס ברי, Arabic for wild lettuce, and כוסברתא is merely a corruption. In the earliest

We find the first mention of horseradish in rabbinic literature of mid-twelfth century Germany. R. Eliezer b. Nathan of Mainz, (c.1090-c.1170) a contemporary of R. Tam, mentions *meeretich*, the German word for horseradish.²⁶ However, it is not mentioned as a bitter herb, but rather as an ingredient in his recipe for *haroset!* In fact, when he does define the herbs of the mishnah he defines all but חמכא.²⁷ R.

- manuscript of the *Perush ha-Mishnayot* (with an introduction by S. Sassoon, facs. by Ejnar Munksgaard Pub., Copenhagen, 1956, I, pg. 284), dating from the time of Maimonides, it can clearly be seen that the definition of מרור is כס ברי. For Maimonides' definition of חררבינה see *DFDJ* I, 439. Regarding the Arabic translation of the Rif, אל שלים, which may be a form of rape or a completely different plant (see note 21), the fact that no such similar plant is mentioned by the *Rishonim* or *Aharonim* is unusual. It seems possible that, in fact, שלים or שילם resulted from an error in copying a very early manuscript. The earliest reference we have of the Rif mentioning שלים is an early thirteenth-century lexicon by *Tanhum ha-Yerushalmi* (letter "ח" printed in *Leshonenu* 33 (1969) 280-296 by H. Shai). If, however, the Rif wrote שריס or שריס, it is not difficult to imagine the ר being mistakenly changed to a ל by the addition of a short stroke, and the *samekh* being changed into a final *mem*, thus forming שלים from שריס. See the comment by R. Elija Shapiro (*Elijah Rabbah*, Sulzbach 1757, repr. N.Y. n.d., pg. 164b.), who writes that the Rif defines חמכא as סריס. A more detailed study by someone expert in this field is necessary.
26. *Even ha-Ezer, Sefer Ra'avan* (Prague, 1610) 74b. The origin of the words *meeretich* and horseradish are fascinating. *Meerettich* indicates a radish (*rettich*) that grows near a body of water. Hence its Latin generic name *Armoracia*, formed from the Celtic: *ar* near, *mor* the sea, *rich* against. *Merretich* may have evolved into horseradish by taking *meer* to be *mare*, a horse, and thus sea-radish became horseradish! Another possibility exists that horseradish means a strong or hot radish. See "Historical Notes on Horseradish", op. cit. Also see the *Hokhmat Shelomo* of R. Shelomo Kluger to *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 473/5, who suggests that if *meeretich* can be used for *maror*, so can plain *retich* (radish, *Raphanus sativus* L.) since by their names, they must be very similar plants. Most probably he was referring to the sharp varieties of radish.
 27. *Even ha-Ezer*, op. cit., 73a. So too his grandson, R. Eliezer b. Joel. See *Sefer Ra'avyah* (Jerusalem, 1964 repr. of Aptowitz ed.) II, 101 and the note of Aptowitz who adds into the text [חמכא מרוב"א] and writes in a footnote: הוספתי על פי הגמרא ופירש"י שאין סברא שרבינו השמיטו.

Eleazer of Worms (c.1165-c.1230) also mentions *meeretich* only as an ingredient of *haroset*²⁸ and, in his definitions of the five herbs of the mishnah, identifies *חמכא* with *אגרווך*, which is probably a corruption of *andorn*, the German word for horehound.²⁹ In Germany, then, at least until the period of Eleazer of Worms, there is no mention of horseradish as *maror*.³⁰ *חזרת*, lettuce of a leafy or 'romaine' type,³¹ was used

28. *Ha-Roke'ah* (Fano, 1505) 284:

החרוסת . . . ונותנים בו קצת מה בשיר השירים אגחים תאנים ורימונים ופלפל חננביל וכמון וכרפס ומירח"ך.

Apparently it was customary, at least in North France and in Germany, to add vegetables to the *haroset* in order to make it thick. See, for example, *Rashbam to Pes.* 116a, s.v. *לסמוכיה*.

29. *Ibid.*, 282. See I. Low, *DFDJI*, 431. It does not take too much imagination to see the *ג* and first *ד* of *אגרווך* replacing, due to a scribal error, the *ג* and first *ד* of *אגרווך*. In the *Sefer ha-Assufot* (*Studies and Texts* by M. Gastner, London 1925-1923, III, 216-243), *חמכא* is defined as *andorn* (pg. 221). See *Mavo LeSefer Ba'alei Assufot* by B.Z. Benedict in *Sinai* 27 (1950) 322-329 and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. *Lattes, Judah*.
30. *Meeretich* is mentioned as a form of *maror*, although not as *חמכא*, in the Pseudo-Rashi commentary on the Rif to *Pes.* 39a. There, *meeretich* is given as the definition of the fifth species, *מרירחא*. It is similarly found in ms. Bod. 545 and Br. Mus. 473 fol. 88a of Alfasi with Pseudo-Rashi. According to Rabbinovicz (in a short note to the DS at the end of *Shekalim*) the Pseudo-Rashi dates to the second half of the thirteenth century and is part of the general literature that sprung up around the Rif, due to the earlier ban on studying Talmud. It is therefore not surprising that it mentions horseradish. In the *Sefer ha-Assufot* [SH] (see note 29), *meeretich* is mentioned as one of the ingredients of *haroset* where it is also identified with *אמרפיל* which is the *la'az* of Rashi and many others (for example, the Ra'avan, Ra'avyah, Roke'ah) for the fifth species *מרירחא*. Earlier in the SH, (pg. 221) *מרירחא* of the mishnah is also defined as *אמרפיל* but with the accepted German vernacular of wormwood, as it is in the Ra'avan, Ra'avyah and Roke'ah. *Amerfoil* cannot be both wormwood and horseradish unless, as I. Low suggests, it is just a general term for 'bitter leaves'. The other possibility is that the second *amerfoil*, associated with horseradish and *haroset*, is a later addition. Considering the lack of manuscripts and general confusion surrounding the authorship of the SH (see above note), no conclusions may be drawn.
31. See note 50. Iceberg, or head lettuce as we know it, seems to have

and, when it was unobtainable, endive and horehound were used; wormwood, too, may have been relied on to some extent.³²

In the areas south and west of Germany, i.e. North France, Provence, Italy, Spain, North Africa and Eretz Yisrael; lettuces, endives, horehound and, depending on local custom, other flora such as cardoon are mentioned and may have been used. Again, there is no mention of horseradish. The situation in these Mediterranean countries, in contrast to that of Germany, remained unchanged throughout the Middle Ages.

In Italy, R. Judah b. Benjamin Anav (mid-thirteenth century) quotes R. Nathan's definitions of cardoon and horehound³³ while R. Yehiel Anav³⁴ and R. Zedekiah Anav,³⁵ R. Judah's nephew and cousin respectively, mention only horehound. In North France, R. Moses of Coucy (first half of thirteenth century) maintains the tradition of horehound.³⁶ We can also infer from a comment attributed to R. Peretz (end of thirteenth century) that horseradish was not used for bitter herbs in North France.³⁷ In discussing the use of roots for

originated sometime in the late Middle Ages and is associated with a simple mutation. It is first described in Fuchs' sixteenth-century herbal as *Lactuca capitata* and would now be considered as *L. sativa* var. *capitata*. The picture associated with *L. capitata* in Fuchs' herbal, looks more like a romaine lettuce than a head lettuce in spite of its name and, in fact, romaine (*Cos*) lettuces are a loose heading form of lettuces, as opposed to a leaf lettuce. See "Salads For Everyone — A Look at the Lettuce Plant" by T.W. Whitaker in *Economic Botany* 23(1969) 261-264.

32. See note 30.

33. *Perush R. Yehudah b. R. Binyamin Anav al ha-Rif, Massekhet Pesahim* (New York, 1915) to *Pes.* 39a.

34. *Tanya* (Cremona, 1565) pg. 57b.

35. *Sefer Shibbolei ha-Leket ha-Shalem* (New York, 1959) pg. 194.

36. *Sefer Mizvot Gedolot* (Venice, 1547) 118a, *Aseh* 41.

37. This comment is found in the *Hiddushei ha-Ritva* (Warsaw, 1864 and repr. after his commentary to *Shabbat* in many editions) to *Pes.* 39b. הוא דחן במתניחין יוצאין בקלה שלהן פי בתוס' בשם השר מקוצי דדוקא בקלה אבל בשורש לא יש ליהרהר להסיר השורש מן החזרת ע"כ משיטת הרב רבי פרץ.

For information regarding the authorship of the *Ritva to Pesahim* see

maror, which was prohibited by R. Tam, R. Peretz rules that one must be certain to remove the root of the lettuce plant when it is used. If, in fact, horseradish was used, mention of its root would certainly have been made. In Provence, R. Manoh of Narbonne (end of thirteenth and first half of fourteenth century) defines חמכא as a form of endive,³⁸ like Maimonides,³⁹ while his contemporary, R. Aaron of Lunel, continues the tradition of horehound.⁴⁰

In Spain, R. Moses Halava (mid-fourteenth century) quotes Alfasi's definition of חמכא with the additional comment והוא מרובי,⁴¹ while R. Joseph Habiba (beginning of 15th cent.) also defines חמכא as horehound.⁴² R. Simeon b. Zemah (1361-1444), originally from Spain but forced to move to N. Africa in

1391, quotes Alfasi's Arabic translation and adds that it is a form of lettuce.⁴³ Even by the early sixteenth century, Obadiah of Bertinoro, who first lived in Italy and later in Eretz Yisrael still makes no mention of horseradish as *maror* when he defines the species of the mishnah.⁴⁴

The first mention we have of חמכא translated as horseradish is in the late thirteenth-century Germany, in the *Haggahot Maimuniyyot*,⁴⁵ written by R. Meir Ha-Kohen, student of R. Meir of Rothenburg (c. 1215-1293). Surprisingly, among no other student of R. Meir from whom we have written records, do we find similar mention of horseradish.⁴⁶ In addition, the first corroboration, from later commentaries, that the *Haggahot Maimuniyyot* defined חמכא as *meeretich* does not occur until about two hundred years later.⁴⁷ It seems possible

- Hiddushei ha-Ritva, Massekhet Eruvin* (Jerusalem, 1974) ed. by M. Goldstein, pg. 15. The prohibition of using the root is attributed here to R. Samson of Coucy, brother-in-law of R. Moses of Coucy. In most sources, it is attributed to R. Tam. See second half of this paper.
38. *Sefer ha-Menuha* (Constantinople 1718, repr. in *Kovez Rishonim al Mishneh Torah*, Jerusalem 1967) 24a.
- החמכא היא עשב נקראת אסקריולא והיא חורח מדברית.
- In *Sefer ha-Ezer* (note 16) אסקריולא is given as a synonym for אנדיבה (endive), together with חורח מדברית. *Scariola* is also described in the *Circa Instans*, pg. 125 as a type of endive.
39. For information on the relationship of the *Sefer ha-Menuha* to Maimonides, see H. Tchernowitz, *Toldot ha-Posekim* (New York, 1946) III, 281.
40. *Orhot Hayyim* (Florence, 1750) 79a. A contemporary, R. Menahem Ha-Meiri (1249-1316), defines חמכא as קרישמילאה (*Bet ha-Behirah al Massekhet Pesahim*, ed. J. Klein, Jerusalem, 1966, pg. 124) which is how Rashi defines עולשין. A study of this *la'az* would demand a much larger study than this note can offer. But, see *Sefer Ra'avyah* ed. by Aptowitz, II, 101, note 1 for an idea as to what such a study might produce.
41. *Perush Maharam Halava al Massekhet Pesahim* (Jerusalem, 1966) to *Pes.* 39a:
- חמכא חמכתא שמה פי הרב אלפסי שקורין לה בלשק ערבי אל שלים והוא מרובי.
- The last two words מרובי, והוא מרובי, may either be part of the Alfasi that R. Halava used or may be R. Halava's own addition. See note 20.
42. *Nimmukei Yosef* (New York, 1960) to *Pes.* 39a.

43. *Sefer Ma'amar Hamez* (printed together with *Sefer Yavin Shemu'ah*, Livorno, 1744, repr. Jerusalem, 1970) 35a:
- ובחמכתא פירש הרף ז"ל שהוא אלשיל"ם בלי ערבי ובלי רומי ליטוגא רומני.
44. Commentary of R. Obadiah of Bertinoro to *Mishnah Pes.* 2:6.
45. To *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Hamez u'Mazza*, 7:13. In the modern printed editions there are contradictory vernaculars. The Amsterdam 1702 edition reads מירטיך בלעז מרוביא, which makes no sense. In a number of manuscripts of the HM studied, *meeretich* is mentioned in all but one. The Constantinople 1509 ed. 133b has only *meeretich* as the definition of חמכא (although it appears more like מירטיך with a *samekh*). In ms. Br. Mus. 501 (fol. 85) described as sixteenth-century Italian, (*Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Br. Mus.* by G. Margoliouth (London, 1965) II, 112) there are no translations of any of the species. In Bod. 844 fol. 146a חמכא is defined as מירטיך בלעז מרוביא as it is in J.T.S. ms. Rab. 350 which again makes no sense. Bod. 641 fol. 144b mentions מירטיך and מרוביא but also quotes the *Arukh*. In the Nurnberg Landeskirch, Arch. 88 2 there is מירטיך בלעז מרוביא, after which the *Arukh* is quoted, which in turn is followed by an additional *la'az* which I could not make out. How much of these comments were actually written by R. Meir Ha-Kohen, or whether any part at all was, is questionable. See for example, E.E. Urbach's *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot* (Jerusalem, 1954) pg. 435.
46. See *Sefer ha-Parnes* by R. Moshe Ha-Parnas (Vilna, 1891) par. 57, 6a; *Sefer Tashbaz* (Cremona, 1556) 8a, only mentions that if one cannot find *maror* then wormwood can be used. For Asheri see note 22.
47. The first to mention that the *Haggahot Maimuniyyot* defines חמכא as

that this comment in the *Haggahot Maimuniyyot* may have resulted from a later addition, and not from the late thirteenth century.⁴⁸

By the first half of the fourteenth century, horseradish is clearly mentioned as an acceptable form of *maror*. R. Alexander Suslin (d. 1349), of Frankfurt and later Erfurt, in eastern Germany, distinctly mentions the custom of using *meeretich* when lettuce could not be found, although he does not explicitly define תמכא as *meeretich*.⁴⁹

During the middle of the fourteenth century the custom of using horseradish already existed. It was, however, considered preferable to use lettuce when available, and there are indications that in western Germany, lettuce was indeed available Passover time.⁵⁰ We have reason to believe, though, that lettuce was at times difficult to obtain, as evidenced by the com-

meeretich is R. Joseph b. Moshe, student of R. Israel Isserlein, in *Leket Yosher* (Berlin, 1903, repr. Jerusalem, 1964) pg. 92.

48. See note 45. For the reader who feels that I am making emendations too quickly see "The La'azim of Rashi and of the French Biblical Glossaries" by M. Banitt, in *The World History of the Jewish People*, ed. C. Roth, vol. 11, *The Dark Ages*, ch. 12, pgs. 291-297 and notes and bibliography. See especially pg. 295 where he writes, "Curiously enough, neither Rashi nor any rabbi of his period could resist the temptation of inserting into their commentaries translations in a foreign tongue they did not understand, but which they had found in their sources and which must have been practically useless for their countrymen . . . In fact, we are faced with the general medieval traits of an inveterate compilatory attitude and a strong verbalistic trend in education." If this is true for Rashi and his period it is all the more true among the later commentaries and copyists. The *Haggahot Maimuniyyot* is a fine example.

49. *Sefer ha-Agudah* (Cracow, 1571), 162a,

וראיתי רבתי החזיק אחר לשונ"א ואם לא מצאו יקחו מירטך.

However, when defining the species immediately before, he does not define תמכא at all, much like the Ra'avan and Ra'avyah.

50. See, for example, *Sefer Minhagim Devei Maharam b. Barukh MiRothenburg*, ed. I. Elfenbein, vol. 5 (New York, 1938) pg. 24; *Minhagei R. Hayyim Paltiel* in *Kiryat Sefer* 24 (1948) pg. 79. Also see note 80 of the paper and *Sefer Ma'asei ha-Geonim*, ed. A. Epstein and J. Freimann (Berlin, 1910 repr. 1967) pg. 18.

ments of R. Shimshon b. Zadok⁵¹ (student of R. Meir of Rothenburg) and R. Alexander Suslin⁵² who describe situations where it was not obtainable.

The availability of lettuce and other leafy annuals that must be sown from seed depends on climatic factors. In areas such as Spain, Provence, Italy, Eretz Yisrael and N. Africa, all bordering the Mediterranean, the climate is such that lettuce is easily obtainable in March-April. As one moves northeast, the climate in winter becomes progressively colder, and spring, which heralds the growing season, begins progressively later.⁵³ In western Germany, as previously mentioned, lettuce was generally available. In unusual years, especially when Passover occurred early, it is probable that lettuce was difficult to obtain, or at least it was prohibitively expensive.⁵⁴ Further east, in cities such as Erfurt, it was probably even more difficult to procure. In contrast to the leafy annuals, a perennial root crop such as horseradish would be obtainable in cooler climates. Its leaves would push forth from the ground with the advent of spring, and in colder regions, where even the leaves would not be available, the root itself could be stored and made available throughout the year. The dependence on horseradish, then, probably started in the cooler climates of eastern Germany and moved to the even colder climates of Poland and Russia. The reverse may also be true; the custom of using horseradish may have begun in the colder portions of eastern Europe, for which

51. See note 46.

52. See note 49. Suggestions that lettuce should be bought אפילו בדמים יקרים may also be indicative of the increasing difficulty, even in northern France, of obtaining lettuce. See, for example, the gloss to *Amudei Golah (Semak)* (Cremona, 1556) 107b par. 220. Rashi, too, is reported to have had difficulty in obtaining lettuce one year. See *Mahzor Vitry* and *Sefer ha-Oreh* (my note 18).

53. See *The Times Atlas of the World* (London, 1968) plates 4 and 5 which illustrate climatic patterns of Europe. For an interesting study of the effect of climate on history, see *Times of Feast, Times of Famine; A History of Climate Since the Year 1,000*, by Emmanuel LeRoy Ladourie, Doubleday, New York, 1971.

54. See note 52.

we have few written records,⁵⁵ and once established, moved to the relatively warmer Germany where it could be depended upon whenever necessary. In either case, the custom of using horseradish for *maror* and its identification with one of the species of the mishnah, thereby legitimizing its use and giving it roots in tradition, seems to stem from the migration of the Jews north-eastward into Europe, and the flowering of new Jewish communities in these colder regions.⁵⁶

55. For an introductory survey of early East European Jewish settlements see *The World History of the Jewish People*, ed. C. Roth, vol. 11, The Dark Ages, ch. 13, and notes and bibliography.
56. As previously mentioned, it is not within the scope of this paper to deal with the definitions of all the species of bitter herbs. However, the observant reader will no doubt be bothered by the possibility that horseradish may have been used prior to the thirteenth century in countries warmer than Germany and the change that occurred in thirteenth-century Germany was a transposition of horseradish from its definition as one of the other species of the mishnah to *חמכא*. The only possibility of this having occurred is with the fifth species of the mishnah, the *מרירחא* of the Talmud. As already mentioned (note 30), at least one source defines *מרירחא* as horseradish, albeit a late one. Rashi himself defines *מרירחא* (*Pes.* 39a, s.v. *מרירחא*) as *פופרץ* (see Darmestater and Blondheim op. cit. for variant readings), which he is reported to have used one year when he could not find lettuce. (See sources in my note 18.) No one suggests that this might be horseradish. Darmestater and Blondheim identify it with tusselage, Löw with *Sonchus oleraceus*-sow thistle (*J.Q.R.* 21 [1931] p. 328), a member of the Composite family; others suggest pepper and purslane (see footnotes to sources in my note 18). My feeling is that *פופרץ* refers to a peppery tasting plant, possibly garden cress or peppergrass (*Lepidium sativum* L.), a member of the same family as horseradish (Cruciferaeae). Pliny (op. cit. xix: 42) describes a plant whose common name is *piperitidis* on account of its peppery taste, and this plant seems to be *L. sativum*. In the time of Rashi, though, *piperitidis* or *פופרץ*, if a loose term for a pungent plant, may have referred to something other than peppergrass. However, it is interesting to note that no matter what *פופרץ* may be, after Rashi and his school it is never heard from again, and horseradish is not mentioned as a bitter herb for approximately two hundred years. What remains unanswered is how horseradish attained its place of prominence on the list of acceptable bitter herbs. Given the conservatism of the halakhic process, the sudden introduction of a new species to fulfill so important a requirement as the eating of *maror* is

After R. Alexander Suslin, the use of horseradish is taken for granted. R. Jacob Moellin (c. 1360-1427) mentions *meeretich* and states that R. Suslin identifies it with *חמכא*, although this is not evident from R. Suslin's writings themselves.⁵⁷ But R. Jacob then continues onto another problem which also is symptomatic of the migrations of the Jews into colder climates.

II

The Root of the Problem of the Problem of the Root

R. Moses of Coucy is the first to mention, in the name of R. Tam (c.1100-1171), that one may not use a plant root for *maror*, since the mishnah states *ויוצאין בקלה שלהן* and *קלה* is taken to mean the stem, exclusive of the root.⁵⁸ This restriction seems to have been well-accepted⁵⁹ and as long as horseradish was not used, and leafy vegetables such as lettuce were available, this ruling posed no problem. One had only to be careful to remove any part of the root that may still have been attached to the plant.⁶⁰ However, once horseradish appeared as one of the bit-

difficult to imagine. One possibility that comes to mind is that since it was legitimately used in the *haroset*, as previously mentioned, it was already present at the *seder* table and was available to fill the void when other species could not be obtained. However, there is no real support for this suggestion. The alternative, mentioned at the beginning of this note, is likewise difficult to imagine, especially considering the silence of two hundred years between Rashi's *פופרץ* and the *Haggahot Maimuniyyot's* *מרטיך*.

57. *She'elot u'Teshuvot Maharil* (Cremona, 1556) par. 58, pg. 18a states: ואגודה כתב דמירעטץ היינו חמכא דמתניחין.
- But see note 49.
58. *Sefer Mizvot Gedolot*, op. cit.
59. It is also attributed to R. Shimshon of Coucy (the 'Sar' of Coucy), the brother-in-law of R. Moses of Coucy (see note 37). It is mentioned, in the name of R. Tam, in most mss. of the *Haggahot Maimuniyyot*. This law appears to have originated with R. Tam and was unknown prior to him. Rashi used the *עיקר של פופרץ* which apparently was a root. See comment of Rashi, *Hullin* 59a, s.v. *עיקרא דמרירחא* and Tosafot to *Sukkah* 13a, s.v. *מרירחא*. See sources in my note 18.
60. See note 37.

ter herbs of the mishnah, R. Tam's prohibition became a serious problem.

In Germany, ground horseradish root was commonly used as a condiment, much as we still use it today.⁶¹ It is not unusual, then, that when the Jews began using horseradish for *maror* the initial reaction was to use the root. In addition, among the Jewish communities far to the east of Germany, it is questionable whether the leaves of horseradish were available by Passover, due to the cold weather and the lateness of the growing season. R. Moellin is the first to deal with the problem raised by R. Tam's prohibition and, in no uncertain terms, applies the principle of R. Tam to horseradish too, stating that its roots may not be used for *maror*.⁶²

R. Isaac Tyrnau, a contemporary of R. Moellin, writes that one may use lettuce and horseradish leaves or stems, but adds that roots should not be taken.⁶³ A gloss to this ruling states:

צריך עיון על הקריין ושמעתי שקרוי קלה
עד למטה מזנבו ושבולק קטנים יוצאין מהן.⁶⁴

61. John Gerard's *The Herbal or General History of Plants* (1633, repr. New York, 1975) pg. 242, under the description of horseradish, states, "Horse Radish stamped with a little vinegar put thereto is commonly used among the Germans for sauce to eat fish with, and such like meates, as we [the English] doe mustard."

62. See note 57. Also *Sefer Maharil* (Cremona, 1558) 21a, which states:
צריך לזהר ליקח הקלה של המעריטין או הירוק שלו ולא השורש כדדייק התם [ר' חס"י]
דאין יוצאין בשרשים.

In the *She'elot u'Teshuvot Maharil* (note 56) it is explicitly attributed to R. Tam.

63. *Minhagim* (Venice, 1591) 22a-b:

יקח לטי"ך או קריין הקלחין או עלין שלו ואם אין לו לטי"ך יקח ווערמט או איוה עשב
מר . . . יוצאין בקלחין . . . ולא בשרשים כלל.

This is the first time that the Slavic word for horseradish is used in rabbinic literature. Judging both from the gloss and the phrase *ואם אין לו* it seems plausible that *קריין* was added later. Otherwise it should read *לטי"ך יקח קריין*. Also see *Sefer Minhagim* of R. Abraham Klausner, ed. Disin (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 111 and the numerous glosses there.

64. For information on the authorship of the glosses, see H. Tchernowitz,

This redefinition of the term *קלה*, allowing the use of the main root of horseradish, has its origins in a problematic responsum of R. Jacob Weil, a student of R. Moellin. In one section he redefines the term *קלה*, without making reference to horseradish. Later on, however, while specifically discussing horseradish he declares that one should only take that part of the plant that is above ground; any parts below ground should not be taken since they fall under the category of "root" which R. Tam prohibits.⁶⁵

The same paradox is found in the *Leket Yosher* of R. Joseph b. Moses, student of R. Israel Isserlein (1390-1460). On the one hand he quotes R. Weil's redefinition of *קלה* for the expressed purpose of *לישב המנהג*, to justify the use of the horseradish root, which seems to have become a common custom.⁶⁶ Later, while describing the *sefer* of his teacher, R. Isserlein, he explains that the horseradish root does fall under the category of "root" and thereby under the prohibition of R. Tam.⁶⁷

This tension, felt already in the early fifteenth century in the writings of R. Weil, continues for the next two hundred years. On the one hand, the prevailing custom was to use the root; however, there remained opposition to its use due to the

Toledot ha-Posekim (New York, 1946) II, 260. I am assuming that the author of the gloss wrote after R. Weil.

65. *She'elot u'Teshuvot Maharil Weil* (Hanau, 1610) 67b:

כפ"ק דסוכה חניא אוזב ג' קלחים ובהן ג' גבעולי פרש"י קלחים שרשים מטעם זה גראה הוא
דכתב ר"ח ולא שרשים היינו השרשים הקטנים המהפצלים לכאן ולכאן אבל השורש הגדול
שבו עומד הירק הוי בכלל קלה.

In the next column he writes:

ואם יקח מירעטי"ך יקח מה שהוא למעלה מן הקרקע כגון העלין וסמך לו אבל לא יקח מה
שהוא למטה מן הקרקע דהוי שורש ור"ח כתב דוקא קלה ולא שרש.

66. *Sefer Leket Yosher*, ed. J. Freimann (Berlin, 1903, repr. Jerusalem 1964) pg. 83.

67. *Ibid.*, pg. 92.

. . . ואי ליכא חזרת כל המוקדם במשנה קודם כך כתוב הגאון ועולשים לא ידענא מאי היא
אבל תמכה פ' בהג' במיימוני שהוא מירעטי"ך שאנו קוראין בארצותינו קריין וכתב ר"ח שאין
אנו יוצאין בשרשים מדנקט במתניתין דיוצאין בעלין ובקלחין ושרשים לא הוזכר. לכך
זהירו רבותינו שלא יקח גוף הקריין אלא הקלחין והעלין שבראשו.

ruling of R. Tam. For the halakhic justification of the custom, R. Weil's redefinition was repeatedly referred to. At times, only parts of his comments were quoted, depending on whether the authority was justifying or opposing the use of the roots.

R. Isaiah Horowitz (1565?-1630) quotes the whole responsum of R. Weil but concludes that 'ראוי לנהוג' not to use the roots.⁶⁸ This phrase implies preferability of the leaves, while it recognizes the custom of using the root. R. Benjamin Solnik (1550-1640) and R. Joel Sirkes (1561-1640) both are more definitive in their rulings. R. Sirkes relays only the half of R. Weil's responsum that prohibits the use of the horseradish root.⁶⁹ R. Solnik, while quoting the permissive half of the responsum concludes with the restrictive opinion and adds that he himself would use only that portion of the plant that grew aboveground: the leaves and the thin uppermost section of the root that protrude above soil level.⁷⁰

In Germany, R. Joseph Hahn (1570-1637) stresses that if one must use horseradish, only the leaves should be used.⁷¹ As late as the second half of the seventeenth century there was still

68. *Shenei Luhot ha-Brit* (Wilhemsdorf, 1686) 119a.

וכן ראוי לנהוג בזה כי שמעתי אומרים בשם הגאון מהר"ר שכנא שהורה כן דכל מה שהוא חתח הקרקע נקרי שורש ולא נקרי קלה אלא מה שיוצא למעלה מהקרקע סמוך לעלין על כן כשיקח כזית מקריין יקח העלין עם הראש הקריין שהעלין נתחבו בו ע"כ.

It is interesting to note here, that the definition of קלה and שורש became even less anatomical and more utilitarian. No longer is there "root" or "stem" but rather "above ground" and "below ground". See also note 70.

69. See his commentary, *Beit Hadash to Tur Orah Hayyim* 483, s.v. אלו ירקון.

70. *Sefer Masa'at Binyamin* (Cracow, 1633). At the end of his responsa there are a few pages of his commentary to the *Shulhan Arukh*. In his commentary to *Orah Hayyim*, n. 3, he writes:

ואני שמעתי בשם מהר"ש השני שקבל מרבנותיו דכל מה שעומד בקרקע קרי שרשים ומה שלמעלה מן הקרקע קרי קלה וכן אני נוהג ליקח העלין וקצת מן הקריין עצמו כעובי אצבע ששיעור זה הוא דאי למעלה מן הקרקע.

The מהר"ש השני is R. Solomon b. Judah Leibush of Lublin (d. 1591), 'second' to R. Solomon Luria. For the little that is known about him see the article by I. Lewin in *Ha-Darom* 22 (1966) pgs. 5-18.

71. See second half of note 74.

opposition by R. Samuel b. Joseph, the author of the *Olat Tamid*, to the use of the below-ground portion of horseradish.⁷² R. Elijah Spira (1660-1712) sums up both positions and concludes that *ובשעת הדחק יש להקל* to permit the roots,⁷³ again implying the uneasiness on the part of the authorities in sanctioning the use of the root.

However, in spite of the attempt by rabbinical leaders to discourage reliance on the root, the common practice continued. In the first half of the seventeenth century we hear of the custom, in Poland, of using horseradish leaves the first time that *maror* is called for at the *seder*, and the root only for *korekh*.⁷⁴ This custom became widespread and is described as

72. *Sefer Olat Tamid* (Amsterdam, 1681) 473/4:

וכתב מהר"י ווייל ואם יקח מערטו"ך יקח מה שהוא למעלה מן הקרקע כגון העלים ולא מה שהוא למטה מן הקרקע דה"ל שורש ואין יוצאים בשרשים ונ"ל דה"ל בקריין אין ליקח למרור רק מה שהוא למעלה סמוך להידוק וכן ראיתי רבוחי נוהגין.

It can be seen that the author did not realize that *meeretich* was horseradish by his comment ונראה לי דהוא הדין בקריין. For an interesting description of the *Olat Tamid*, see Tchernowitz, III, pg. 164.

73. *Sefer Eliyyah Rabbah* (Sulzbach, 1757 repr. New York, n.d.) pg. 164b.

74. See the commentary of the *Taz-Magen David* to *Shulhan Arukh* 473/8 where he writes:

וראיתי הרבה אנשים שלוקחין בשעת אכילת מרור את הירק שלו ובשעת הכריכה נוטלין הקלה ואין לזה טעם וריח דיש ליקח הירק גם בשעת הכריכה כי יוכל לאכול בטוב כזית ממנו כי אינו מצער כל כך כמו הקלה שיש לו כח יותר.

A somewhat similar custom seems to have been prevalent in Frankfurt A.M. R. Hahn in *Yosef Omez* (Frankfurt A.M., 1723 repr. in Frankfurt, 1928, Jerusalem, 1965) writes that lettuce was used for מצות מרור and horseradish leaves for *korekh*. par. 746):

... ואחר כך המרור והחרוסת דהיינו לאטיין אם אפשר אם דמין יקרים ואחר כך המערערעטין שלוקחין אותו לכריכה.

However, in later paragraphs, when describing the rituals of *maror* and כורך in more detail he writes (par. 765): for *maror*:

אחר כך יקח כזית לאטיין אם יש לו ואם אין הלאטיין מצוי שלא יהיה לו כזית ממנו ישחיל שיהיה לו לפחות עלה אחד של לאטיין ויצרף אותו עם הירק שעל שורש מערערעטין ולא השרשים עצמן עד שיהיה ביחד כזית.

par. 769: for *korekh*:
אחר שאכל מרור יעשה הכריכה דהיינו שיקח כזית לאטיין או ירק שעל המערערעטין לאפוקי השרשים כדלעיל.

It would seem that if one had enough lettuce for both *maror* and

such by R. Abraham Gombiner⁷⁵ (1637-1683), R. Jacob Risher⁷⁶ (1660-1733) and R. Judah Ashkenazi⁷⁷ (first half of the eighteenth century). This practice undoubtedly sprouted from the tension over the acceptability of the horseradish root. There was no question regarding the permissibility of the horseradish leaves in this period. However, leaves were in short supply⁷⁸ and could not be stretched to fulfill the requirements of both *mizvat maror* and *korekh*. As a solution, the more preferable leaves were used when the blessing on *maror* was made and the halakhically less preferable roots were used for the *korekh*, considered secondary to the *mizvat maror*. Thus one could be certain of fulfilling the requirement of eating *maror* by using the leaves when the blessing was made.⁷⁹

By the eighteenth century there was no more discussion as to the acceptability of the horseradish root.⁸⁰ East European

korekh so much the better. If one had only horseradish leaves, they could be used for both. However, if one had some lettuce, but not enough for both *maror* and *korekh* then, it should be used for the מצות מרור.

75. See *Magen Avraham* to *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 473/5, where the phrase ונתפשט המנהג is used. R. Gombiner suggests that the halakhic preferability of the leaves is implied from the language of the mishnah ויצאין בקלה שלון which, he claims, implies reduced halakhic desirability of the root. See commentary of *Mahazit ha-Shekel*, ad loc.

76. *Hok Ya'akov*, ad loc., ונתפשט המנהג.

77. *Ba'er Hetev*, ad loc., ונתפשט המנהג. For information regarding the authorship of the *Ba'er Hetev* see Tchernowitz, III, pgs. 306-307.

78. See *Magen Avraham*, op. cit. He writes:

ומפני שאין העלין הרבה כל כך לכן נוטלין הקלה לכריכה מיהו אם רוצה לטול העלין לכריכה הרשות בידו, implying that the custom had become so routine that permission had to be given for the use of the leaves for *korekh*.

79. See note 74 for the same concept applied to lettuce and horseradish.

80. Still, not all are content with the use of horseradish. R. Zevi Ashkenazi (*She'elot u'Teshuvot Hakham Zevi* n. 119, Jerusalem, 1970) bemoans the use of horseradish:

ומפני שבארצות אשכנז ופולוגיא שהן קרות אינו מצוי בזמן הפסח לא הודגלו לקחתו לחובה מצות מרור או מפני שלא היו בקיאים כטוב פתרון שמות הירקות כאנשי ארצות הקרובות לארץ ישראל ונבל לא ידעו מה הוא ולקחו הקרי"ן שהוא חמכא לפ"ד מקצת חכמים ונפק מיניה חורבא כי הן רבים עתה עם הארץ שאינם אוכלין אפי' כחצי זית מחמת חורפיה ושהוא מדיק באכילתו חי ומבטלים מצות מרור ואף החרדים אל דבר ה' ואוכלין כזית מהקרי"ן

Jewry relied on it at Passover time, even in areas where leafy vegetables could be obtained. In 1822, R. Moses Sofer gave increased stature to horseradish when he wrote that it may even be preferable to lettuce due to the difficulty of cleaning the lettuce leaves of insects.⁸¹ The final irony may be that the modern Hebrew word for horseradish is *hazeret*, the first species of the mishnah which, according to all commentators, is lettuce!

The history of the use of horseradish for *maror* is one that parallels the travels and migrations of the Jewish people. As long as the Jews enjoyed the warm, calm climate of the Mediterranean region, lettuce and similar bitter, leafy vegetables were used at the Passover seder. Only as they moved northward and eastward was horseradish accepted as one of the permissible bitter herbs. As leafy vegetables became even less available, concomitant with the move into colder regions, a dependence on the horseradish root became inevitable.

The *maror* symbolizes not only the bitter bondage of Egypt, but also serves as a reminder of the bitter exile and the wanderings of the past and present. How fitting it is then, that the symbol of this bitterness, horseradish, is in itself a product of these selfsame wanderings. Even the celebration of the *seder* has been so affected by the Diaspora that commemorative symbols have become evidence and testimony.

מסתכנים בו כי באמת במקום שחזרה שהוא הלאטוגא סלאט שכיח כמו בערי אמשטרדם והמבורג ושאר ערי אשכנז אף שהוא עדינו קטן מאד קורא אני על הקרי"ן סכנה ואין בו מצוה.

81. *Sefer Hatam Sofer-Helek Orah Hayyim* (Vienna, 1855 repr. New York, 1968) n. 132. He also mentions that the word חמכא is an acrostic for ל-א-ל, thereby raising its status.

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