

## A PEWTER PASSOVER SEDER PLATE

The previous seller secured two academic views concerning the purpose of the plate, its likely origins and the meaning of the words, letters, and symbols shown. This article repeats those views as understood by this writer, and as provided by or through Kenneth Barkin (USA)

The plate measures close on 15" (38 cms) in diameter and weighs about a sturdy 1972 grams (nearly 2 kilos – 4lbs 6ozs). It has a single reeded rim. The work is done in a fine and confident wriggleworked technique with some cross hatching or fine lined design work to the enclosed areas of the letters. There are no marks to the back. The depth as a difference of rim to the centre of the well is about 3cms. There is no damage other than a very small nick or two to the rim and some scratches or small nicks in a short area of the back of the rim causing no problems to a strong and well made piece.

The rim of the plate is a recitation of the 'order of events' from a Passover Seder (a ritual meal). It is a standard litany except some phrases are abbreviated (two letters instead of two full words) and also some extra characters, not whole words, thrown in.

So it is a 'Passover Seder Plate'.

Is the figure to the right of the above centre diamond shape, a dancer or human figure holding a sheet or whatever in her hands?

It is likely a German Jewish Plate from Silesia a mixed area of Poles, Germans and Jews. Silesia was a relatively poor region which might explain the lack of decoration to the well. It was part of the Prussian Empire on the Austrian Polish borders.

A Matzah plate is to use at the Seder

In the centre are perhaps two letters. One letter is a Shin or Sin with what might be writing or a design inside it which is not inside the second letter which might be a Kof. Were it not so big it might be a signature?

The writing on the rim starts at 6.30 and moves counter clockwise around the plate.

Then you have the order of the Seder as it is recited at the beginning of the Seder.

LP might be for L-pesach or "For Passover" Set apart by the more floral border.

Kadesh Urhatz Karpas...then two letters each set apart by the little florets.

A Kof and a PE (at 3 O'clock) with unknown purpose or meaning.

Then the words resume Yahatz Magid Rahtzah (12 O'clock)

The the same letter three times – which stands for the next three parts of the Seder

M(otzi) M(atzah) M(aror) followed by a word in a 'cloud like' circle that looks like Basar (this is not part of the Seder) and would mean 'flesh' in Hebrew.

The rest is in abbreviated form, simply first letters –

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SH(ulhan) O(rech) TZ(afun) B(arech) H(allel) N(irtzah) and that returns us to the LP.

Usually Passover plates have lines in the well creating eight different sections – perhaps the buyer could not afford the extra work.

what age then? – well the plate to the writer handles and feels of good and aged quality and the rim work is fine – if the base work is cruder (later? –earlier? - opinions welcomed?). An authority on pewter with knowledge of these, who has not handled this plate suggests 1780 – 1820 with the view that the better the quality the earlier in the 1700s is more likely.

“Not having seen the plate, I hesitate to guess when it was made. One has to look at the quality of the metal, since the standards declined sharply in nineteenth century Germany. If I hazarded a guess it would be around 1780 to 1820. In Germany most Judaic originates from Frankfurt, Bavaria and Baden in the south, and Silesia. If the Seder dish is of high quality metal that would rule out Silesia which was quite poor. Frankfurt or a large city in Bavaria is where it may have been made.’



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