

The original seder plate according to Rabban Gamliel consisted of three symbols for the Passover Seder: Pesach, Matza and Maror.

Thereafter, for reasons that remain academic theories, the symbols multiplied for the Seder from the first “traditional” Seder plate – קערה and its well-known symbols:

Maror - מרור; Hazeret – הזרת; Charoset - חרוסת; Karpas - כרפס; Z'roa - זרוע; Beitzah - ביצה.

Over the years, and mostly in contemporary times, we have added additional interpretations to those symbols and added additional symbols to the plate, near the plate, on a second plate and on the table. These have been collected over the years – thanks to all!!

Please consider the following guide questions, review the list of symbols that many are or have added to their Passover Plate, Plates or on the table and then match those symbols with their stated explanations. Discuss which of these interpretations are meaningful to your Seder participants and debate how you could or would use these symbols to expand the story and meaning of the Exodus.

1. Should the traditional Passover Seder and its symbols be interpreted more particularly – meaning a focus on the liberation and the Passover for the Jewish People - or more universalistic, meaning liberation for all humanity, every individual people, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, venue, nation, culture or every time period in human history?
2. What is the traditional meaning and story behind each of the following symbols – some of which you may recognize or not?
3. What are some of the traditional substitutes for the traditional seder plate symbols and why have they been selected?
4. What are some of the most familiar new symbols added to, around, on a second Seder plate and even just on the Seder table for the Seder?
5. What is/are an additional meaning(s) and interpretation(s) do you find in each of the following symbols which are being put out for the Seder?
6. Are these new symbols particularistic-Jewish values or universal-human values?
7. What new symbol(s) would you add to the Passover plate, the Seder table and the Haggadah teaching? Is/are it/they particularistic or universalistic?
8. What are the causes, organizations, agencies which encourage the exodus from oppression and persecution that exists today in the world and our society?

How to “play” this game:

1. Distribute and consider for each of the proposed “symbols” in the first list possible meanings and interpretations, whether particularistic or universalistic. Note that these are not in order of the Seder but alphabetical – making it harder.
2. If you wish to make it easier re-sort the symbols list in the order of the Seder.
3. Distribute next the “answers” – which are also in alphabetical order and not in either Seder or in matching parallel order to the answers in either #1 or #2.
4. Compose your final list of symbols and one or more meanings/interpretations and indicate whether they are particularistic or universalistic Jewish or humanity’s values.

5. List what you feel will be meaningful for your Seder, First and/or Second night Seder.
6. How do you “triage” so many values and a common-sense Seder discussion length within the time of the Seder?
7. Create your own original interpretations of these symbols and add your own symbols and meaning to this list. Above all, enjoy the Seder and those who celebrate with you.
8. Keep track of which items are inappropriate or are not part of really the Passover story, and why that is your conclusion(s).
9. Have we become so “creative” that we have “lost” the original purpose of Seder symbols?
10. Which of these symbols and which of these causes might have been part of the Seder of Rabban Gamliel who, in a sense, began this discussion of Passover through symbols?

**SYMBOLS**

Apple  
Arugula  
Artichoke [raw or prepared]  
Asparagus  
Bag of rice  
Banana.  
Bananas  
Band-Aids  
Beet-tops  
Bell pepper  
Brick  
Brick from  
Broccoli  
Building picture  
Carrots  
Cell phone  
Celery  
Celeriac  
Cherimoya  
Chicory  
Child's toy  
Corkscrew  
Dandelion  
Empty picture frame  
Empty seat  
Fair Trade chocolate or cocoa beans  
Food Desert Seder Plate"  
Football  
Fourth matzah  
Glass of water  
Grapes  
History  
History book  
JWW's #SecondSederPlate, [[jww.org/SecondSederPlate](http://jww.org/SecondSederPlate)]  
Kitchen matches  
Lettuce  
Lock and Key  
Mango and/or Papaya  
Milk carton unopened  
Olive(s) / olive branch  
Onion

Orange / Tangerine  
Oyster [clearly in sealed container]  
Pine cone  
Pineapple  
Plantain  
Potato  
Potato chip  
Potato peelings or beets  
Prickly lettuce  
Radishes  
Raw horseradish  
Roasted potato or a boiled beet, in place of a shank bone,  
Romaine lettuce leave covering the table  
Rotten piece of lettuce  
Sabra  
Salted cashews  
Scallion  
Scallions – Beet tops  
Slice of Bread  
Small red potatoes  
Strawberries  
Sugar cane  
Sweet clover  
Tambourine  
Flower or the Seed  
Tomato  
Tzedakah Box  
Unboiled egg  
Unlit candle  
Yam

**SUGGESTED MEANINGS/INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ADDITIONAL SYMBOLS FOR PASSOVER**

NOTE:

1. "Symbol interpretations" / applications may be used more than once for a symbol or symbols.
2. "Symbol interpretations" / applications listed here may not be the only answer – these are suggested ones.
3. Some "Symbol interpretations" / applications are humorous and not intended to be serious choices – improve on them – either with a humorous alternative or a serious meaning.
4. Don't forget the possibilities of adding your own symbols to the list and your creative alternative "meanings" for the symbols which are listed.

ENJOY YOUR SEDER



Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner

Acceptance of the interracial and interfaith; only what's in one's heart that is important.

Alongside the parsley

Ally ourselves with those who are behind bars, with those who are labelled as felons in the community, and with the parents, children, and other family members of those who are locked up and locked out

Exodus to lead to land of milk and honey

Aylan and Galip's father Abdullah reminisced that his precious boys both loved bananas

Too many innocent people wounded during Syria's civil war lack life-saving medical aid because large humanitarian organizations cannot enter areas being actively bombed. JWW's #SecondSederPlate, [[jww.org/SecondSederPlate](http://jww.org/SecondSederPlate)]

Banished the original arrangement altogether, replacing it with items symbolizing the lack of access to fresh, healthy food in many low-income neighborhoods

Before lighting candles and donate to organization or cause linked to liberation

Birth of James Thomas "Cool Papa" Bell, who had the best nickname in the history of baseball

Building without safety standards for reasons of greed, callous disregard for human lives

China's suppression of Tibet and the Dalai Lama

Color orange reminds us of an orange which symbolizes that a woman, too, can lead a seder

Demonstrates vegetarian compassion for animals

Elijah calling in

Ethiopian immigrants unable to eat regular meals on arriving in Israel

Exclusion of women and homosexuals from parts of the Jewish community [**bag it**]

Expresses our admiration for Mayor Michael Bloomberg

Expresses solidarity with professional athletes struggling with addiction problems

For peace in the Middle East

Focus on forced child/adult labor in those industries

Fresh water is in short supply in the refugee settlements, immigrant housing

Gluten-free or reduced matzah

Grape juice

Helps us understand how some of our family members can be related to us.

High-fat potato chips are cheaper and easier to find than fresh potatoes

Holocaust – HaShoah reminder

Honor the soldiers protecting Israel

Honors the role of women and/or gays and lesbians in Jewish life

Innovation by a Union soldier who was unable, during a battle, to provide charoset

Kurdish Jews have a Passover custom of striking one another with scallions to symbolize whips

Love of grapes

Mentioned in BT 114b, and the red color reminds red blood of Paschal lamb

Miriam and the Israelite women

Nearly 500 African migrant workers and/or African refugees joined Israeli supporters at a "refugee seder"

Often incites debate about whether the Exodus is the literal history of the Jewish

"On the food desert seder plate no egg, one of the luxuries lacking in these neighborhoods."

One way to encourage participation in the seder is to ask each guest to bring one item that, for him or her, represents liberation. Participants might bring family heirlooms that remind them of their family's immigration story, newspaper stories about current liberation struggles, or other symbolic objects. Each guest should place this item near the seder plate and, at an appropriate time in the seder, explain its significance.

Operation Magic Carpet, 1949-1950; Operation On Wings of Eagles (Hebrew: כנפי נשרים, Kanfei Nesharim)

Operation Joshua/ Operation Sheba 1985

Operation Moses 1984

Operation Solomon 1991

Operation Yachin 1961, 1964

Oppression of citizens and in Cuba in particular

Suggestion to remember the Deepwater Horizon and similar ecological disasters and need for greater safety standards for workers and environment

Plate of scallions reminiscent of the onions that sustained the Israelites in Egypt (Numbers 11:5)

Refers to the angel of the Lord passing over the Jewish homes

Rotten piece of lettuce illustrates inner-city grocery stores often carry only spoiled produce

Salted cashews kept the men and women in military serving in a desert climate hydrated

Sign of welcome and prosperity

Since the egg represents spring and new life, a flower or seed is often substituted by vegans

Society to Prevent Urinary Tract Infections

Spiky pod is meant to represent prisons, inmates inside are valuable but unseen, easily forgotten

Substitute for Karpas

Substitute for Beitzah=Roasted Egg

Substitute for Zeraa=Roasted Shankbone

Substitute for Hazeret=Romaine

Substitute for Wine

Symbol for interfaith families

Symbol of hospitality and/or welcome

Symbol of solidarity with Ethiopians

Symbolizes the fruitfulness that these previously marginalized communities bring to Jewish life

Syrian refugees who washed up dead on the shores of refuge

Table in picture of Yemenite Seder was very simple and was covered with romaine lettuce and symbolic foods of seder plate

To signal hope for eventual peace between Israelis and Palestinians

Vegan, the traditional egg needs to leave the Seder plate as well. You can use a purely

Vegetarians who don't want meat on their tables

Whips of the Egyptian task-masters

Work and effort required to release the joy of life



**PROPOSED INTERPRETATIONS-MEANINGS FOR NEW PASSOVER TABLE SYMBOLS**

Apple	for those who “love” NYC or admire Mayor Blumberg
Arugula	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Artichoke [raw or prepared]	Acceptance of the interracial and interfaith; only what's in one's heart that is important.
Asparagus	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Bag of rice	Symbol of kitniyot and Sephardi traditions
Bananas	Aylan and Galip’s father Abdullah reminisced that his precious boys both loved bananas, Syrian immigrants; Immigrants and refugees
Band-Aids	Too many innocent people wounded during Syria’s civil war lack life-saving medical aid because large humanitarian organizations cannot enter areas being actively bombed. JWW’s #SecondSederPlate, <a href="http://jww.org/SecondSederPlate">[jww.org/SecondSederPlate]</a>
Beet-tops	for Karpas and/or Hazeret; Demonstrates vegetarian compassion for animals
Bell pepper	for Karpas and/or Hazeret; Birth of James Thomas “Cool Papa” Bell, who had the best nickname in the history of baseball
Brick	Bricks made in Goshen by slaves
Broccoli	for Karpas and/or Hazeret; helps us understand how some of our family members can be related to us as broccoli is part of the cabbage family
Building picture	Building without safety standards for reasons of greed, callous disregard for human lives

Carrots	Color orange reminds us of an orange which symbolizes that a woman, too, can lead a seder; for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Cell phone	forced labor from children and/or adults
Celery	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Celeriac	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Cherimoya	Personal liberation from civil unrest and revolution
Chicory	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Child's toy	Children as refugees who have no opportunity to Play or for adequate nutrition, housing and medical care and to sustain a family
Corkscrew	effort to "liberate" joy – from a bottle
Dandelion	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Empty picture frame	symbolizes China's suppression of Tibet, including its ban on pictures the Dalai Lama
Empty seat	the missing 5 <sup>th</sup> child; Who is missing from your Seder; Hospitality for immigrants and refugees
Fair Trade chocolate / cocoa beans	Forced labor from children and/or adults; JWW's #SecondSederPlate, [ <a href="http://jww.org/SecondSederPlate">jww.org/SecondSederPlate</a> ]
Flower	Vegetarian in place of meat; Since the egg represents spring and new life, a flower or seed is often substituted by vegans
Food Desert Seder Plate"	JWW's #SecondSederPlate, [ <a href="http://jww.org/SecondSederPlate">jww.org/SecondSederPlate</a> ] A plate with six new symbols that highlight the dire plight of millions of refugees across the globe today
Football	"Passing" refers to the angel of the Lord passing over the Jewish homes

Fourth / Additional matzah	Used to represent Jews still needing liberation, Originally for Soviet Jewry, then for Ethiopian Jews; Gluten-free or reduced matzah
Glass of water	Fresh water is in short supply in the refugee settlements, in immigrant housing
Grapes	Juice for those who cannot drink wine
History book	history book often incites debate about whether the Exodus is the literal history of the Jewish people or a mythical story
Honey	Exodus to lead to land of milk and honey
JWW's #SecondSederPlate,	Banished the original arrangement altogether, replacing it with items symbolizing the lack of access to fresh, healthy food in many low-income neighborhood
Kitchen matches	Fire used to destroy villages in Myanmar; Adequate supplies of fuel and energy for immigrants and refugees world-wide
Lettuce	for Karpas and/or Hazeret; Table in picture of Yemenite Seder was very simple and was covered with romaine lettuce and symbolic foods of seder plate; Operation Magic Carpet, 1949-1950; Operation On Wings of Eagles (Hebrew: כנפי נשרים, Kanfei Nesharim)
Lock and Key	ally ourselves with those who are behind bars, with those who are labelled as felons in the community, and with the parents, children, and other family members of those who are locked up and locked out
Mango and/or Papaya	Oppression of citizens and in Cuba in particular

5778 New and Alternative Passover Plate and Table Symbols Activity

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Milk carton unopened	Exodus to lead to land of milk and honey
Olive(s) / olive branch	Honor the soldiers protecting Israel; for peace in the Middle East; To signal hope for eventual peace between Israelis and Palestinians; Peace throughout the world between antagonists
Onion	Remind us of what slaves ate in Egypt and some dreamed of returning to in Egypt
Orange / Tangerine	orange symbolizes the fruitfulness that these previously marginalized communities bring to Jewish life.
Oyster [in container]	Suggestion to remember the Deepwater Horizon and similar ecological disasters and need for greater safety standards for workers and environment
Parsley	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Pine cone	Spiky pod is meant to represent prisons, inmates inside are valuable but unseen, easily forgotten
Pineapple	Symbol of hospitality
Plantain	Suggestion to remember the Deepwater Horizon and similar ecological disasters and need for greater safety standards for workers and environment
Potato	for Karpas and/or Hazeret; Ethiopian immigrants unable to eat regular foods/ meals on arriving in Israel - Operation Joshua/ Operation Sheba 1985, Operation Moses 1984, Operation Solomon 1991; Operation Yachin 1961, 1964.
Potato chip	lack of access to fresh, healthy food in many low- income neighborhoods

5778 New and Alternative Passover Plate and Table Symbols Activity

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Potato peelings or beets	commemorate Jews who starved during the Holocaust / Shoah
Prickly lettuce	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Rice [in a bag]	Operation Magic Carpet, 1949-1950; Operation On Wings of Eagles (Hebrew: כנפי נשרים, Kanfei Nesharim)
Radishes	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Raw horseradish	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Roasted potato or a boiled beet,	in place of a shank bone for vegetarians; Ethiopian immigrants unable to eat regular foods/ meals on arriving in Israel; Mentioned in BT 114b, and the red color reminds red blood of Paschal lamb
Romaine lettuce leave covering the table	Yemenite custom for karpas/hazeret
Rotten piece of lettuce	lack of access to fresh, healthy food in many low-income neighborhoods
Sabra	Prickly on exterior and sweet within
Salted cashews	Salted cashews kept the men and women in military serving in a desert climate hydrated
Scallion	Whips of the Egyptian task-masters
Scallions – Beet tops	for Karpas and/or Hazeret;
Seed	Vegan, the traditional egg needs to leave the Seder plate as well; Since the egg represents spring and new life, a flower or seed is often substituted by vegans
Slice of Bread	Exclusion of women and homosexuals from parts of the Jewish community [ <b>bag it</b> ]

Small red potatoes	Ethiopian immigrants unable to eat regular foods/ meals on arriving in Israel
Strawberries	for Karpas and/or Hazeret; Expresses solidarity with professional athletes struggling with addiction problems
Sugar cane	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Sweet clover	for Karpas and/or Hazeret
Tambourine	Miriam and Israelite women
Tomato	Symbol of contemporary oppression and “slavery “of adults/ child labor; Everyone needs food to survive which is often Inadequate nutritionally or in quantity
Tzedakah Box	Before lighting candles and donate to organization or cause linked to liberation
Unboiled / Fresh egg	lack of access to fresh, healthy food in many low- income neighborhoods
Unlit candle	symbolizes China’s suppression of Tibet, including its ban on pictures the Dalai Lama; Before lighting candles and donate to organization or cause linked to liberation
Yam	Vegetarian substitute for Zeroa=Roasted Shankbone

One way to encourage participation in the seder is to ask each guest to bring one item that, for him or her, represents liberation. Participants might bring family heirlooms that remind them of their family’s immigration story, newspaper stories about current liberation struggles, or other symbolic objects. Each guest can then place this item near the seder plate and, at an appropriate time in the seder, explain its significance to them as an individual or to the Jewish People.