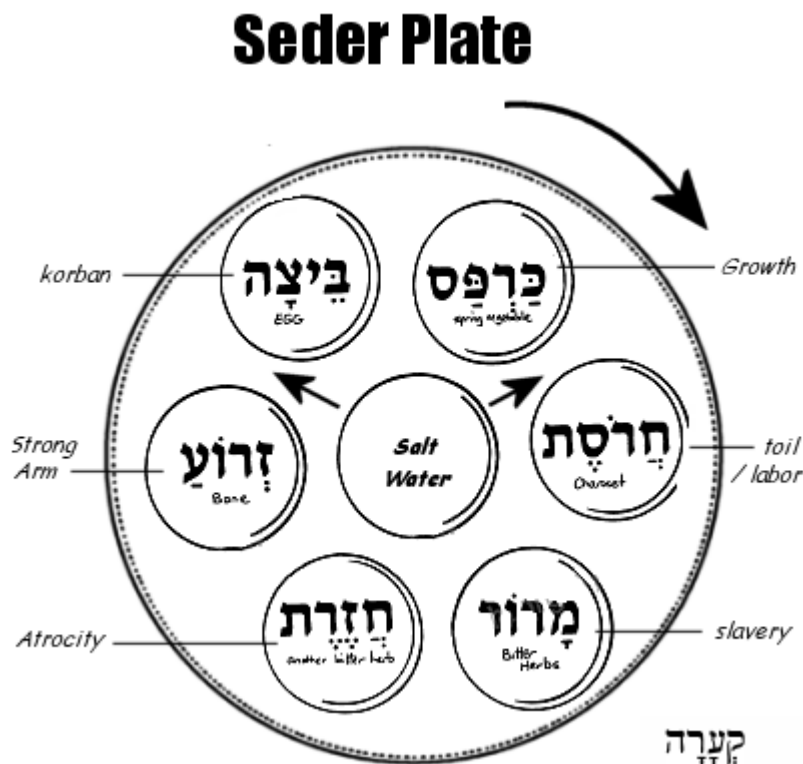




## The Traditional Passover Seder Plate

Although there are various opinions about how to arrange the ceremonial items put on the Passover Seder plate (i.e., *ke'arah*: קערה), it is helpful to keep in mind that it is intended to serve as a “visual aid” to help recount the story of the deliverance from Egypt. One arrangement might look like this:



In this arrangement, the plate functions as a sort of “clock” to create a visual narrative of the basic events of the Exodus:



1. **Karpas** (כרפס) - A vegetable (such as parsley) that is dipped into salt water near the beginning of the Passover Seder. The presence of karpas represents the growth and fertility of the Jewish people in Egypt (Exod. 1:7).



2. **Charoset** (חרוסת) - An apple, wine, and nut mixture that represents the mortar used by the Jewish slaves to build the storehouses of Egypt. Charoset symbolizes the toil and labor of the Jewish people in Egypt (Exod. 1:13-14).



3. **Maror** (מרור) - A bitter herb, such as horseradish, that symbolizes the bitterness and harshness of the slavery which the Jews endured (Exod. 1:13-14).



4. **Chazeret** (חזרת) - An inedible bitter herb (such as horseradish root) that symbolizes the atrocity of infanticide (i.e., Pharaoh's decree to murder the Jewish baby boys). This herb is inedible because it "cannot be swallowed" or accepted, and therefore represents the repudiation of assimilation. Note that both maror and chazeret are regarded as the "bitter herbs" (plural) mentioned in Numbers 9:11.



5. **Zero'a** (זרוע) - A roasted lamb (or goat) shank bone that symbolizes the korban Pesach (i.e., the sacrificed lamb whose blood was put upon the doorposts). Note that the usual word for "bone" is *etzem* (עצם) in Hebrew, but the sages refer to the lamb as *zero'a* - "arm" - as in the "outstretched arm" (*zero'a netuyah*) of the LORD. The "arm of the LORD" is evidenced in His mighty deliverance of the Jewish people given in Yeshua!



6. **Beitzah** (ביצה) - A roasted egg that recalls the korban chagigah, or the roasted lamb that was slaughtered at the Temple during the season of Passover.
7. **Salt Water Bowl** (מלח המים) - The bowl of salt water on the plate first recalls the sweat and tears of the Jewish slaves, as later recalls the splitting of the Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army. We use the salt water to dip the karpas, near the beginning of the seder and to dip the egg before the start of the seder meal.

### Ways to Tell the Story...

Regarding the retelling of the story of Passover the Torah commands, "You shall tell (i.e., *v'higadta*: וְהִגַּדְתָּ, from which the word *haggadah* [story] comes) your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt'" (Exod. 13:8). Since there are different ways "to tell" the story, the Passover Seder uses different methods to engage all of our senses. The Seder Plate appeals to our *eyes* to serve as a sort of "visual story" of the events of the deliverance. The various ritual actions (such as dipping the karpas, tasting the bitter herbs, reciting blessings, singing, and so on) appeals to our *physical experiences* at the table (taste, smell, motions). Finally, the verbal retelling of the story (beginning with the "four questions" - *Mah nishtana ha-laila ha-zeh...*) appeals to our *ears* to understand the message of our deliverance....

*Pesach Sameach!*