

INTERFAITH FAMILY

By Michael Hebb



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Karpas

Karpas Kavannah

Contributed by [18Doors](#)

Source: Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael, Five Interfaith Passover Readings You Can Add to Your Haggadah

Karpas (parsley that is dipped in salt water during the seder) kavannah (spiritual focus)--time for spring awakening, new directions--renewal and bursting forth of new ideas.

We take this time to honor others who travel with us from other faiths and cultural traditions. We acknowledge the fact that they bring a new perspective to our lives and a legacy of their own that enriches ours. We are grateful for the growth that we have experienced because they are in our lives.

As a plant bursts forth with new energy to bloom, so too we recognize that at this time of Jewish history we are blossoming in different ways. As the garden needs tending, so, too, do our relationships with spouses, in-laws and families of other traditions. Weeding out all that is not necessary and loving, we make room for fresh insight and respect. Welcome those who sit around this table for the first time or the twentieth, bringing new understanding to our discussion.

Karpas

The Artichoke on the Seder Plate

Contributed by [18Doors](#)

Source: Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael, *Five Interfaith Passover Readings You Can Add to Your Haggadah*

The seder plate holds the main symbols of a traditional Passover seder-- the shank bone, egg, karpas, charoset, and maror. The Kabbalists of the Middle Ages added hazeret, another kind of bitter lettuce. And in recent years feminists have added an orange on the seder plate to symbolize women's leadership roles and full empowerment in Jewish life.

The artichoke however is a new development. What is an artichoke? Surely a work of God's imagination! Many petals, with thistle and a heart. To me this has come to represent the Jewish people.

We are first of all, very diverse in our petals. We call people Jews who are everything from very traditional Orthodox Hassidim, to very liberal secular. We are Reform, Reconstructionist, Orthodox, traditional, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Renewal, and, of course, post-denominational. We are social justice activists and soldiers; we are Israelis and Jews of the Diaspora. We are young, old, single, married. Many are vegetarian, while others swear by Hebrew National. Our skin can be white as Scandinavian, dark black as Ethiopian, and we now welcome many Chinese and Latin American adoptees. Lately we add another category, that of interfaith.

Like the artichoke, which has thistles protecting its heart, the Jewish people have been thorny about this question of interfaith marriage. Let this artichoke on the seder plate tonight stand for the wisdom of God's creation in making the Jewish people a population able to absorb many elements and cultures throughout the centuries--yet still remain Jewish. Let the thistles protecting our hearts soften so that we may notice the petals around us.

Maror

Maror/Charoset

Contributed by [18Doors](#)

Source: [Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael, Five Interfaith Passover Readings You Can Add to Your Haggadah](#)

Maror (bitter herbs, such as horseradish)—the symbol of bitterness and slavery of the Israelites in Egypt. Today, in a Jewish community that is free, this bitterness takes on another layer of meaning. We acknowledge that there are many among us who are embittered by their feelings of resentment, discomfort, and fear. We know that there is just cause for some of these feelings of fear, for Jews were "other" for so many centuries and mistreated just because they were different.

This laden history has often contributed to some of our families' inability to accept the idea of intermarriage. We acknowledge that Jewish people have struggled and been enslaved in the past and we stretch to transform this defeated posture. We also know that sometimes our own enslavement or emotional bondage prevents us from being open to hearing each other in our marriage. Loyalties to families of origin need to be honored, unless they prevent us from creating true intimacy. Bitter places are stuck places, and we commit ourselves tonight to moving beyond our own positions to find new points of intersection and connection.

Tonight we dip our bitterness in the sweetness of charoset. Charoset, the sweet mixture of fruits and nuts, symbolizes the mortar of the bricks of the Israelites. It is also the mortar of commitment and interdependence that enabled the Jewish community to survive through those centuries of oppression. It is the building blocks of hope and tradition, which are sweet. We take our maror of fear, and by dipping it into the sweetness we create a new model that honors the fear and suffering yet holds out hope for the future.

By blending our maror and charoset, we acknowledge the blending of faiths and traditions that sit around this table here tonight. We know it is not always sweet and it is not always bitter, but that life is a mixture of both. Just as our taste buds are designed for sweet, salty, sour and bitter, so we taste the range of textures of our relationships. By our dipping tonight we bring together the bitter and the sweet for something new to emerge.

Koreich

Mixing the Bitter and the Sweet

Contributed by [Andrea Steinberger](#)

Source: Rabbi Andrea Steinberger

Korech: Mixing the Bitter and the Sweet

One of my favorite moments of the seder comes just before dinner is served. It is called Korech. It is also known as the Hillel sandwich. It is the moment when we eat maror (the bitter herbs) and the charoset (the sweet apple and nut mixture) on a piece of matzah. What a strange custom to eat something so bitter and something so sweet all in one bite. I can taste it now, just thinking about it, and the anticipation is almost too much to bear. I dread it, and I long for it all at the same time. Why do we do such a thing? We do it to tell our story.

The Jewish people tells our story through our observance of Jewish holidays throughout the year. The holidays of Passover, Chanukah and Purim remind us just how close the Jewish people has come to utter destruction and how we now celebrate our strength and our survival with great joy, remembering God's help and our persistence, and our own determination to survive.

We also tell the story throughout our lifetime of Jewish rituals. The breaking of a glass at a Jewish wedding reminds us that even in times of life's greatest joys we remember the sadness of the destruction of the Temple. When we build a home, some Jews leave a part unfinished to remember that even when building something new, we sense the times of tragedy in the Jewish people. And on Passover we mix the sweet charoset with the bitter maror, mixing bitter and sweet of slavery and freedom all in one bite.

Throughout each year and throughout our lifetimes, we challenge ourselves to remember that even in times of strength, it is better to sense our vulnerability, rather than bask in our success. We all have memories of times in which bitter and sweet were mixed in our lives, all in the same bite. Judaism says, sometimes life is like that. We can celebrate and mourn all at the same time. And somehow, everything will be ok. What is your korech moment?

Bareich

Opening the Door for Elijah

Contributed by [Haggadot](#)

Source: Original Illustration from Haggadot.com



Hallel

To Say Nothing But Thank You

Contributed by [TAMAR FOX](#)

Source: http://thesunmagazine.org/issues/401/to_say_nothing_but_thank_you

by JEANNE LOHMANN

All day I try to say nothing but thank you, breathe the syllables in and out with every step I take through the rooms of my house and outside into a profusion of shaggy-headed dandelions in the garden where the tulips' black stamens shake in their crimson cups.

I am saying thank you, yes, to this burgeoning spring and to the cold wind of its changes. Gratitude comes easy after a hot shower, when my loosened muscles work, when eyes and mind begin to clear and even unruly hair combs into place.

Dialogue with the invisible can go on every minute, and with surprising gaiety I am saying thank you as I remember who I am, a woman learning to praise something as small as dandelion petals floating on the steaming surface of this bowl of vegetable soup, my happy, savoring tongue.

