

# A Seder Plate for All

Passover is rich with symbols that remind us of our struggle with bondage and our journey toward freedom. While many LGBTQ+ Jews have successfully made their way out of the closet and are able to share their full selves with the world, there are many in our communities who are still “bound” and on their journeys to full authenticity, equality, and acceptance. In an effort to embrace our LGBTQ+ Jewish family and friends, we invite you to partake in this creative addition to the *Seder* ritual from our partners at JQ International.

This activity focuses on the addition of an LGBTQ+ *Seder* Plate alongside the traditional *Seder* plate, representing the intersectionality and duality of the Jewish traditions we’ve practiced since ancient days, as well as our evolution as a Jewish community working to fully embrace LGBTQ+ Jews. If so moved, you can assemble a LGBTQ+ *Seder* Plate and add the rituals and conversation starters in the guide below to your Passover *Seders* this year onward. Consider this a beautiful way to celebrate and increase awareness; foster greater diversity, equity, and inclusion; and express gratitude for what makes us feel free while supporting those who lack the opportunities to live their fullest lives.

*We are grateful to JQ International for contributing this activity.*



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# The LGBTQ+ Seder Plate

## Part I: Symbols & Stories



### Orange - תפוז

Placing an orange on the Seder plate is a tradition created by Dr. Susannah Heschel, symbolizing inclusion of gays, lesbians and others who are marginalized within the Jewish community. No longer just a solo addition to the traditional Seder plate, the orange is now joined by the coconut, sticks and stones, flowers, pickled vegetables, and fruit salad, each representing additional hardships and blessings.

### Sour Vegetables - חמוצים

Traditionally on Passover, all liquids which contain ingredients or flavors made from grain, alcohol, or vinegar (other than cider vinegar) are prohibited. Consequently, pickled foods are uncommon and undesirable for those observing the dietary guidelines of Passover. Equally undesirable in our world is the sour flavor of hatred, bigotry, anti-Semitism, and homophobia.

### Coconut - קוקוס

The coconut represents those who are still locked inside their shell, hiding from the world their inner beauty as an “out and proud” LGBTQ+ Jew. We notice that the shell is nearly impossible to crack with our bare hands and equally difficult for the beauty inside to escape on its own. This is a recognition of the struggle of “coming out.”

### Sticks & Stones - זרדים ואבנים

These sticks and stones have affected us and shaped our identities. Today, we remember the many crossroads, vistas, cracks, and divots along the way — some of which have had lasting effects on us and who we are today in the world.

### Fruit Salad - סלט פירות

In an ideal world, all people will be included as equal players, able to contribute their gifts and receive freely as respected participants in society. We seek a world that celebrates and works toward greater diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### Flowers - פרחים

The flowers on the LGBTQ+ Seder Plate represent the beauty within each of us on this path of life. We should stop and smell the flowers, see the beauty in each other, and recognize that each day is a gift.

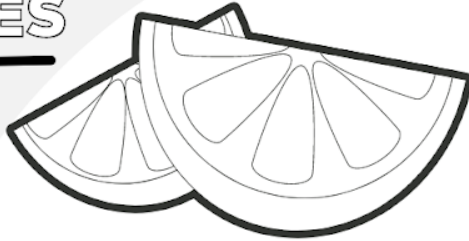
# The LGBTQ+ Seder Plate

## Part II: Coloring Your LGBTQ+ Seder Plate

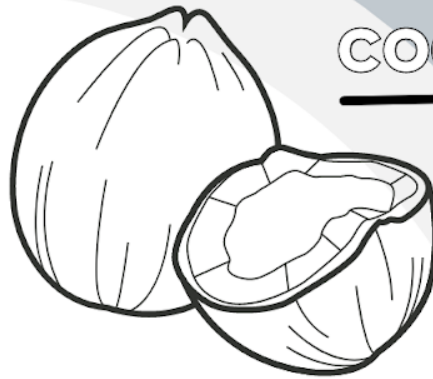
As you're coloring your *Seder* plate, think about the symbolism of each item. Refer to Part I to learn what the items on the LGBTQ+ Seder Plate stand for, and how you may incorporate the meanings into your life.



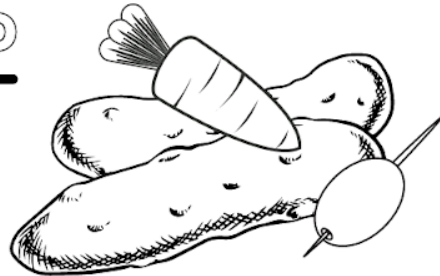
**ORANGES**



**COCONUT**



**FRUIT SALAD**



**SOUR VEGGIES**



**STICKS & STONES**



**FLOWERS**

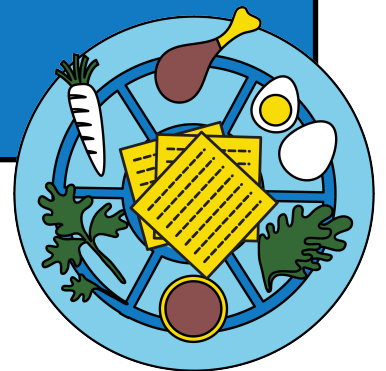


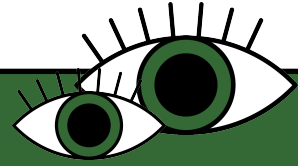
## The LGBTQ+ Seder Plate

### Part III: Integrating the LGBTQ+ Seder Plate into Your Seder

Add and integrate the LGBTQ+ Seder Plate as an equal participant on the table, recognizing that this second plate is full of symbolism equal to that of the shank bone, egg, haroseth, bitter herbs, greens, and parsley. The LGBTQ+ Seder Plate's symbolism represents lives, struggles, and progress in our community's efforts to celebrate diversity, fight for equity, and strive for full inclusion of LGBTQ+ community members.

Use Part I to explain the symbolism of each item on the second Seder plate. You can do this at any point of your choosing during the Seder; it also fits well immediately following the traditional blessings over the *matzah* and *maror* (bitter herb) and before the main meal. Feel free to add the following ritual blessings and explore the symbolism with family and friends by using the following prompts.





## HaCarah — הַכָּרָה

### The conscious recognition of those not completely seen

#### *To be fully seen*

Explore: Who do we feel is not fully seen by society? How do we raise their level of visibility? What parts of your identity are you grateful to be able to share with the world?

For both the orange and the coconut, we make a conscious decision to recognize those who have not fully been seen by everyone in our society.

## Fruit Salad — סַלַט פְּרוֹת



#### *Diversity, equity, and inclusion*

Explore: What does it mean to celebrate diversity? How do we ensure a seat at the table for everyone? What steps should we take to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion?

In recognition of our collective potential when we all work together, able to recognize each others' identities, we hold the fruit salad and inspect its components. Each piece of fruit is different from the others — and regardless of which fruit it is, the diversity of textures and flavors work together to make a collective entity that is greater than any single piece.

We take a piece of orange, some fruit salad, and a piece of coconut and recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'Olam, bo'ray p'ree ha'etz.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.



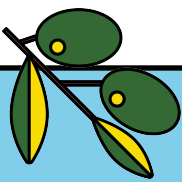
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## HaChemitz — הַחֶמִיץ

### Sour Foods

*Ending hatred, bigotry, and homophobia*

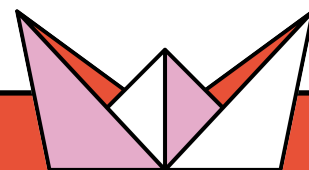
Explore: What are the causes of hatred and fear?

Sour is the flavor of hatred, bigotry, and homophobia. We take a piece of pickled vegetable and recite:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'Olam, bo'ray p'ree ha'adamah.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.



## HaDerekh — הַדֶּרֶךְ

### The Path

*The world around us*

Explore: What are some of the challenges on your path that have helped shape you as a person? What difficult parts of your past might you be grateful for today?

The path that brought us to who we are today is full of flowers that we can use our senses to enjoy. The flowers here on our Seder plate represent the beauty within each of us on this path of life, but we must recognize the sticks and stones which lay in our path and contributed to making us who we are today. These sticks and stones have affected us and shaped our identities. Today, we remember the many crossroads, vistas, cracks, and divots along the way.

We take the sticks, stones, and flowers and recite:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָ בְּדַבָּרוֹ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'Olam, she-ha-kol ni-h'yah bid-va-ro.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Ruler of the universe, by whose word everything comes to be.

## Closing Remarks

The LGBTQ+ community has made great strides in the last century to receive recognition, acceptance, and respect as equal human beings. Within the Jewish community, we've made great attempts to further inclusion efforts on spiritual and cultural fronts. We sit here today to celebrate, commemorate, and further commit ourselves to making all people welcome and respected here at this table and everywhere we can in our lives.



# *Beteyavon!* — בְּתַאבוֹן! Enjoy the Festival Meal!

The LGBTQ+ *Seder* Plate created and developed by Asher Gellis in 2004 can be found in JQ's 2007 fully integrated GLBT Passover Haggadah, a collaborative effort by JQ International and the Institute for Judaism & Sexual Orientation (IJSO) at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. The full Haggadah is available for free download at [www.jqinternational.org/resources](http://www.jqinternational.org/resources).

Whoever you are, whatever you need, we are here for you. The JQ Helpline provides support and resources for LGBTQ+ Jews, their families, and allies. Call or email the JQ Helpline today: 855-JQI-HLPS (855-574-4577) or [helpline@jqinternational.org](mailto:helpline@jqinternational.org), or visit us online at [www.jqinternational.org/helpline](http://www.jqinternational.org/helpline).



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