

The Four Cups of Whine

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The weeks before Pesach/Passover and people are *full* of complaints. The stress, the topsy-turviness of the kitchen, dining room, work areas. Shopping for all the Pesach stuff, including new clothes, making sure to get enough matzah and wine, and the right kinds of both. Where's the money to pay for all this going to come from?!

And "Whose Seder are we going to?" and "I haven't been invited to anyone's Seder yet" or being blood-tested at the hospital or diagnosed with lymphoma. *Gevalt! Oy vey!*

We see that our Kiddushing, our dipping, all our questions—on God, rabbis, fellow Jews, ourselves, our history—well, we NEED to drink for cups of wine, to stay sober, steady our nerves and our resolve for such a darn long exile. And the Four Cups of Whine:

1. Kiddush: Why do I have to be so holy? Who can be so holy?
2. Maggid (Telling the Story): You took us out of Egypt, but what have You done for us lately?
3. Birkat HaMazon (Grace after Meal): If I'm from Your Chosen People, how come we can't eat like this all year long?
4. Hallel: If the Mashiach and his Geulah (Exodus) are such a big deal, what's taking him so long to get here?!

But you know, despite all our wiseacre "questions," somewhere in all the mess of the pre-Pesach preparation there creep in a few thoughts of Egypt and exile, of the Geulah/Exodus and the most beautiful night of the year, Seder night. Somehow, out of the painful confusion and the race against time to be chametz-free and ready for Pesach, there *is* a Seder. Whatever your Seder looks like, even if the hostess serves bread (yes! because she knows not everyone likes matzah—I knew such a woman), still in all, the Seder has *seder*, order and

structure, because all the seeming randomness leads somewhere, to a happy ending.

The Seder's last stage/step, *Nirtzah*, says it all, the answer to every (sort of) question. It's not really a stage/step. It's either a pious wish and a prayer, or a statement and a throwing down of the gauntlet, or both: "We've done our part, best we can. Now do Your part."

L'shanah ha'baah b'Yerushalayim habenuyah! Next year in rebuilt Jerusalem—a rebuilt heart, a rebuilt people, a rebuilt Torah, a rebuilt world. Amen!