

4th Cup of Wine

By Rabbi Ezra Boyarsky

The four cups of wine which we are required to drink during the course of the Seder service represent the four expressions of liberation which the Almighty employed in His promise to free the Children of Israel from their Egyptian bondage.

These four contextually synonymous expressions are found in the following Pentateuchal verses: "Therefore say unto the Children of Israel, I am the Eternal and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you out of their service and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements: and I will take you to me for a people and I will be to you a God.....(Ex. 6:6, 7);

Upon close examination of the above, it becomes clear that only the first three terms deal directly with redemption while the fourth -- "I will take you etc." -- relates not to the Exodus but to the time when the Israelites were to accept the Decalogue at Mount Sinai and will have thereby merited the status of Am Segula -- a divinely chosen and select nation. Yet the Talmud regards even the fourth expression as bearing directly on the Exodus and hence it is mandatory on each celebrant to partake of four cups of wine. Now is this seeming incongruity reconciled?

The tyrannical and paranoiac Pharaoh operated with two pernicious methods designed to "solve the Jewish problem" in Egypt. First he exploited the Israelites' ever increasing labor force to the fullest possible potential by assigning them to insufferable and inhumane, back-breaking work, calculated for eventual physical extermination (the method emulated by the Nazis) and secondly by liquidating them through the subtle and "humane" process of assimilation (practiced presently in the Soviet Union).

The Exodus from Egypt therefore accomplished a double objective. It has brought to the Israelites physical redemption and spiritual freedom, with the latter having been ratified by their acceptance of the Torah. The

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fourth cup of wine commemorates the Exodus from spiritual serfdom and is a "sobering" reminder that physical integrity alone is inadequate for the survival of the Jewish people.

Recently, Will Maslow, former executive director of the American Jewish Congress has published an analytical brochure the findings of a thorough survey made on the Structure and Functioning of the American Jewish Community.

In the 20 years from 1941 - 1961 the rate of intermarriage occupied a narrow range of 5.9-6.7 percent; from 1961-1965 the intermarriage rate increased to 17.4 percent (more than doubled) and the years 1966-1972 this has again doubled to an alarming 31.7 percent.

As other data in this survey suggest, intermarriage is a natural and compatible bed-fellow with another negative aspect of contemporary American Jewry -- a loss of its religious character. Taken together they appear as a frightening spectre of a fast grinding, intractable assimilationary process.

Concurrently with this socio-religious disaffection that has descended upon American Jews has emerged the Civil Rights movement in which Jews have played a prominent role in redressing

the grievances of the various ethnic groups of which the American Jews themselves are a part.

The mind - boggling paradox of Jews taking front line positions behind the barricades and marches to fight for the rights of other ethnic groups to preserve their respective cultures while alienating themselves from their own is a flagrant contradiction that American Jews should seriously ponder.

A particularly fitting occasion for such reflection would be when we arrive at the point of the Seder service and drink the 4th cup of wine.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- As Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger arrived in Israel for his third round of talks, the Israeli Cabinet decided not to offer any new proposals to Egypt, at least for the time being.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- Israel President Ephraim Katzir left for Israel after attending synagogue services in New York.

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