

A Fifth Cup Of Wine At The Passover Seder

By Yitzchak Dinur

(WZPS) — The four cups of wine at the Passover seder symbolize the Bible's four terms of redemption referring to the Exodus from Egypt:

"And I will bring you out from under the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm...

and I will take you unto me for a people..."

A fifth term, "and I will bring you into the Land," prompted the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher, a distinguished scholar and supporter of the State of Israel, to suggest the addition of a fifth cup to the seder, accompanied by a prayer for the State of Israel. Yet, even among secular, nationalistic Jews, who have revised the text of the Haggadah, the fifth cup - and even mention of the State of Israel - is yet to become general practice.

The four mandatory glasses of wine at the Passover seder, unlike the four questions and four sons in the recitation of the Haggadah, are symbols rather than narrative elements. As such, they lend themselves to the suggestion that a further symbolic element be added to this ritual of the Festival of Freedom. The suggestion by the eminent, late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher is that an additional - fifth - cup of wine be added to the ceremony, accompanied by a prayer for the State of Israel.

The four glasses of wine not only mark the joyous nature of Passover, but are testimonial symbols for the four terms of redemption used in

the Bible (Exodus 6:6-7) when speaking of the Exodus from Egypt:

"And I will bring you out from under the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm...

and I will take you unto me for a people..."

These biblical promises are understood to refer both to the historical exodus from Egypt and to redemption for all later Jewish dispersions.

Rabbi Kasher, who died in 1983, was a distinguished figure at first associated with the anti-Zionist Gerer Rebbe but later a great supporter of the State of Israel. He produced two annotated Passover Haggadot, the "Eretz Israel Haggadah" (1950) and the "Haggadah Shlemah - (Complete Haggadah)" in 1955, containing all the commentaries ever written on the Haggadah. In these volumes he raised the idea of a fifth glass of wine at the Seder.

Appropriate Connection

The scholar based himself on a passage in Exodus 6:8, which states "and I will bring you into the Land." He fervently felt that this connected appropriately with the establishment of Israel and could well be added to the Passover Haggadah and ceremony, which already mention other deliverances accorded the Jewish People, even if they did not occur around Passover.

Of course, such a passage did not go unnoticed through centuries of Jewish Bible study, and Rabbi Kasher was easily able to support his

suggestion with references to recommendations of Jewish sages throughout the ages. He quoted the earliest rabbis, such as Rabbi Tarfon in Mishnaic times (towards the end of the first century), Sharira Gaon in Babylonian times, Rashi in the 11th century, Maimonides, Rabbi Loewe of Prague (the maker of the legendary Golem) in the 16th century and many others, all of whom were in favor of a fifth glass of wine to symbolize the future redemption.

Rabbi Kasher had moved closer to that part of Orthodoxy that was Zionist and participated in the establishment of Israel. Unlike the anti-Zionist Agudat Israel and Neturei Karta, who have no place for the State of Israel in their Judaism, Rabbi Kasher held that Israel's establishment was the beginning of the era of Messianic redemption, and this made it supremely worthy of being included in the Passover seder.

Special Prayer

Although many Jews today include special prayers for the State of Israel in their celebration of Passover, the idea of the fifth cup has yet to gain general acceptance. Haggadot of Kibbutzim whose text and format have been recast, still retain the four glasses of wine and their symbolism. The Haggadah of the Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim, for example, assigns a meaning to each glass of wine. The first glass is designated "a cup of deliverance to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt, from dispersion to redemption, from subservience in other kingdoms to freedom in our land, to life and deliverance." Even this does not mention the State of Israel as such.

Among such groups for whom Israel is the focus of existence, a fifth glass specifically connected with Israel would seem to be a natural feature and a welcome addition to the seder. And, as Rabbi Kasher did not neglect to mention in his essay on the topic, the fifth cup might also serve to further quench the thirst of those who have a taste for wine!

**There are times
when you need
a helping
hand.**

**We're there
when you
need us.**SM



**Valley Bank
of Nevada**
MEMBER FDIC

Depend on the strength and safety
of Nevada's largest state bank.

