

Cup of Elijah



Background: There was a debate in the Talmud as to how many cups of wine we should drink at the Seder. The four cups represent the four terms of redemption that we read in the Book of Exodus: "I will bring you out," "I will deliver you," "I will redeem you," and "I will take you to be my people." There is a fifth term of redemption, "I will bring you out." The rabbis decided we would drink four cups of wine, but have a fifth cup, one we do not drink, "Elijah's Cup."

Procedure: There is a custom to leave the Cup of Elijah empty until it is time to welcome Elijah to the Seder. Pass the cup around the table, having each participant add some wine from their own wine glass. The Cup of Elijah represents hope and redemption, something we must all work together to achieve. Open the door (generally, this privilege is awarded to a young child). Stand and recite the blessing in your Haggadah, or the following reading:

In the middle of our Seder table, we have an extra cup of wine. This is the cup for Eliyahu. There is a tale that Eliyahu, or Elijah, a great ancient prophet who challenged rulers to live more justly, visits every Seder to wish everyone a year of peace and freedom.

As we open the door for Elijah, we recognize that Passover is a night for openness. We open our doors to visitors, our minds to learning and personal growth, and our hearts to those less fortunate.