



Four Cups for Liberation



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Throughout the course of the Seder, we drink four cups of wine or grape juice, marking our progress through the night. According to one popular interpretation, these four cups allude to the story in which the Divine speaks to Moses and promises to redeem the Hebrew people from enslavement (Exodus 6:6-7). This Divine promise contains four verbs used to describe the act of liberation: וְהוֹצֵאתִי, *I will take you out*, וְהִצַּלְתִּי, *I will rescue you*, וְגִאֲלְתִּי, *I will redeem you*, and וְלָקַחְתִּי, *I will bring you*.

The liberatory process of the Exodus was both active and ongoing, requiring not one but four modes of action by the Divine. All the more so in our time, as we take responsibility for the work of liberation, we are reminded that this process requires ongoing action on multiple levels. Both oppression and liberation function in four modes: the Ideological, the Institutional, the Interpersonal, and the Internalized. These four modes are interwoven and reinforce one another; when we engage with all four modes, our work can be most powerful.

As we navigate through the four cups, we will use each one as a dual invitation: an opportunity to reflect on one way oppression shows up in the world as well as on one way we can bring about liberation.

Each reflection may be recited before or after the blessing over the wine or juice. Alternatively, the reflections may be recited when each cup is filled.



First Cup: Ideological

Ideological oppression happens due to systemic beliefs that some groups of people are superior or more deserving. For too long, certain traditional Jewish texts have been used to justify harm, exclusion, or erasure. While many Jewish communities no longer uphold these interpretations, the impact of generations of ideological oppression continues to reverberate through our communities, our political systems, and the social structures and dynamics that shape our daily experiences.

We meet ideological oppression with ideological affirmation. We believe, concretely and actively, that LGBTQ+ individuals embody the Divine, and deserve dignity, safety, love, and celebration. **We commit** to expressing this belief in our actions. This year, we will build towards a world that is not only free of anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry but that also actively celebrates and honors LGBTQ+ lives.



Second Cup: Institutional

Institutional oppression happens when systems, policies, or simply the “way things are done” have a disproportionate impact on specific groups of people, reinforcing inequality. Sometimes these systems are hard to detect because they thrive on the assumption that they are “simply the way things are.” Institutional oppression is a large part of why the LGBTQ+ community, especially LGBTQ+ People of Color or those who have other multiply-marginalized identities, experience severe disparities in access to housing, employment, medical care, communal resources, and so much more.

We meet institutional oppression with institutional change. **We commit** to examining the institutions we are a part of and asking ourselves, “Who is served by this way of doing things? Who is served less? Who is not served at all?”

More concretely, we will actively seek to identify and remove barriers to access for LGBTQ+ people, bringing an awareness of the many ways that assumptions about gender and sexual orientation are embedded in the structures of our institutions. Together, we will build institutions that embody justice, access, and full participation and leadership of LGBTQ+ people.



Third Cup: Interpersonal

Interpersonal oppression is oppression that shows up in interactions between people, whether those be instances of individual discrimination, mistreatment, or expressions of implicit bias. Interpersonal oppression does real harm to individuals and has far-reaching consequences for our communities and institutions.

We meet interpersonal oppression with allyship and self-advocacy. Whether or not we ourselves are LGBTQ+, we have the power to respond to, intervene in, and create cultures in which interpersonal respect and decency are the norm. **We commit** to learning and practicing concrete tools for intervention in the moment, as well as personally modeling and reinforcing cultures of respect and dignity for LGBTQ+ people.



Fourth Cup: Internalized

Internalized oppression happens when negative messages about a group of people are so dominant and constant that they become internalized. In a time in which negative stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people pervade politics, entertainment, and the media, we all encounter these messages on a daily basis. LGBTQ+ people may internalize these messages by feeling less-than, hyper vigilant, reinforcing or fleeing from stereotypes, and using mental and emotional energy to secure their own safety. Cisgender and straight people also may internalize these messages by subconsciously reinforcing stereotypes or negative beliefs about LGBTQ+ people.

We meet internalized oppression with love and liberation. **We commit** to a process of unlearning stereotypes and biases, building systems of accountability and mutual care, and celebrating our LGBTQ+ selves and our LGBTQ+ loved ones. We envision a world in which every LGBTQ+ person encounters positive messages about their identities, joyful role models, and communities of belonging.