

4 Cups of Wine

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Source:

Reader 1: Tonight we will drink four cups of wine and with each we will tell the story of a recent immigrant to the United States. The four cups have traditionally been linked to God's fourfold promise to redeem the Israelites from slavery. Tonight we also link the four cups to the four times that the Torah insists that our experience of having been "strangers in the land of Egypt" should guide our treatment of strangers among us for all time. Reader 2: As it is written, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt"; "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourself been strangers in the land of Egypt"; "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I the Lord am your God"; "You must love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." The First Cup This cup is dedicated to the 700,000 Soviet Jews who immigrated to the United States between 1971 and 2009 and to the people who eased their journeys. Tonight we share the story of one such immigrant, Marina Merlin, who came to Philadelphia from St. Petersburg in 1992. "We were Refusniks. We didn't have any relatives or know anybody here. Society Hill Synagogue resettled us. They found an apartment for us and furnished it with donated furniture. My kids were in a bunk bed from the rabbi. I came with my two very little children and my parents. My husband was a scientist and was told by the KGB that he could not leave. But synagogue members made calls, talked to the senator and he got out a year later. "My story is not different from other people. We were professionals. We had relatively good jobs. We didn't have extra money but we were doing ok. But I was scared for my children. I could see the hate in people, the anti-semitism. Once we were on a very packed bus. My mother-in-law Sarah was in the front, and I was in the back with my kids. I hesitated to call out her name because I didn't want anyone to recognize that we were Jews. "I worked many small jobs when I arrived in Philadelphia. Some of the bosses were so cheap and not very ethical. I came from a big city and I was educated, and the transition was still very hard. My American friends were from a very different world. They didn't teach me how to ride the bus; they never rode the bus. Imagine people who had well water and pit toilets, people who didn't need to track time like we do here. It is so different here. You have to learn so many basic things." We raise our cups in remembrance of our Jewish ancestors who have sought freedom for their families. Raise cup and recite: Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borei p'ri hagafen Praise to You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine INSERT PRAYER