

First Cup of Wine

Contributed by [Bruce Saran](#)

Source: Velveteen Rabbi



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The following sentence is a kabbalistic "kavanah" or intention, aimed at encouraging us to sanctify and drink our wine with the holy intention of connecting transcendence and immanence, God far above with God deep within.

הַנְּבִי מִנְּכַן וְיִמְזוּמֵן לְקִיּוֹם מִצּוֹת כּוֹס רֵאשׁוֹן הַמֵּאֲרָבֶּעַ כּוֹס וְתֵל שֵׁם יְחִוּד קִנּוּד שֶׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשִׁכְנִיתִיָּה

Hin'hi muchan u-m'zuman l'kayem mitzvah kos rishonah m'arbah cosot l'shem yichud kudsha brich hu u-schinteh.

I take upon myself the mitzvah (connective-commandment) of this first of four cups of wine, in the name of the unification of the Holy Blessed One with Shekhinah!

Tonight we drink four cups of wine. Why four? Some say the cups represent our matriarchs— Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah—whose virtue caused God to liberate us from slavery. Another interpretation is that the cups represent the Four Worlds: physicality, emotions, thought, and essence. Still a third interpretation is that the cups represent the four promises of liberation God makes in the Torah: I will bring you out, I will deliver you, I will redeem you, I will take you to be my people (Exodus 6:6-7.) The four promises, in turn, have been interpreted as four stages on the path of liberation: becoming aware of oppression, opposing oppression, imagining alternatives, and accepting responsibility to act. This first cup of wine reminds us of God's first declaration: "I will bring you out from the oppression..."