

IDENTITY

A Fifth Cup

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: Pesach: A Season of Justice

Some *Haggadot* include a “fifth” cup in the Seder as an opportunity for additional readings or prayers. This tradition dates back to the early rabbis and commentators, including Alfasi and Maimonides, who discussed this possible addition to the Seder.

A Fifth Cup enables us to call attention to a current social justice issue or recognize a recent victory with regards to a prior injustice. This fifth cup could be passed around the table and filled with coins to be donated to tzedakah. An additional reading with specific hopes or social action goals (like a renewed focus on the homeless or implementation of a new, long-term tzedakah project) for the coming months can be included at this point.

As wine can serve as a symbol of abundance and luxury, the fifth cup is a perfect opportunity for a discussion on privilege and poverty: Some Jews experience a high degree of privilege. Others are less privileged. A recent study points to 100,000 Jews living below the poverty line in New York City. What are the sources of our privilege? Has your family’s economic status changed over the last few generations? In what ways? What does it mean to experience the *Haggadah* from a place of privilege? From a place of poverty? All are invited to tell a short story of an ancestor who faced economic hardship, or came up against an economic system that did not acknowledge their humanity.