On the Seder night we drink four cups of wine (or grape juice). But why four cups? Seems a bit excessive, no?

When God first appears to Moshe at the burning, He explains that He will redeem the Jewish people. Here is what God told Moshe:

לך אמר לבני ישראל כי אני יהוה אמחים אתך מבית סבלת מצריםインא אמחים אתך ממצרים בית סבלת מצרים ויהיה כי אם כי אלוקים המוזיא אתך מבית עבדתם אלוהים לבראשו אתכם לבראשו אתכם ואתכם ימח ימח וישלח א棫 לארץ אצ >(נ לך כי ידעتم: ממצרים

Therefore, say to the children of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will save you from their labor, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I will take you to Me as a people, and I will be a God to you, and you will know that I am the Lord your God, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

God uses four different verbs to describe the redemption. Why? Rabbi Shlomo Luschnitz explains in his commentary Kli Yakar that redemption is not binary, it is a process. Redemption has several steps and each step along the way is purposeful and meaningful. Rabbi Luschnitz explains that for the Jewish people the steps were as follows: removing them from physical pain, saving them from slavery, redeeming them as converts able to connect, taking them as a nation.

At the seder we drink four cups of wine to celebrate the process of redemption. Freedom from oppression can come in an instant, but true redemption takes time and development.

As articulated by the Kli Yakar, each language corresponds to a different step in the process. The first two represent a freedom that removes a negative, while the final two words associated with redemption introduce a positive. The image to the side reflects the process of each of these terms.

What four words would you use to describe your redemption story?

Submit Your Answers
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