



YOUR JOURNEY TO WELLNESS – TOLD IN FOUR CUPS

In his commentary on the collection of Jewish law known as the Mishnah, the 12th century medieval commentator Rashi shares one possible origin for the practice of drinking the four cups of wine at the Seder:



These four cups correspond to the four descriptions of redemption stated during the exodus from Egypt: “I will free you,” “I will deliver you,” “I will redeem you,” and “I will take you out” (Shemot 6:6-7) in Parshat VaYera. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:1)

At first glance, this seems somewhat redundant. If we are commemorating one event--our escape from slavery in Egypt — and emphasizing our newfound freedom and appreciation for it, why not drink a single glass of wine (or alternative beverage) like any other holiday? Additionally, why not drink the four cups of wine at once rather than over the course of the Seder?

By identifying these four cups with different descriptions of redemption, Rashi may be suggesting the Jews’ journey to recovery and freedom did not happen in one awesome moment; rather, it was achieved in stages that took time and effort. For that reason, we spread the four cups — the four stages of redemption, as explained by 16th-century scholar Judah Loew ben Bezalel, also known as the Maharal of Prague — out over the course of the Seder.





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I SHALL FREE YOU

Even if we had remained slaves, but the burden had been removed, we would have raised a cup of gratitude to God.



I SHALL DELIVER YOU

We drink another cup, because God completely nullified our servitude.



I SHALL REDEEM YOU

Because God defeated our pursuers so they could no longer afflict us, we drink the third cup.



I SHALL BRING YOU OUT

We raise the fourth cup in honor of the redemption and freedom that come with the giving of the Torah – the Jew's introduction to Judaism – and the freedom that comes with the purpose and meaning our tradition provides.





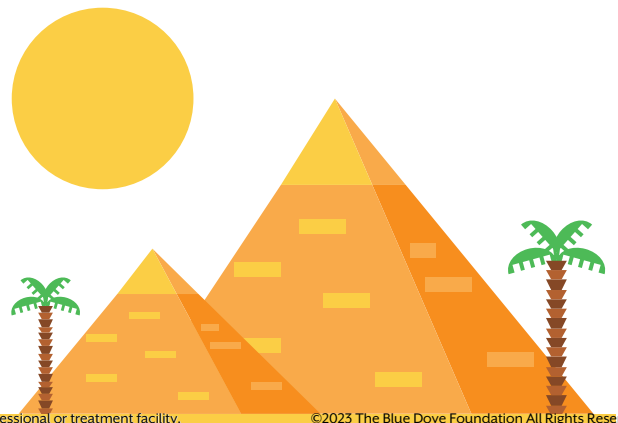
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This highlights the fact that freedom from the things that oppress us and hold us back takes time, and we should feel grateful for and celebrate each step in our journeys out of our personal “Egypt.”

Is there a personal Egypt in which you found yourself trapped in the past or are still dealing with? Can you identify and feel gratitude for the steps you took to escape that Egypt and the people who helped you do it — or the steps you have taken so far? Or, should you still find yourself in Egypt, what steps can you begin to take during the Seder to escape that Egypt? Each of the four cups should be poured for the person drinking it by someone else, showing us the steps we take toward freedom don’t have to be — nor should they be — made alone.

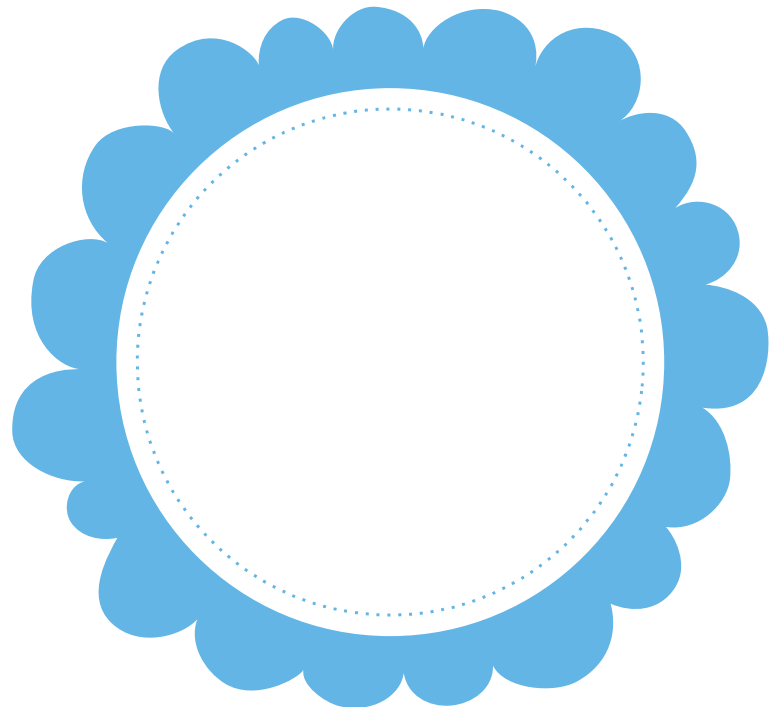
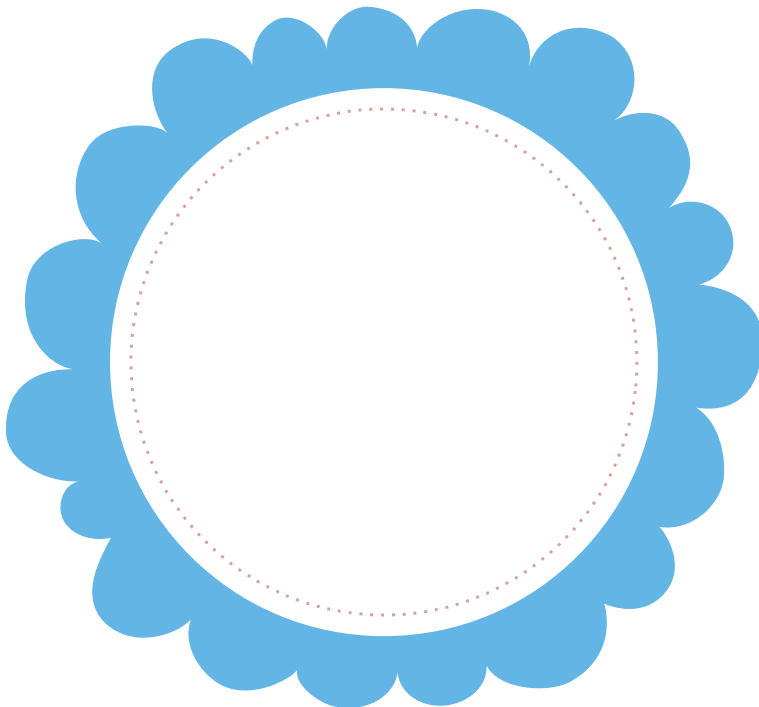
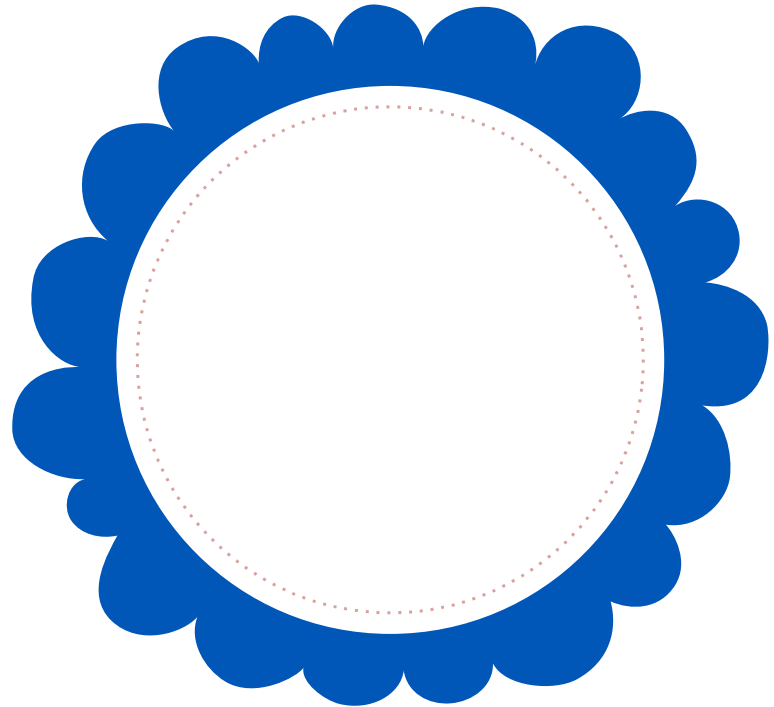
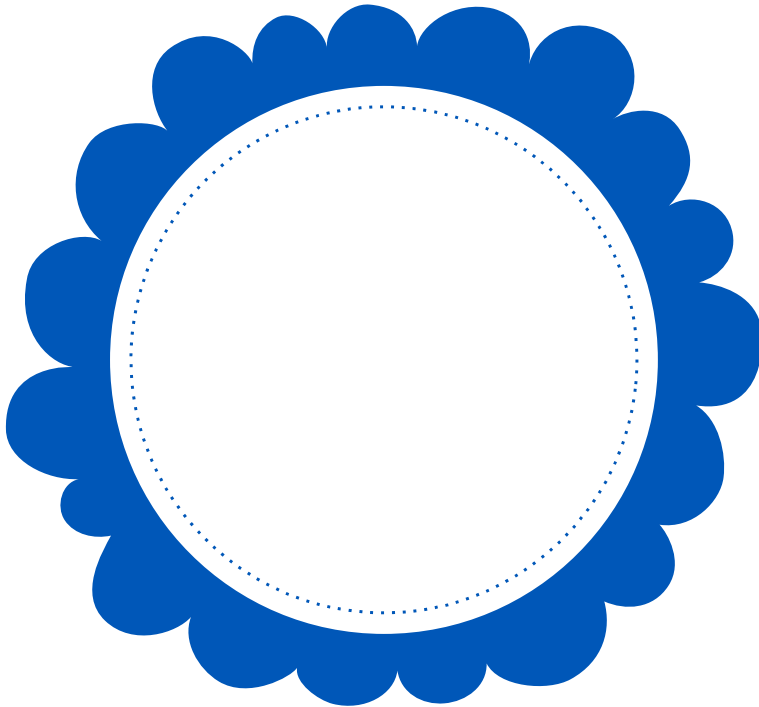
ACTIVITY

On the next page, try describing your personal Egypt. This can be a challenge you have faced, a mental or physical health condition you overcame or a difficult time in your life you didn’t think you’d make it through. Then, on the following page in the four “coasters” and glasses, describe the steps you took to escape that Egypt. Feel free to cut those coasters out and bring them with you to your Seder. Place your cup on the coasters and/or simply concentrate on the steps toward freedom you are grateful for or hope to take with each cup you drink. Consider sharing that gratitude with the table and asking the others who feel comfortable to share the steps in their journeys to freedom they are grateful they were able to perform.





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