

Spilling Wine

As each of the ten plagues is read during the Passover story, it is customary for each celebrant to take his or her little finger or knife, dip it into the third cup of wine, and place one drop on their plate. In addition, some place three more drops in representation of the “blood, fire, and pillars of smoke” that will precede the “great and the terrible day of the Lord.”¹ An additional three drops may also be placed on the plate representing the three mnemonics coined by Rabbi Judah, consisting of the first Hebrew letter of each of the ten plagues. These mnemonics were given to show the pattern of the three sets of three plagues, each of increasing intensity, which are climaxed by the death of the firstborn in the tenth plague.²

Thus, after all the plagues and their mnemonics are enumerated, there is a potential for sixteen drops of wine, although only the ten for the actual plagues are most common. Sometimes it is important to place the drops carefully because, as Dr. Victor Ludlow light-heartedly points out, how ever many drops you are short or have too many, that is how many of the plagues of the last days you will be afflicted with.

¹ Joel 2:30-31

² Klein, Mordell ed. *Passover* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973) 76