

Alcohol Addiction Recovery in Cleveland Supported by Jewish Community

By [Sean Woodard](#) - March 27, 2018



To help celebrate Passover, a Jewish synagogue in Cleveland is offering an alternative to drinking wine during the holiday as a way of assisting congregants in alcohol addiction recovery.

To provide a welcoming and safe environment to those who are on the road to sobriety, [Temple Israel Ner Tamid](#) in Mayfield Heights, a suburb of Cleveland, holds a sober Seder.

Peter Freimark, the head of the Social Action Committee at Temple Israel Ner Tamid, took it upon himself four years ago to organize a sober Seder after finding none in Cleveland.

Although Temple Israel Ner Tamid is the first Jewish synagogue in the Cleveland area to hold one, other states including California, Florida and Pennsylvania have been holding sober Seder celebrations.

Instead of wine, grape juice is provided to those who abstain from alcohol. Freimark explained that the literal commandment states 'fruit of the vine' which can be interpreted as grape juice or wine.

One Jewish principle that informed his decision to begin an alcohol-free Seder was that of *pikuach nefesh*, which states that saving a life takes precedence over Jewish laws in certain instances. If a person's life can be saved, he believes, it is a moral obligation to help them.

Traditionally, Seder signals the beginning of *Pesach*, or Passover, the seven-day holiday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which commemorates the Jewish people's freedom from slavery. The book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible chronicles how God rescued the Israelites from Egypt and led them to safety across the Red Sea.

Seder is held on the first or second evenings of Passover. Over the course of the service, Matzah (unleavened bread) and other ceremonial foods are served. The four cups are drunk following the opening prayer; during the retelling of the Passover story; while saying grace after meals; and following a recitation of Psalms 113-118.

"The theme of Passover is coming from slavery and then coming out of slavery," he said. "So, I think it resonates very well with people in recovery."

Although wine represents freedom during the feast, alcohol abuse has been a rising concern among the Jewish community.

According to a study published in the *Journal of Addiction*, approximately 40 percent of Jewish people surveyed knew of a person struggling with [alcohol or drug use](#), while almost 25 percent admitted to having a family history of drug or alcohol abuse.

A study by [Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health](#) suggested a genetic variation among Jewish individuals could be responsible for lower consumption rates of alcohol. However, later research revealed that additional environmental factors could affect a person's effectiveness in abstaining from alcohol.

Freimark mentioned that it is not uncommon... [\(Continue Reading\)](#)



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