

# What to Pray for

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

A well known custom at the Passover Seder instructs us to take a drop of wine from our cups for each of the plagues. We should not rejoice in the sufferings of others, even our enemies.

This idea recurs throughout Passover. In the Midrash, God rebukes the angels for singing as the sea closes in: "How can you sing while My creatures are drowning?" (Sanhedrin 39b) On the last six days we eliminate sections of the hallel prayer — the special psalms of praise on holidays — for we remember the anguish of the Egyptians. We abbreviate our praise in emulation of the angels who were gleeful in the midst of others' pain.

Undergirding this theology is the thought beautifully expressed by Bruria in the Talmud. In the tractate Brachot we are told of the renowned Rabbi Meir, who was consistently harassed by thugs in his neighborhood. He came home and in exasperation told his wife Bruria he would pray that they die. She corrected him: in Psalm 104:35, it reads "Let sin be uprooted from the earth and the wicked will be no more." You see, she pointed out, the Torah calls not for the death of sinners, but the end of sin.