

Cup of Wine For Elijah, A Cup of Water for Miriam

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Source: JQ International GLBT Haggadah

Fill the cups with wine; open door; all rise...

Elijah the Prophet

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

-Malachi 4:5

Elijah the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah from Gilead, May he come quickly, In our days, with the Messiah son of David.

Eh-lee-ya-hu ha-na-vee, Eh-lee-ya-hu ha-tish-bee, Eh-lee-ya-hu ha-gi-la-dee, Bim-hey-ra Ya-vo e-ley-nu Im-ma-shi-ach ben Da-vid.

Elijah the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah from Gilead, May he come quickly, In our days, with the Messiah son of David.

cup of wine for elijah

Let us open the door and invite Elijah to enter and join with us as we drink the wine of our freedom

Eliyahu Ha-Navi ("Elijah the Prophet" in English) was a biblical prophet who lived in the 9th century BCE during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel in the Kingdom of Israel. His prophetic fervor and fierce defense of God in the face of pagan influences in comparison with all other Israelite biblical prophets earned him the honor of being the 'guardian angel' of the Israelites and subsequently, the Jewish people. Because he was considered the strongest defender of God, he was said to be the forerunner of the Messiah. In the Book of Malachi, Malachi, who was the last of the Israelite prophets, states that Elijah would reappear just before the coming of the Messianic Age. (Malachi 3:1)

a cup of water for miriam

Tonight we have both our traditional cup filled with wine for Elijah the Prophet, and a second one filled with water, for Miriam the Prophetess (Exodus 15:20).

According to Rabbi Susan Schnur, Miriam is a central figure in the Passover drama. She stands guard loyally when her baby brother Moses is set floating on the Nile, and she arranges for a wet-nurse, Moses' own mother, who gets paid by Pharaoh's daughter for caretaking and living with her own child. Miriam leads the Israelites in singing and dancing (that most natural expression of religious joy) after they cross the Red Sea. And she dies by the kiss of God; the Angel of Death, we are told, has no power over her. After her death in the desert, the Israelites lose their most precious possession: water-and its then that Miriam's grieving brother strikes the rock.

The Midrash teaches us that the water, which disappeared at Miriam's death, came from a miraculous well. Created during twilight on the eve of the world's first Sabbath, God gave the well to Miriam because of her holiness, and it was intended to accompany the Israelites in the desert throughout the span of her life. "Miriam's Well," as it was called, not only quenched thirst; it also cured body and soul. Both Miriam and her well were spiritual oases in the desert bedrock sources of nurturance and healing

We raise our wine glasses and say collectively:

You abound in blessings, God, creator of the universe, Who sustains us with living water. May we, like the children of Israel leaving Egypt, be guarded and nurtured and kept alive in the wilderness to understand that the journey itself holds the promise of redemption.

Amen.