

The 4th Cup

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Source:



[The Fourth Glass of Wine - The Cups of Elijah & Miriam](#)

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As we come to the end of the Seder, we drink one more glass of wine. With this final cup, we give thanks for the experience of celebrating Passover together, for the traditions that help inform our daily lives and guide our actions and aspirations.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

The Cup of Elijah

We now refill our wine glasses one last time and open the front door to invite the prophet Elijah to join our Seder. In the Bible, Elijah was a fierce defender of God to a disbelieving people. At the end of his life, rather than dying, he was whisked away to heaven. Tradition holds that he will return in advance of messianic days to herald a new era of peace, so we set a place for Elijah at many joyous, hopeful Jewish occasions.

Eliyahu hanavi Eliyahu hatishbi Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu hagiladi Bimheirah b'yameinu, yavo eileinu Im mashiach ben-David Im mashiach ben-David

Elijah the prophet, the returning, the man of Gilad: return to us speedily, in our days with the messiah, son of David.

Everybody knows that we place a cup of wine for the prophet Elijah at the center of the Seder table. At a dramatic moment in the Seder, the door is opened to welcome this usually unseen guest into our homes in the hope that the final, messianic, redemption of all people is at hand. Our ancient traditions tell us that final redemption will come at the season of Israel's redemption from Egyptian bondage - on some Passover to

come.

We sing Elijah's song, and watch expectantly and hopefully for the wine in the cup to diminish, a sure sign that Elijah has visited and the dawn of a new redemption is near. Of more recent origin is the custom of placing a second cup on the Seder table for a second unseen but deserving guest - the prophetess, Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron.

Why Miriam? Who was it who, disregarding her own safety, dared to approach the Pharaoh's daughter, Princess of Egypt, and offer to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for her? Who was it who led the redeemed Israelite women and men in song and dance to celebrate their salvation at the Sea?

It was Miriam, the Prophetess, symbol of all the courageous and worthy women who kept the home fires burning, even when the men became discouraged and despaired of redemption. Who then is more deserving to be "toasted" with water and saluted for service "above and beyond" than she?

If the Cup of Elijah is one symbolizing hope for future redemption, Miriam's Cup symbolizes redemption realized through the tireless efforts of Israel's women. Let us honor her for her heroism, and through her, all the brave, capable, devoted, faithful and loyal women of Israel who have been, and continue to be, the ongoing source of Israel's strength.

For the sake of our righteous women were our ancestors redeemed from Egypt. L'Chaim!

DRINK THE FOURTH GLASS OF WINE