



# The Zion Letter

The Monthly Newsletter of For Zion's Sake Ministries, Inc.  
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## Elijah's Cup: Its Passover and Prophetic Meaning

For those of you who aren't familiar, the Prophet Elijah plays a large part in the Jewish Passover. It is easy to understand the Moses connection to Passover and that Yeshua/Jesus' last supper and crucifixion was on Passover, but where does Elijah fit in? Why does he play such a prominent role in the Passover Seder meal? In this newsletter we shall look at Elijah's roll in the Passover, return; what the ancient rabbis taught about it, and what some Messianic Jews and Christians believe about the possibility of Elijah coming back. Read on!

### Elijah's Cup:

Every year in the traditional Jewish Passover since the Second Century (see *Passover the Mystery of the Fifth Cup*, by Simeon J. Maslin of Reform Judaism.org), the rabbis instructed Jewish people to place a cup of wine for Elijah the Prophet and an empty place setting for the Prophet. Traditionally there were only four cups of wine consumed at a Passover meal as prescribed by the *Mishnah*, written in 450 B.C. (see Pesahim 10:1 in the *Mishnah*). Each one had a name based on this verse in Exodus 6:6-7, "**I AM the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, (Cup one: the Cup of Sanctification), and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements, (Cups Two and Three: The Cup of Plagues and the Cup of Redemption). Then I will take you for My people and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. (Cup Four: The Cup of Hallel or Praise).**" It is from these verses that the rabbis derived the first four cups of Passover, and



that Yeshua/Jesus made reference to in Luke 22 as well as other places. So believe it or not, at times, Yeshua, followed the teachings of the Talmud (extra Biblical writings by the Rabbis). But our sages had a dispute as to whether God gave four promises in Exodus 6:6-7 (see above) or whether there were five promises. One answer is based on Malachi 4:4-6, "**Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. Behold I am going to send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.**" Based on this verse in Malachi the sages declared that Elijah would return at Passover to announce the coming of the Messiah and to prepare the way for the Messianic age! This is the primary teaching that I recall from Passover seders I attended as a child.

So the rabbis added a fifth cup: **The Cup of Elijah.** As I said earlier, it's easy to understand the connection between Moses and the Passover (see Ex 12) and it's easy to understand the connection Yeshua has to Passover since Luke 22 tells us His Last Supper was a Passover meal and that he was crucified on Passover (our Passover Lamb, 1 Cor. 5:6-7). The tradition goes that at the end of the Passover meal, a child opens the front door of the home to allow the Prophet Elijah to enter the home and announce the coming of the Messiah! A much larger chalice than the other four is filled to the brim with wine and a place setting sits empty for Elijah just in case he should happen to show up. All who are gathered sing the ancient song with a

haunting melody: *“Eliyahu Ha Navi, Eliyahu Ha Tishbi...”* (Elijah the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite etc). Interestingly, nobody drinks from Elijah’s cup. Why is it bigger than all the other cups? Why is Elijah’s cup bigger than the ones Jesus himself mentioned? My theory is that Elijah has a very big job to do so he gets a rather large cup. Matthew recorded, ***“And His disciples asked Him, Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? And He answered and said “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist. Mt 17:10-13.*** We can glean from this chat with the talmidim (disciples) that Yeshua taught that Elijah ***is coming*** and that Elijah ***already came***. We must remember that Elijah is a forerunner, or one who prepares the way. John was a forerunner of the Messiah who suffered and died. John did not accomplish the mission of ***“Restoring all things or restoring the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa”***. John also wasn’t Elijah, but he did come in the Spirit of Elijah. Thus, John the Baptist was a forerunner to the Messiah’s first coming, an Elijah in the Spirit, one for the Lamb of God. The Elijah who is next to come will be a forerunner to the Lion of Judah who will reign.



### **How will we recognize Elijah when he comes?**

Assuming you accept Jesus’s word that Elijah is coming again, then how will we recognize him? Elijah was a great prophet, very intimate with God. He was a Jew from Gilead in Israel. So the Elijah to come will likely be a Jew, and a Messianic Jew at that! Are Christians waiting for a Messianic Jewish Elijah to appear, not as Elijah himself, but as a Jewish man who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah as John did? If they are waiting, I have never heard it mentioned. Are Messianic Jews expecting Elijah to come? Honestly, in my circle Elijah is viewed as one who performed miracles, was a forerunner to the Messiah, was a zealous prophet who tore down the altar of Baal, and slew the 400 prophets of Baal (see 1 Kings 18). I don’t hear much about a physical manifestation of Elijah returning in Messianic Jewish circles, save him being one of the two witnesses possibly. There are also the traditional Jews who

don’t believe in Yeshua. They are the Jews who are religious, celebrate Passover, and make mention of Elijah, but coming out of their ranks at age 30, I don’t recall them anticipating a Messianic Jewish Elijah. The coming Elijah has to restore all things, and restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa? On top of that you have millions of Christians who believe John the Baptist was the Elijah to come and who are not expecting another, plus there are Jews and Christians who could care less. Poor Elijah, no wonder he gets such a big cup to drink at Passover.

### **Elijah’s Redemptive Work:**

OK, so Elijah has a big job, but what does it mean to restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers and to restore all things? Matthew 8:11 says, ***“I say to you that many will come from East and West and recline at the table with***

***Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.”*** Perhaps the Patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Rachel, Rebecca, Leah, the two Mary’s, and the Apostles represent “the fathers” along with modern Messianic Jews. Perhaps “the children” is referring to the Church (of true believers). For example in 1 John 2:1, the Apostle writes, ***“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father...”*** and again ***“Now, little***

***children, abide in Him so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming,”*** 1 John 2:28 (see also in 1 Cor. 4:14, Gal. 4:19, 1 John 3:7, 3:18, 4:4).

We must take into account that by the time 1 John and most of the New Testament was written it was long after the day of the Pentecost in Acts 2. The Church age had started. The times of the Gentiles was now in full swing (Luke 21:24)! So perhaps the Church are the children and the patriarchs and believing Jews represent the fathers and God’s desire that we be in unity. John 10:14-16 says, ***“I am the Good Shepherd and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”*** Yeshua is clearly talking to His Jewish Disciples about the future

Church and bringing us into unity. Again, we see in John 17:20-23, **“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one even as You, Father are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that you sent Me. The glory which you have given Me I have given to them that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in Unity, so that the World may know that you sent Me.”**

Wow! So “One” in the verses above means “unity”. Just as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father and they are “One”, yet they are still separate figures. So the two sheep folds of John 10:14 refers to the Messianic Jewish community and to the Church (True believers) that are perfected in unity! The Hebrew word for “One” here is Echad and it means unity, like one bunch of grapes or one crowd of people. **Friend, the key to the world believing is when Messianic Jews and the Church of true believers come together in unity. We are living in the first time in history when the two groups exist together in the world side by side!** That is the work of Elijah to bring both groups together, perfected in unity, “One”! Man that’s a big cup.

### **Conclusion:**

Since Moses prophesied the Lamb of God (Yeshua) at the first Passover, some 1400 years before Jesus came, and since Yeshua’s last supper was a Passover Seder meal (Luke 22:8-13), we can assume that Elijah, who it is taught will appear at Passover to announce the coming of the Messiah, will actually return at Passover. Why? Perhaps it’s the Passover connection to the miracles, signs, wonders and judgments demonstrated in Egypt during the time of Moses. It is only fitting that Elijah show up before His Adon (Lord) on a Passover coming soon!

If Jesus accepted the four cups of Passover instituted by men (Rabbis) 450 years before His own birth, then why wouldn’t He accept the cup of Elijah at Passover too?

Elijah’s work is to restore Jew and Gentile, one in the Messiah, not to make Jews join “The Church” or to force Christians to become “Messianic Jews”; although in ancient times Gentiles had a court in the Temple of the Jews, attended Feasts of the Jews (see Acts 2), and were even exhorted by James to visit synagogues as seen in Acts 15:21. Just as God calls Christians to be missionaries to places like India, Africa, and Latin

America, He also calls some to be Messianic. Is God calling you to be Messianic?

Yeshua said Elijah is coming back (Mt 17:11); will we recognize him when he comes back? Probably not, at least not until he begins performing the miracles of Revelation 11 (I believe that Elijah is one of the two witnesses). I suspect Elijah is walking the earth today waiting for his powers to be given to Him as God promised. When these things happen there will be no doubt who he is. I don’t think he will be the man *Elijah*, but a man who walks in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Lastly, will he succeed in his mission of unifying the Church (children) and the Messianic Jewish community (the fathers)? Will he bring world revival? Leaders tend to be very territorial. Shepherds build their folds over decades and many are threatened by change and “giving up a good gig” as I heard one shepherd call it recently. Truly humble shepherds are a rare commodity. Pastors and Rabbis, would you be willing to lay down YOUR VISION to come into unity and be yoked together as Jew and Gentile? Is it possible? It would certainly require a great humbling by leaders. Only the meek and lowly will see Elijah through spiritual eyes as his disciple Elisha did when he was caught up to heaven in the “*chariot of fire with horses of fire*” (2 Kings 2:11-12). I hope this teaching encourages you spiritually. If so please share it and encourage your friends to sign up for the Zion Letter at [www.forzionsake.org](http://www.forzionsake.org)

Next month we shall look at Elijah’s Mantle and the double portion. Happy Passover!

In His Love,  
Rabbi Joe and Dawn



As an additional note,

We want to thank you for your continued support of Israel through For Zion’s Sake Ministries, your local connection to Israel.” *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you.” Ps 122:6*

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