

**Happy Passover and Shabbat Shalom
from Rabbi Michael Gold**

Candle Lighting Time

Wed. Erev Pesach 7:20 pm

Thurs 2nd Day 8:13 pm (from pre-existent flame)

Friday Erev Shabbat 7:21 pm (from pre-existent flame)

Passover and Shabbat Services

Wed. April 1 5:30 pm followed by 1st night Seder for those with reservations

Thurs. April 2 9:30 am 1st Day Passover

Fri. April 3 9:30 am 2nd Day Passover

Sat. April 4 9:30 am Shabbat Hol HaMoed, Reading of Song of Songs

Wed. April 8 9:30 am 7th Day Passover

Thurs. April 9 9:30 am 8th Day Passover

Yizkor

Dear Friends,

I wish you a joyous Passover holiday.

Zissen Pesach and Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Gold

**PESACH
ELIJAH'S CUP**

“I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and will deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God.” (Exodus 6:6-7)

On Passover we pour a cup of wine for the prophet Elijah. After dinner we open the door and invite Elijah in. There is a tradition that Elijah visits every Passover seder. (He also visits every bris or ritual circumcision. I suppose he likes wine.) One of my oldest memories as a young boy at my parents' seder was their telling me, watch the cup of Elijah carefully. The wine will go down a little. I would say that the wine looks like it is the same. My parents answered, Elijah visits so many seders that he does not drink very much wine at each one. Otherwise, he would get very drunk. I suppose I believed Elijah drank the wine just as I once believed in the tooth fairy.

When I was a bit older, as a teenager at my parents' seder, we opened the door for Elijah. One year there was one of my dad's clients standing there dropping off his tax information for my father. (My father was a certified public accountant, and Passover often fell during tax season.) Certainly, this client did not look like Elijah, but I think my father invited him to join us.

As an adult who became a rabbi, I began to ask deeper questions about the

cup of Elijah. To begin, I have to explain the symbolism of the cup. During the seder we drink four cups of wine – one at the beginning during kiddush, one before dinner, one after dinner, and one at the end. (I tell people who want to leave the seder immediately after dessert that they will miss the last two cups. They usually leave anyway.)

Why four cups? They correspond to four words for redemption in a verse in Exodus. I quoted the verse at the beginning of this message. God says, “I will free you,” “I will deliver you,” “I will redeem you,” and “I will take you.” The Rabbis saw four steps in the process of redemption.

But the Torah continues with a fifth phrase, “I will bring you into the land.” Somehow the redemption was incomplete until we came into the land. So, the question arose, should we drink a fifth cup of wine. The Rabbis felt the redemption was incomplete since we were in exile from the land. Today, when we are in the land, should we drink a fifth cup? Or is our redemption still incomplete because we do not live in peace? The question stands unanswered.

According to Jewish tradition, Elijah will come to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. That was the haftarah we read this last Shabbat. “Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of God” (Malachi 3:23). On that day Elijah will answer all the unanswered religious questions. When Elijah comes, he will answer whether we should drink a fifth cup of wine. Meanwhile, we pour the cup and put it in the middle of the table. Maybe he will come this Passover and give us an answer.

Let me share one more tradition that is much newer and performed at many seders among more liberal Jews. Just as we pour a glass of wine for Elijah, we pour a glass of water for Miriam. It was Miriam who made sure the Israelites had water during the years of wandering in the desert. In fact, we have a beautiful matching set of cups we use at our seder, a wine cup for Elijah and a water cup for Miriam. More Orthodox Jews would disagree, saying that we do not make changes in tradition. But more liberal Jews would say that the cup makes the seder more egalitarian, celebrating Miriam’s role in our liberation. By tradition, it was Miriam who convinced her parents to come back together, leading to the birth of Moses. And it was Miriam who followed Moses as he floated down the Nile in a basket, until Pharaoh’s daughter rescued him.

The Passover seder is more than a fancy dinner. It is filled with both ancient and modern religious rituals that teach profound lessons about both our past and our future.