

Welcoming Elijah

(To be read after the festive meal, as we resume the seder)

We are about to open the door for Eliyahu ha-Navi, Elijah the Prophet. Elijah is a fascinating figure in Jewish tradition. He often hid his identity, appearing as a stranger who taught lessons and only later revealed himself as a prophet of God. Why was he so secretive?

As a prophet, Elijah never hesitated to speak truth to power. He confronted kings, calling them out for abusing those who could not stand up for themselves (I Kings 21:19). But challenging the powerful meant he was often running from them. Yet, despite the clear and immediate personal danger he faced, Elijah never stopped speaking for God on behalf of the poor and marginalized.

Perhaps this is one of the many reasons that he is the prophet we welcome to our seder; the prophet expected to usher in an age of peace. He is a reminder to all of us that we must look for the divine potential in every person, and always be willing to open our door to people, possibilities, and a more peaceful path forward. In a moment, we will open our doors and our hearts to Elijah. Should he fail to appear when we welcome him in, we must be prepared to summon his qualities within ourselves:

May we open our hearts and our minds to those cast aside. May we open our mouths against those espousing messages of tyranny, bigotry, and hate. May we promise never to close ourselves off to the widow, the stranger, or the orphan.

Whether he walks through our door or not, may the spirit of Elijah truly be with us tonight.

