

## Elijah at the Door: Harbinger of Hope

### I) Biblical Elijah

#### 1) I Kings 17:1

(א) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי מִתְּשֻׁבֵי גִלְעָד אֶל־אֲחָאָב חִי־ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר עֲמַדְתִּי לְפָנָיו אִם־יְהִי הַשָּׁנִים הָאֵלֶּה טַל וּמָטָר כִּי אִם־לְפִי דְבָרִי: {ס}

1) Elijah the Tishbite, an inhabitant of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the ETERNAL lives, the God of Israel whom I serve, there will be no dew or rain except at my bidding."

#### 2) I Kings 18:36-39

(לו) וַיְהִי אִ בַּעֲלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה וַיָּגֵשׁ אֵלֶיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם יוֹדַע כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ (ובדבריך) [ובדברך] עָשִׂיתִי אֵת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: (לז) עַנְנֵי ה' עָנְנֵי וַיִּדְעוּ הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי־אַתָּה ה' הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַתָּה הַסִּבֵּת אֶת־לִבָּם אַחֲרָיִת: (לח) וַתִּפֹּל אִשָּׁה וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־הַעֲלֵה וְאֶת־הַעֲצִים וְאֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וְאֶת־הָעֵפֶר וְאֶת־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּתְּעֵלָה לַחֲכָה: (לט) וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים:

36) When it was time to present the grain offering, the prophet Elijah came forward and said, "O ETERNAL One, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel! Let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your bidding. (37) Answer me, O ETERNAL One, answer me, that this people may know that You, O ETERNAL One, are God; for You have turned their hearts backward." (38) Then fire from GOD descended and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the earth; and it licked up the water that was in the trench. (39) When they saw this, all the people flung themselves on their faces and cried out: "the ETERNAL One alone is God, the ETERNAL One alone is God!"

#### 3) I Kings 19:9-10

(ט) וַיְבֹא־שָׁם אֶל־הַמַּעְרָה וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם וְהִנֵּה דְבַר־ה' אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה־לָּךְ פֹּה אַל־יְהוּ: (י) וַיֹּאמֶר קָמָא קָמָא לֵה' אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת כִּי־עָזְבוּ בְרִיתְךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִזְבְּחֵיךָ הָרְסוּ וְאֶת־נְבִיאֶיךָ הָרְגוּ בַחֶרֶב וְאֹתָר אֲנִי לְבַדִּי וַיְבַקְשׁוּ אֶת־נַפְשִׁי לְקַחְתָּהּ:

(9) There he went into a cave, and there he spent the night. Then the word of GOD came to him: "Why are you here, Elijah?" (10) He replied, "I am moved by zeal for the ETERNAL, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life."

#### 4) Malbim

מה לך פה ר"ל הלא הנביא צריך שימצא בין העם להוכיח ולנבאות לא שיתבודד במדבר ובהרים:

### **5) II Kings 2:11**

וַיְהִי הַמָּחָה הַלְלִים הַלּוֹךְ וַיְדַבֵּר וַהֲנֵה רֶכֶב-אֵשׁ וְסוּסֵי אֵשׁ וַיִּפְרְדּוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיַּעַל אֵלֵיהֶם בְּסַעֲרַה הַשָּׁמַיִם:

As they kept on walking and talking, a fiery chariot with fiery horses suddenly appeared and separated one from the other; and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.

*I Kings 17 - Appears out of nowhere/Elijah as miracle worker*

*I Kings 18 - Defender of Israel*

*I Kings 19 - Zealous isolationist or Man of the People/ Critic of Israel*

*II Kings 2 - Taken in a whirlwind*

### **6) Seder Olam Rabbah 17:1**

אחזיה בן אחאב מלך שנתים, ובשנה השנית לאחזיה נגזז אליהו ולא נראה עד שיבא מלך המשיח, ונראה ונגזז שנית, ואינו נראה עד שיבא גוג ומגוג, ועכשיו הוא כותב מעשה כל הדורות כולם,

### **7) Malachi 3:23-24**

כג) הִנֵּה אֲנִי שֶׁלַח לְכֶם אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא לְפָנָי בּוֹא יוֹם הַגְּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא: כד) וְהָשִׁיב לְבַ-אֲבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵי וְלֵב בְּנִים עַל-אֲבוֹתָם פֶּן-אֲבֹא וְהִפִּיתִי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ חָרָם:

23) Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the LORD. 24) He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with utter destruction.

### **8) Yalkut Shimoni Bereshit 42**

תשעה נכנסו בחייהם לגן עדן ואלו הן חנוך ומשיח ואליהו ואליעזר עבד אברהם ועבד מלך הכושי (מט) וחירם מלך צור ויעבץ בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא וסרח בת אשר ובתיה בת פרעה ויש אומרים הוציאו חירם ונכנס תחתיו ר' יהושע בן לוי.

## **II) Rabbinic Elijah**

### **9) Tanna debei Eliyahu 18 - Elijah and the Sages**

פעם אחת היו רבותינו ושאר חכמים יושבין בבית המדרש והיו חולקים זה עם זה ואמרו מהיכן אליהו בא זה אומר מזרעה של רחל וזה אומר מזרעה של לאה עד שהן חולקין זה עם זה באתי אליהן ועמדתי לפניהן ואמרתי להן רבותי אין אני בא אלא מזרעה של רחל ואמרו לי תן סימן לדברייך אמרתי להן ולא כתיב ביוחסין של שבט בנימין (ד"ה א ח) ויערשיה ואליה זכרי בני ירוחם.

### **10) Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97b - Elijah heralds the Mashiach**

**Elijah the prophet said to Rav Yehuda, brother of Rav Sala Hasida: The world will**

exist **no fewer than eighty-five Jubilee** cycles, or 4,250 years. **And during the final Jubilee, the son of David will come.**

Rav Yehuda **said to** Elijah: Will the Messiah come **during the beginning of the Jubilee or during its end?**

Elijah **said to** Rav Yehuda: **I do not know.**

Rav Yehuda asked: Will this last Jubilee cycle **end** before the Messiah comes **or will it not yet end** before his coming?

Elijah **said to him: I do not know.**

**Rav Ashi says:** This is what **Elijah said to him: Until that time do not anticipate his coming; from this point forward anticipate his coming.** Elijah did not inform Rav Yehuda of the date of the coming of the Messiah.

### **11) Talmud Bavli Taanit 22a - Elijah Defender of Israel**

**Rabbi Beroka Ḥoza'a was often found in the market of Bei Lefet, and Elijah the Prophet would often appear to him.** Once Rabbi Beroka **said to** Elijah: Of all the people who come here, is **there anyone in this market worthy of the World-to-Come? He said to him: No.** In the meantime, Rabbi Beroka **saw a man who was wearing black shoes, contrary to Jewish custom, and who did not place the sky-blue, dyed thread of ritual fringes on his garment.** Elijah **said to** Rabbi Beroka: **That man is worthy of the World-to-Come.** Rabbi Beroka **ran after** the man and **said to him: What is your occupation?** The man **said to him: Go away now, as I have no time, but come back tomorrow and we will talk.** **The next day,** Rabbi Beroka arrived and again **said to him: What is your occupation?** The man **said to him: I am a prison guard [zandukana], and I imprison the men separately and the women separately, and I place my bed between them so that they will not come to transgression. When I see a Jewish woman upon whom gentiles have set their eyes, I risk my life to save her. One day, there was a betrothed young woman among us, upon whom the gentiles had set their eyes. I took dregs [durdayya] of red wine and threw them on the lower part of her dress, and I said: She is menstruating [dastana], so that they would leave her alone.** Rabbi Beroka **said to him: What is the reason that you do not have threads of ritual fringes, and why do you wear black shoes?** The man **said to him: Since I come and go among gentiles, I dress this way so that they will not know that I am a Jew. When they issue a decree, I inform the Sages, and they pray for mercy and annul the decree.** Rabbi Beroka further inquired: **And what is the reason that when I said to you: What is your occupation, you said to me: Go away now but come tomorrow?** The man **said to him: At that moment, they had just issued a decree, and I said to myself: First I must go and inform the Sages, so that they will pray for mercy over this matter. In the meantime, two brothers came to the marketplace.** Elijah **said to** Rabbi Beroka: **These two also have a share in the World-to-Come.** Rabbi Beroka **went**

over to the men and said to them: What is your occupation? They said to him: We are jesters, and we cheer up the depressed. Alternatively, when we see two people who have a quarrel between them, we strive to make peace.

### 12) Talmud Bavli Bava Batra 7b - Elijah protector of the vulnerable

**MISHNA:** The residents of a courtyard can compel each inhabitant of that courtyard to financially participate in the **building of a gatehouse and a door to the** jointly owned courtyard. **Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel** disagrees and **says: Not all courtyards require a gatehouse**, and each courtyard must be considered on its own in accordance with its specific needs...

**GEMARA:** The Gemara asks: **Is this to say that making a gatehouse is beneficial? But wasn't there that pious man, with whom the prophet Elijah was accustomed to speak, who built a gatehouse, and after-ward Elijah did not speak with him again?** The objection to the building of a gatehouse is that the guard who mans it prevents the poor from entering and asking for charity. The Gemara answers: This is **not difficult: This**, the case presented in the mishna, is referring to a gatehouse built **on the inside** of the courtyard, in which case the poor can at least reach the courtyard's entrance and be heard inside the courtyard; **that**, the story of the pious man and Elijah, involves a gatehouse that was built **on the outside** of the courtyard, completely blocking the poor's access to the courtyard's entrance.

### 13) Talmud Bavli Berakhot 3a -Elijah mediating between heaven and earth

תנא, אמר רבי יוסי: פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ונכנסתי לחורבה אחת מחורבות ירושלים להתפלל. בא אליהו זכור לטוב ושמר לי על הפתח, (והמתין לי) עד שסיימתי תפילתי. לאחר שסיימתי תפילתי

1. אמר לי: "שלום עליך, רבי". ואמרתי לו: "שלום עליך, רבי ומורי".
2. ואמר לי: בני, מפני מה נכנסת לחורבה זו? אמרתי לו: להתפלל.
3. ואמר לי: היה לך להתפלל בדרך. ואמרתי לו: מתירא הייתי שמא יפסיקו בי עובדי דרכים,
4. ואמר לי היה לך להתפלל תפלה קצרה.

באותה שעה למדתי ממנו שלשה דברים: למדתי שאין נכנסין לחורבה, ולמדתי שמתפללין בדרך, ולמדתי שהמתפלל בדרך מתפלל תפלה קצרה.

5. ואמר לי: בני, מה קול שמעת בחורבה זו? ואמרתי לו: שמעתי בת קול שמנהמת כיונה ואמרת: "אוי לי שחרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי והגליתי את בני לבין אומות העולם".
6. ואמר לי: חייך וחיי ראשך, לא שעה זו בלבד אומרת כה, אלא בכל יום ויום, שלש פעמים אומרת כה. ולא זו בלבד אלא, בשעה שישאל נכנסין לבתי ונכנסות ולבתי מדרשות ועונין "יהא שמייה הגדול מבורך", הקדוש ברוך הוא מנענע ראשו, ואומר: אשרי המלך שמקלסין אותו בביתו כה, מה לו לאב שהגלה את בניו, ואוי להם לבנים שגלו מעל שולחן אביהם.

It was taught in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Yosei said: I was once walking along the road when I entered the ruins** of an old, abandoned building **among the ruins of**

**Jerusalem in order to pray.** I noticed that **Elijah, of blessed memory, came and guarded the entrance for me and waited at the entrance until I finished my prayer.** **When I finished praying** and exited the ruin,

1. Elijah **said to me**, deferentially as one would address a Rabbi: **Greetings to you, my Rabbi. I answered him: Greetings to you, my Rabbi, my teacher.**
2. **And Elijah said to me: My son, why did you enter this ruin? I said to him: In order to pray.**
3. **And Elijah said to me: You should have prayed on the road. And I said to him: I was unable to pray along the road, because I was afraid that I might be interrupted by travelers and would be unable to focus.**
4. **Elijah said to me: You should have recited the abbreviated prayer.**

Rabbi Yosei concluded: **At that time**, from that brief exchange, **I learned from him, three things: I learned that one may not enter a ruin; and I learned that one need not enter a building to pray, but he may pray along the road; and I learned that one who prays along the road recites an abbreviated prayer** so that he may maintain his focus.

5. **And after this introduction, Elijah said to me: What voice did you hear in that ruin? I responded: I heard a Heavenly voice**, like an echo of that roar of the Holy One, Blessed be He (Maharsha), **cooing like a dove and saying: Woe to the children, due to whose sins I destroyed My house, burned My Temple, and exiled them among the nations.**
6. **And Elijah said to me: By your life and by your head, not only did that voice cry out in that moment, but it cries out three times each and every day. Moreover**, any time that God's greatness is evoked, such as **when Israel enters synagogues and study halls and answers in the kaddish prayer, May His great name be blessed, the Holy One, Blessed be He, shakes His head and says: Happy is the king who is thus praised in his house.** When the Temple stood, this praise was recited there, but now: **How great is the pain of the father who exiled his children, and woe to the children who were exiled from their father's table.**

### III. Elijah and Seder night

#### **14) Shemot Rabbah 18:12**

"It was a night of vigil for the Lord to take them out of the land of Egypt; it is a night for the Lord, a vigil for all the children of Israel throughout their generations" (Exodus 12:42).

What did He see that led Him to call it a night of vigil [*shimurim*]? It is a night during which He performs great deeds for the righteous, just as He performed [great deeds] for Israel in Egypt. On that [night] He rescued Hezekiah, and on it He rescued Hananya and his counterparts, and on it He rescued Daniel from the lions' den, and on it Messiah and Elijah the prophet will be exalted, as it is stated: "The watchman said: The morning comes, and also the night" (Isaiah 21:12).

**15) Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, chap 29:17-18 - Elijah's tikkun**

אמר לו הקב"ה, (אלהו) טוב אתה מאבותיך, עשו בקש את יעקב להרגו, שנאמר יקרבו ימי אבל אבי ואהרגה את יעקב אחי. וברח מלפניו ונמלט, שנאמר ויברח יעקב שדה ארם. פרעה בקש להרוג את משה, וברח מלפניו ונמלט, שנאמר ויברח משה מפני פרעה. שאול בקש להרוג את דוד, וברח מלפניו ונמלט, שנאמר ודוד ברח וימלט. ללמדך שכל מי שהוא בורח נמלט. עמד אליהו וברח מארץ ישראל ונמלט, שנאמר ויקם ויאכל וישתה. (ושם) נגלה עליו הקב"ה ואמר לו, מה לך פה אליהו קנא קנאתי. אמר לו הקב"ה, לעולם אתה מקנא. קנאת בשטים על גלוי עריות, שנאמר פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן. וכאן אתה מקנא, חייך שאין ישראל עושין ברית מילה עד שאתה רואה בעיניך.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Art thou better than thy fathers?" Esau sought to slay Jacob, but he fled before him, as it is said, "And Jacob fled into the field of Aram" (Hos. 12:12). Pharaoh sought to slay Moses, who fled before him and he was saved, as it is said, "Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. And Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh" (Ex. 2:15). Saul sought to slay David, who fled before him and was saved, as it is said, "If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain" (1 Sam. 19:11). Another text says, "And David fled and escaped" (1 Sam. 19:18). Learn that everyone, who flees, is saved. Elijah, may he be remembered for good, arose and fled from the land of Israel, || and he betook himself to Mount Horeb, as it is said, "And he arose, and did eat and drink" (1 Kings 19:8). There the Holy One, blessed be He, was revealed unto him, and He said to him: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). He answered Him, saying: "I have been very zealous" (1 Kings 19:10). (The Holy One, blessed be) He, said to him: Thou art always zealous ! Thou wast zealous in Shittim on account of the immorality. Because it is said, "Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, in that he was zealous with my zeal among them" (Num. 25:11). Here also art thou zealous. By thy life ! They shall not observe the covenant of circumcision until thou seest it (done) with thine eyes.

מכאן התקינו חכמים שיהיו עושין מושב כבוד למלאך הברית, (שנקרא אליהו ז"ל מלאך הברית), שנאמר ומלאך הברית אשר אתם חפצים הנה בא וגו'. אלהי ישראל יחיש ויביא בחיינו משיח לנחמנו ויחדש לבבנו, שנא' והשיב לב אבות על בנים.

Hence the sages instituted (the custom) that people should have a seat of honour for the Messenger of the Covenant; for Elijah, may he be remembered for good, is called the Messenger of the Covenant, as it is said, "And the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he cometh" (Mal. 3:1).

**16) Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Orot Hakodesh 3:365**

כשם שבתחלה לפני התבסמותו הכיר יותר מכל את עומק הכיעור והזיהום שעולם שפל זה שקוע בתוכו, ומפני כך קנא באש שלהבת לבער את רוח הטומאה והמחזיקים בו, כן יכיר אחרי ביסומו את כל ניצוץ קודש שבעולם זה, להעלותו ברוח שלום, וישיב לב אבות על בנים, ולב בנים על אבותם.

Originally, before he was sweetened, he perceived acutely the depth of ugliness and contamination in which this lowly world is immersed. Therefore, he blazed with zeal to eradicate the spirit of impurity and those clinging to it. After being sweetened, he perceives every spark of holiness in this world and redeems it.

### **17) Peninei Halakha hilchot pesach**

למעשה נוהגים שלא לשתות כוס חמישית, אבל נהגו למזוג כוס חמישית וקוראים לה 'כוס של אליהו'. ובאר הגאון מווילנא, שהיא נקראת כוס של אליהו מפני שבכל ספק שאיננו יכולים לפטור, אנו אומרים, כשיבוא אליהו הנביא יפשוט את הספק, ולכן אנו מוזגים כוס חמישית לכבודו, וכשיבוא יאמר אם צריך לשתות אותה.

### **18) Daniel Matt, *Becoming Elijah*, pp. 133-134**

On Passover, Elijah is literally liminal, expected to appear on the "threshold." Anticipated at the doorway, he mediates between home and community, between private space and the wider uncertain world. He links the ancient liberation from Egyptian slavery with messianic deliverance, bridging the chasm between this unredeemed earth and the final redemption.

... Memories of Elijah at the seder can be bittersweet, recalling the annual disappointment of not finding him at the door. Once, before Passover, according to a Hasidic tale, the disciples of Menahem Mendel (the Kotsker Rebbe) complained to him about this. He promised them that Elijah would be revealed to them at the upcoming seder. On the first night of the festival, the room was full, the atmosphere charged, with Elijah's cup waiting on the table. The seder proceeded, and finally the door was opened. What happened next left the disciples astonished. Nothing; no one appeared. Crushed, they turned to their Rebbe, whose face was beaming. Seeing their distress, he asked, "What's troubling you?" They told him. "Fools!" he thundered. "Do you think Elijah the prophet enters through the door? He enters through the heart."