

To be recited as we prepare to open the door for Elijah.

We say that there are four cups of wine at the seder. These are four cups based upon the promises in Exodus: "I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians; I will deliver you; I will redeem you; I will take you to be My people."

But there is, of course, a fifth cup of wine at the Passover seder. And there was a fifth promise. The cup is Elijah's cup. And the promise was "I will bring you into the land."



But God did bring us into the land. We came, we conquered, we settled... and then we lost and left again. Elijah's cup sees coming into the land as a promise held out for the future. If so, then this cup, this tradition, this seder itself has to have its origin at a time when we were no longer in the land. It had to have taken shape after the destruction of the Second Temple, in the year 70 – or, perhaps, even later, sometime in the second century.

But we are back, now. So if "coming to the land" was the criterion for the fifth cup, should we not now, after 1948, after the declaration of independence of the Third Jewish commonwealth, after the birth of the modern state of Israel, should we not perhaps now drink the fifth cup? Has the promise been fulfilled?

Except that... over time, the cup of Elijah has come to stand for a future hope of something deeper than mere presence. It is about redemption. It is about setting things right, and things being the way they are supposed to be.

And we are not, now, in a place of full redemption. To truly share this cup we must find a way to truly share this space. For we know if the state of Israel is reishit tz'michat ge'ulateinu, the first flowering of redemption, still we know, and sadly we see ... that redemption is not yet complete. "Being there" alone is not enough. The suffering of others, the pain of the Palestinians, has to be part of our world, brought into our minds and our hearts before we can fully taste the sweetness of the final cup. So still we look to a future day, when we will dwell in peace, in two states, and the swords shall be beaten into the plowshares... and none shall make anyone --them or us-- afraid*.

*Micah 4:3-4

"...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit everyone under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid..."