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*Dedicated for the soul-elevation of Yehuda ben Yerachmiel (Tilles)  
on the occasion of the 43rd yahrzeit on 17 Nissan (3rd day of Passover)*

## ***Seeking Elijah After Two Seders***

*[I know this story has been circulating a lot lately on social media, but I have had it in my files since 2010. Also, the "punch line" is different from all other versions, -- YT]*

It was in the weeks preceding Passover that one of the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov was overcome with a burning desire to see *Eliyahu HaNavi* [Elijah the Prophet]. The disciple knew that it would require much purity of mind and soul and that generally the Baal Shem Tov discouraged such endeavors. However, the longing to have the great Prophet reveal himself was so intense that he couldn't distract his mind from the thought. After much deliberation and soul-searching, he decided to ask the Baal Shem Tov for his holy advice.

To the chasid's surprise, the Baal Shem Tov agreed to help him prepare himself for this life-transforming undertaking. The Baal Shem Tov gave the chasid an extensive list of spiritual preparations. Upon completing the list, the chasid reported back to the Baal Shem Tov, whereupon he was told to load a wagon with food, wine and matzas, and to travel to a nearby village where he was to spend the first two days of Passover with a certain family. There, surely, Elijah the Prophet would be revealed.

The chasid travelled to the village with mixed feelings of joy and trepidation. Would he truly merit to see the prophet? A little while later, the chasid arrived at the village and found the dilapidated hut of the impoverished family with whom he was meant to celebrate the two Seders and fulfill his heart's desire of seeing Elijah the Prophet.

"Shalom Aleichem - Peace to you" he announced to the man who answered the door. "I am a chasid of the Baal Shem Tov, and he sent me here to spend the two Seder nights of Passover with you. I've brought everything we will need for the holiday with me, enough food for your entire family and even new clothing for your children."

The man stood at the door dumb-founded. His wife came to the door and she, too, could not believe her eyes as she looked out at the overloaded wagon. The couple soon composed themselves and invited the traveler in.

The Seder night was unforgettable. The woman, her husband and their five children had never been in the presence of one of the Baal Shem Tov's holy pupils. They had never heard such rich Torah thoughts said in such clear and simple words that they could all easily understand. They had also never had such a royal feast at their Seder.

The chasid, for his part, did not forget even for one moment why he had come. At every stage of the Seder that first night, the chasid waited with eager anticipation for the Elijah the Prophet to appear.

They drank the four cups of wine, ate the traditional foods, explained each sentence of the Hagada with joy, sang the traditional holiday songs and even danced until the wee hours of the night. But Elijah did not reveal himself to the chasid.

At the second Seder, the same wondrous scene repeated itself for the family and their guest. The Torah insights, the joy, the food, the singing, the dancing. But this night, too, Elijah the Prophet did not appear to the chasid.

When three stars appeared in the sky the following evening, and the chasid had not merited to see Elijah the Prophet, he was heartbroken. He thanked the family for their hospitality and returned to the Baal Shem Tov.

During the journey back, the chasid wondered what had happened. Surely the Baal Shem Tov was not wrong when he had told the chasid that Elijah would reveal himself in that village family's home on Passover. Elijah must have been there and the chasid had somehow not merited to see him. Perhaps he had dozed off for an instant at the Seder without even realizing it and had missed seeing the Prophet.

When the chasid arrived at the Baal Shem Tov's court, he poured out his heart to his master. He repeated every detail of the past few days, waiting expectantly to hear how or why he had missed Elijah the Prophet.

The Baal Shem Tov thought for a moment and answered, "Go back to the village. Let your horse graze by the window of the house. There you will find your answer."

Without hesitation the chasid travelled back to the village. As he brought his horse to graze by the window of the home, he overheard a conversation between the husband and wife:

"What did you think of our guest?" the wife said to the husband.

"What do I think?" he replied "I think we should thank G-d and the holy Baal Shem Tov for sending us his chasid! The words of Torah, the beautiful explanations, the bountiful food. It was amazing!"

"That was no chasid," she interjected emphatically. "That was Elijah the prophet! I am absolutely sure that was Elijah the prophet."

Now the chasid understood. Elijah the Prophet employs many manifestations; fortunate is he who makes himself able to be one of them.

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*Source:* Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of Rabbi Tuvia Bolton, as published in L'Chaim Weekly #1017 (Pesach 5770-2010).

*Biographic note:*

**Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer** (18 Elul 1698-6 Sivan 1760), the ***Baal Shem Tov*** ["master of the good Name"], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of *Tzava'at Harivash*, published by Kehos.