

“When Will the Messiah Come?”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

In the Jewish tradition, Elijah will return to herald the coming of the Messiah. The question, of course, is “when?”

There are times of expectation, when we pray for the appearance of Elijah. At a *brit milah*, a ritual circumcision, there is a chair designated for Elijah. At the conclusion of both Sabbath and Yom Kippur, we pray for Elijah’s coming. Each year at the Passover seder there is a cup of wine for Elijah to drink, should this be the year he arrives to herald salvation.

All these occasions have separate rationales, but notice what they share in common: each is a family time. At the brit, the seder, the end of Shabbat and Yom Kippur, families gather together. Perhaps that is why the prophet Malachi proclaims, in lines we read before Passover: “I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the great, awesome day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents.” (Malachi 3:23,4)

If you are lucky enough to be part of a close family, you have tasted something of the messianic time. We traditionally conceive of the Messianic age as an unfathomable supernatural event. Perhaps it is closer to a gentle word, an embrace, a family where there is love.