

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

October 15, 2014

The Secret of Elijah

A disciple of the Baal Shem Tov yearned to meet Elijah, herald of redemption. The Baal Shem Tov told him it could happen. All he needed to do was to go to the home of a very poor but pious family that lived in the forest, bring them food and wine for Rosh Hashanah, eat and pray with them, and at the end of the holiday Elijah would appear.

The Hasid did as he was told. But at the end of the holiday, Elijah did not arrive. Returning to ask why his request had not been granted, the Baal Shem told him, "It does not happen all at once. Now for each of the ten days of repentance, bring more food. Then before Yom Kippur supply them with enough to sustain the family so they can fast. Sit and pray and fast with them, and at havdalah after Yom Kippur when you sing to Elijah, you will receive what you wish."

Once more the man did as the Baal Shem instructed; he brought food and fasted and prayed. Yet when Yom Kippur ended, Elijah did not appear. He returned dispirited to his teacher. "Why was I not granted a vision?" he asked. "Because," answered the Baal Shem, "it was not important that you see Elijah. It was important that you *be* Elijah."

All of us have the power to bring hope and help to others in need. We can herald redemption. This year, be Elijah.

Rabbi Wolpe's new book *David: The Divided Heart* is available now.