1. Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, “By the life of YHVH God of Israel, whom I have served, there shall be no rain or dew these years except by my word.” (1 Kings 17:1)

2. Ahab sent out among all the Israelites and gathered the prophets [of Baal] at Mount Carmel. Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long will you keep hopping between the two branches? If YHVH is God, follow Him; and if Baal, follow him!” But the people answered him not a word. (1 Kings 18:20–21)

   Then the fire of YHVH came down and consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, and the soil, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. And all the people saw and fell on their faces and said, “YHVH, He is God; YHVH, He is God.” (1 Kings 18:38–39)

3. He walked... forty days and forty nights as far as the mountain of God, Horeb. There he went into a cave, where he spent the night. (1 Kings 19:8–9)

   [YHVH] said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before YHVH. Look, YHVH is passing by, with a great and mighty wind tearing out mountains and shattering rocks before YHVH. Not in the wind is YHVH. And after the wind, an earthquake. Not in the earthquake is YHVH. And after the earthquake, fire. Not in the fire is YHVH. And after the fire, a sound of sheer stillness.”

   When Elijah heard, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and he went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And look, a voice came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

   He replied, “I have been so zealous for YHVH, God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant—Your altars they have destroyed, Your prophets they have killed by the sword, and I, I alone remain, and they have sought to take my life.”

   YHVH said to him, “Go, return on your way..., and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place” (1 Kings 19:11–16).

4. As they [Elijah and his disciple, Elisha] went along, walking and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared, separating the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha was watching and kept crying out, “My father, my father! Israel’s chariots and horsemen!” And he saw him no more. (2 Kings 2:11–12)
5. Look, I am sending to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the day of YHWH, great and awesome. He will bring fathers’ hearts back to their children and children’s hearts to their fathers. (Malachi 3:23–24)

6. Rabbi Yehudah says, “If Israel does not engage in teshuvah, they will not be redeemed…. And Israel will not excel in teshuvah until Elijah, gratefully remembered, comes, as is said: Look, I am sending to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the day of YHWH, great and awesome; והשיב (ve-heshiv), and he will bring back, fathers’ hearts to their children and children’s hearts back to their fathers (Malachi 3:23–24).”

7. It is leil shimmurim, a night of watch, for YHWH, for bringing them out of the land of Egypt; this night is YHWH’s, a watch for all the Israelites through their generations. (Exodus 12:42)

8. On that night they were redeemed, and on that night they are destined to be redeemed.

9. On that very night, the Messiah and Elijah will appear…. The blessed Holy One said, “...On the day when I wrought salvation for you [on Passover in Egypt]—know that on that very night I will redeem you.”

10. I saw that... my father would not close the doors of our house... at all. And until now this is our custom, and [on the night of Passover] the doors of the house are open. When Elijah comes, we will go out to greet him quickly without any delay.

11. I have seen some people on the night of Passover who pour a special cup and place it on the table, saying that this is the cup for Elijah the prophet—and I don’t know the reason. But it seems that the reason derives from this: If Elijah the prophet comes on the night of Passover, as we hope and expect, he too will need a cup, for even a poor person among Israel must drink no less than four cups. And if the cup is not ready, we would have to prepare it for him, which might delay the Seder.

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1 Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer 43.
2 Mekhilta, Pisha 14, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a.
3 Shemot Rabbah 18:12.
4 Nissim Gaon (11th century); Lewin, Otsar ha-Ge’onim, 3:2, p. 112.
5 Zelikman Binga (15th century), Massekhet Pesahim: Hiddushim, 195.
12. Let all who are hungry come and eat; let all who are needy come and celebrate Passover.⁶

13. Since one calls for “all who are needy” to “come and eat,” he should prepare a cup for a guest who may come; and they call that cup “the Cup of Elijah the prophet,” because we hope for this guest.⁷

14. It seems this is the custom I saw among a few Ashkenazim: to leave on the table one empty cup... in which to pour all the wine left over in the cups of all those reclining there [after they have drunk at least the required minimum from their cups]. This cup is called the Cup of Elijah the prophet (gratefully remembered). This custom pleased me, and I follow it. From the remains of those cups, poured into this cup, I drink during the meal.⁸

15. We have the custom of pouring a fifth cup and calling it the Cup of Elijah the prophet. The reason is that there is a dispute in the Gemara over whether one needs a fifth cup, and the halakhah is not determined. When Elijah comes, the doubt will be clarified. Therefore, based on this doubt, the cup is poured but not drunk, and it is called the Cup of Elijah, for when he comes, all doubts will be clarified, including this doubt.⁹

16. Behinat Eliyyahu – an aspect (or quality) of Elijah.

This aspect is present in every person.... Everyone includes this aspect, but it is in hiding.¹⁰

Look, I am sending to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the day of YHVH... (Malachi 3:23). Truly, before the coming of the Messiah (speedily in our days), Elijah will bring the good news; and thereby awareness will be expanded, as is written: The earth will be filled with knowledge of YHVH as waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). Similarly, this aspect exists in every one of Israel and at all times....

If some good news comes to a person—also during learning, when one is having difficulty with a certain matter, before da’at (knowing)

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⁶ Passover Haggadah.
⁷ Yair Hayyim Bacharach (17th century), annotations on Yuzpa Shammash, Minhagim di-Qhillat Qodesh Vermaisha, 1:85.
⁸ Hayyim Benveniste (17th century), Pesah Me‘ubbin, §182.
⁹ Elijah ben Solomon of Vilna (18th century), Divrei Eliyyahu, 17b (parashat va’era).
¹⁰ Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Me’or Einayim, 44c (parashat aharei mot); idem, The Light of the Eyes, 533.
reaches him, a kind of good news enters him, for he feels a single point entering his mind. This is called behinat Eliyyahu (the aspect of Elijah), after which the earth will be filled with knowledge, for his awareness expands and is suffused with vitality. Then he can easily unite the various parts of himself, bringing even his lower parts toward the good.

For truly, a spark of Elijah is enveloped within anyone bearing good news, since [Elijah] is the bearer of all good tidings in the world, and now he clothes himself in that messenger; for the aspect of Elijah has existed since the six days of Creation....

Therefore, whenever there is good news to be delivered, everyone runs out to tell it, because his soul feels the aspect of Elijah, and he wants to draw it into himself.... If he had awareness, he could begin to serve God with that aspect of Elijah infusing him then, thereby ascending from rung to rung.... This is then called the coming of the great day of YHVH, for he has thereby drawn God into himself.

This is the meaning of: Look, I am sending to you [Elijah the prophet]—for the word sending is in the present tense, because it is constantly so, in each person and at all times.\footnote{Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Me’or Einayim, 23b (parashat vayetse); idem, The Light of the Eyes, 316–18.}