

Looking Forward: A Story in the Haggadah

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At this time of crisis, we pray that Hashem will bless all of us with good health and wellbeing. I offer this interpretation of a passage in the Haggadah and hope it provides a framework for coping better.

The Haggadah tells of five sages who observed Pessah in Benei Berak. They lived in the generation following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The situation was exceedingly bleak.

The Haggadah describes them as *mesubin*, reclining. They acted as though they were noblemen. They studied Torah all night, as though everything was right in the world. They dreamed of a new redemption. By their example, they were teaching: yes, the reality outside is frightening—but we are not afraid. We have a vision, a grander reality in our minds. We foresee happy Jewish families around their Seder tables; we foresee flourishing Torah study; we foresee the reconstitution of the Jewish State.

The students witnessed their rabbis' sense of a larger reality. “Our teachers, we now see that there is a new dawn. You are leading us through the darkness of night.”

These sages taught their generation—and all future generations—not to lose heart at times of crisis. With Hashem's help, we will overcome.

Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer were the elders; Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon were of the next generation; Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was younger. The students who attended them were younger. When all the generations can confront shared problems together, a new day will dawn.

As our sages of old envisioned a better future, so let us look forward to a new and blessed dawn.