

Redemptive Mourning: Sages' Seder at Bnei Brak and the Productive Act of Memory

At least since the 1980s, when Yosef Haim Yerushalmi published his influential monograph *Zakhor*, questions of memory have occupied a central role in Jewish scholarship. Yerushalmi follows Hannah Arendt in drawing a distinction between Jewish history and memory: history, he argues, is focused on constructing linear narratives with defined teleologies. Memory, on the other hand, is less concerned with chronology and is “by its nature, selective.”¹ In *Zakhor*, Yerushalmi expresses anxiety that modern Judaism has privileged history over memory; this failure of synthesis, he asserts, pushes the community toward a crisis. Yet recent interest in the fragmentary nature of rabbinic literature—a literature born out of the cataclysmic destruction of the Second Temple that Benay Lappe has called “The Crash—” may signal a contemporary renewal in Jewish memory.²

Focusing on the brief, shard-like memories of catastrophic loss may help us better understand what Walter Benjamin famously called “the tradition of the oppressed.”³ Following Benjamin, Susan Buck-Morss has argued for the importance of privileging the fragmentary over the linear; “the detail that counts is the one that arrests the reader because it does not fit that narrative.”⁴ Such a fragment, she asserts, can function as the Paris arcades did for Benjamin—as “a passageway that pierces through the street façade of the present, providing an entry point into the past.”⁵ This approach to memory challenges the nostalgia typologies recently explored by Svetlana Boym.⁶ Boym

¹ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Memory*, (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1982), 8–15.

² Bennay Lappe, “An Unrecognizable Jewish Future: A Queer Talmudic Take,” May, 2014.

³ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in Walter Jennings, ed., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 4, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 389.

⁴ Susan Buck-Morss, “Translations in Time,” *October* 172 (Spring 2020), 149.

⁵ Buck-Morss, 148.

⁶ See, *inter alia*, Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002).

sees acts of memory as either restorative, embracing a dangerous desire to restore a simulacrum of a past that never was, or reflective, forever trapped in a narcissistic sense loss.

I would like to reflect on a famous rabbinic narrative that evidences a different and less pathologized form of memory than those Boym contemplates: the rabbis knew of a kind of memory that engages neither in narcissistic melancholy nor in restorative fantasy. Instead, I hope we witness a trend in rabbinic literature that seeks to memorialize the past in order to redeem the present. As we will discuss below, Enzo Traverso has named this kind of memory “fruitful melancholia.”⁷

A famous story appears toward the beginning of the Passover Haggadah:

A story is told of Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, and Rabbi Akiva, who were reclining in Bnei Brak, and were telling of the Exodus from Egypt all of that evening, until their students came and said to them: Our Rabbis, the time has arrived to recite the morning *shema*.⁸

This tale appears in the Haggadah as a proof for the text which immediately proceeds it: “All who expand on the telling of the Exodus from Egypt are considered praiseworthy.” In this brief narrative, we see many great sages doing exactly that—expanding on the story at such length and with such fervor that their students must interrupt their study for the only ritual obligation that could take precedence: the recitation of the morning prayers. As we shall see, story of the sages is also linked to Elazar ben Azaria’s legal statement which follows it: “Behold, I am like a man of seventy, and yet I have not merited to recall the Exodus from Egypt at night...” While both texts appear in different settings in tractate Brachot in the Babylonian Talmud, here the Haggadah presents the legal and narrative material as a single literary unit, generating additional interpretive implications which demand further exploration.

⁷ Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), 21.

⁸All Haggadah citations from Mordechai Leib Katzenelbogen, ed., *הגדה של פסח: תורת חיים* [*Passover Haggadah: Torat Hayim*] (Jerusalem, Israel: Mosad Harav Kook, 1998). Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

The reception tradition around the Haggadah has long been fascinated with this gathering, which brings together many—but not all—of the greatest rabbinic sages of the first century at a time of profound upheaval. Is there a deeper meaning to this grouping of sages? Can we say, with precision, when exactly they met? Why did they, apparently, travel from their homes to the town of Bnei Brak?

One of the most well-known answers to these questions is of recent origin. In *Hagim u-Moadim (Holidays and Festivals)*, Yehuda Leib Maimon wonders why the sages' disciples are absent from the seder, appearing only at the very end of the meal. He offers this hypothesis:

I speculate, therefore...that this party, which gathered the sages of Israel from a variety of locations, had a double purpose: while its expressed goal was to engage with the memories of the past in the form of the Exodus from Egypt, the sages also hoped to discuss the issues of the day from their national-religious (*datit-leumit*) perspective. They were especially concerned with the rebellion against the Roman Empire, which had recently started to develop in secret among the Jews of Israel and which would culminate in the Bar Kochba Revolt and the Hadrianic War.⁹

Maimon was a significant Zionist religious and political leader: he was a founder of the Mizrachi movement, a seminal religious Zionist political organization. He also founded Mosad ha-Rav Kook, a religious research organization named after Israel's first Chief Rabbi, and served as Israel's first minister of religion. In Maimon's reading of the gathering of sages at Bnei Brak, we see clear reverberations of a Zionist mythology that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. He introduces to the story an element not found in the text—the seder is no longer simply a religious gathering but rather a clandestine conclave planning revolt against Rome. Rabbi Akiva assumes a central role in this reading for his endorsement of Simon Bar Kokhba, the military leader whose doomed campaign against Rome marked the final chapter of Jewish life in Palestine and the true

⁹ Yehuda Leib Maimon, *חגים ומועדים [Holidays and Festivals]*, (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1943), 206.

beginnings of Exile. Yet as Yael Zerubavel has observed, the Zionist movement rehabilitated Bar Kokhba, transforming him into a symbol of Jewish heroism:

The transformation of Bar Kokhba from a dubious leader of a failed revolt to a prominent heroic figure from Antiquity is an important feature of the Zionist reshaping of the past. . . . National pride was a central Zionism theme, and the revolt was important because it symbolized ancient Hebrew's proud and courageous stand. . . . The Zionist commemorative narrative thus shifts its focus from the *outcome* of the revolt to the act of rebelling.¹⁰

Maimon's reading, then, may be a kind of historical artifact: it is revelatory in helping to understand the early Zionist worldview but does little to help us understand the literary context that generated the Haggadah.

A more compelling interpretation can be found in the commentary of Maimon's teacher, the legal authority Yechiel Michael Epstein, better known as the Aruch Ha-Shulchan. In Epstein's commentary on the Passover Haggadah, he observes:

We must look into this—for rabbi Eliezer lived in Lod, Rabbi Yehoshua lived Peki'in, and Rabbi Akiva lived in Bnei Brak. For what purpose did they gather at Rabbi Akiva's home in Bnei Brak?

It appears, in my humble opinion, that this story should be read in accordance with this account in the Talmud:

[Once, Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elezar ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva . . . were coming up to Jerusalem together, and just as they came to Mount Scopus, they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They fell a-weeping and R. Akiba seemed merry.

“Wherefore,” said they to him, “are you merry?”

Said he: “Wherefore are you weeping?”

Said they to him: “A place of which it was once said, ‘And the common man that draws nigh shall be put to death,’ is now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep?”

Said he to them: “Therefore am I merry; for it is written, ‘And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the Son of Jeberechiah.’”

“Now what connection has this Uriah the priest with Zechariah? Uriah lived during the times of the first Temple, while [the other,] Zechariah lived [and prophesied] during the second Temple; but Holy-Writ linked the [later] prophecy of Zechariah with the [earlier] prophecy of Uriah. In the [earlier] prophecy [in the days] of Uriah it is written, ‘Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field etc.’ In Zechariah it is written, ‘Thus saith the

¹⁰ Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 96.

Lord of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem.”

“So long as Uriah’s prophecy had not had its fulfilment, I had misgivings lest Zechariah’s prophecy might not be fulfilled; now that Uriah’s prophecy has been fulfilled, it is quite certain that Zechariah’s prophecy also is to find its literal fulfilment.”

Said they to him: “Akiba, you have comforted us! Akiba, you have comforted us!”¹¹

I say that it was for this reason that the sages gathered at Rabbi Akiva’s home: he strengthened the hopes of the House of Israel *immediately* after the destruction of the temple. Therefore, they all came to the city and the house of Rabbi Akiva—except for Rabban Gamliel, who did not come because he was the *Nasi*.¹²

By setting the Haggadah’s seder within the context of the Talmud, Epstein’s reading invites us to explore some foundational questions. What was the relationship between these sages? How are we to understand their lives in relationship to the destruction of the Temple? Was there something significant about Rabbi Akiva’s personality that caused his colleagues to travel to his home instead of their own? And can we read anything, at all, into the absence of their colleague Rabban Gamliel—whose voice, while absent from Rabbi Akiva’s seder, is essential to the Haggadah? Following Epstein, I would like to suggest a reading that situates the story of the seder at Bnei Brak within a broader context within the Babylonian Talmud specifically and rabbinic literature more generally. Such a reading suggests that the rabbis may have been engaged in a task even more revolutionary than planning a revolt against their Hadrianic oppressors.

We might, then, situate the seder at Bnei Brak within a series of narratives that Daniel Boyarin has called “The Yavneh Cycle.” Boyarin argues that the Babylonian Talmud’s stories of the rabbinic academy at Yavneh are meant to be read collectively and that Yavneh serves as an “icon of

¹¹ BT Makkot 24b in I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian: Tractate Makkoth*, (London: Soncino, 1935).

¹² Yechiel Michael Epstein, *ליל שומרים : הגדה של פסח : ליל שומרים* [*Passover Haggadah: A Night of Vigil*], (Warsaw: 1889), 17–18.

the Stammaitic yeshiva” of the fifth century.¹³ Following Boyarin, Moshe Simon-Shoshan notes that Yavneh functioned a “narrative world” for the redactors of the Talmud that “established the norms on which the society of the *beit midrash* is founded and the ground rules by which rabbinic study, dispute, and are to be conducted.”¹⁴

The Talmud famously tells the tale of how the Academy at Yavneh was founded: during the Roman siege of Jerusalem: Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, the first two protagonists mentioned in our story, hid the great sage Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai in a coffin and smuggled him out of the city. The story goes to relate how, while leaving the city, the trio encountered the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and the quick-witted Rabbi Eliezer was able not only to sweet talk his way out of trouble, but also extract additional promises from the emperor: he secured the protection of Yavneh and guaranteed the safety of Rabban Gamliel, a descendent of both King David and Hillel the Elder, who would serve as *nasi*, leader of the rabbinic court, after Rabbi Yochanan.¹⁵

The other sages at our seder represent a younger, so-called “third” generation of sages: Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaria and Rabbi Akiva are the students in our story and are listed second to illustrate their subordinate position in the chain of transmission. Yet, according to the Talmud, three of the four sages mentioned do share at least one thing in common: they were participants in the controversy that led to the removal of Rabban Gamliel as *nasi*.

Several stories in the Talmud relate how Rabban Gamliel could be particularly cruel, especially to his contemporary, Rabbi Yehoshua.¹⁶ In one well-known incident, Rabban Gamliel

¹³ Daniel Boyarin, “The Yavneh-Cycle of the Stammaim and the Invention of the Rabbis,” in Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, ed., *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggadah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 237–289.

¹⁴ Moshe Simon-Shoshan, “Creator of Worlds: The Deposition of Rabban Gamliel and the Creation of Yavneh,” *AJS Review* vol. 41, no. 2 (November 2017), 287–313.

¹⁵ BT Gittin 56a-56b, Avot D’Rabbi Natan 4:5.

disagreed on the calculation of Yom Kippur. Using his authority as the *nasi*, Rabban Gamliel orders Rabbi Yehoshua to appear before him with his staff and purse on the date Rabbi Yehoshua considered to be Yom Kippur. Rabbi Yehoshua was humiliated and distraught at having to violate the most sacred day of the year, as he understood it, to appease the *nasi*. It took the intervention of Rabbi Akiva—the comforter—to resolve the dispute, appease Rabbi Yehoshua, and honor Rabban Gamliel.¹⁷

In another famous tale, Rabban Gamliel was deposed from leadership of the rabbinic academy. Here, again, in a dispute with Rabbi Yehoshua over whether the evening prayer was obligatory or optional, Rabban Gamliel humiliates his contemporary. He forces the aging Rabbi Yehoshua to stand for hours in the study hall, and ultimately compels him to publicly recant his previous teaching. This shaming is more than their fellows can bear: the assembled sages—including Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Elezar ben Azariah—lock Rabban Gamliel out of the study house and appoint Rabbi Elezar ben Azariah as *nasi* in his place.¹⁸¹⁹²⁰

This rift might explain Rabban Gamliel’s absence from at Bnei Brak. While, again, Rabbi Akiva intercedes to restore harmony by suggesting a rotating leadership of the academy, the damage has been done. Rabban Gamliel’s absence from the seder suggests that he is unable or unwilling to celebrate Passover with his colleagues. The association of the seder at Bnei Brak and Rabban Gamliel’s deposition is suggested by the Haggadah itself: the text that immediately follows is a quote from the Mishna that begins, “Rabbi Elezar ben Azariah said, ‘Behold, I am **like** a man of seventy,

¹⁷ BT Rosh Hashanah, 25a.

¹⁸ BT Brakhot, 27a-28b

¹⁹ For a rich exploration of the comforting role of Rabbi Akiva see Miriam Gedwiser, “Rabbi Akiva the Comforter,” available online from the Drisha Institute: <https://drisha.org/audiolibrary/rabbi-akiva-the-comforter/>.

²⁰ See Avi Poupko, “Lighting Up the Night: The Revolutionary Mandate of a Rabbinic Coup,” *Ateret Tzvi Prize* 5778, 2018. Available online: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/ateret-zvi-journal>.

and yet I have not merited to recall the Exodus from Egypt at night...” The Talmud is captivated by the word “like.” It views it as superfluous and uses the irregular language as hook for another legend. I share the story below, in Emanuel Levinas’ telling:

Rabban Gamliel, head of the rabbinic academy, was too strict a master. He was dismissed for that very excess of severity. A replacement is sought, and Eleazar ben Azariah is designated. He possesses wisdom, material independence and nobility — being descended from Esdras [Ezra] in the tenth generation; responsible for an exceedingly glorious spiritual heritage. Everything seems to portend an eminent role for him. But he is only eighteen years old — without one white hair. Can one teach without innovating? But can one innovate without reference to a tradition, without remaining the contemporary — real or apparent — of the discourse of the past? A miracle was needed! Eighteen rows of white hair appeared on Eleazar ben Azariah’s head — who, at the age of eighteen, henceforth looked seventy, in order that all innovation should derive from earlier forms.²¹

While at a first glance, it may seem that Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaria’s statement—and therefore the legend of his overnight maturation it generates—appears as independent and disconnected from the story of the sages’ seder that proceeds it in the Haggadah, the manuscript tradition suggests reading the two texts together. While the majority of Haggadot today follow the text of Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah’s statement as preserved in the Babylonian Talmud, most extant genizah fragments of the Haggadah offer a critical addition, one also preserved by Maimonides in his Haggadah: they all insert the word להם, “to them.” Thus amended, the text reads “Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah said **to them**, ‘Behold I am like a man of seventy...’” This addition demands that the reader understand this paragraph as continuation of the story of the seder it follows.

A second text also asks us to imagine the sages at Bnei Brak as being in dialogue, in some ways, with the legal and political attitudes that led to the deposition of Rabban Gamliel. While he is absent from the seder in the Haggadah, the Tosefta shares a story of Rabban Gamliel’s own all-night seder:

²¹ Emmanuel Levinas, “Beyond Memory: From Tractate Berakhot 12a–13b” in *In the Time of Nations* (London: Continuum, 2007) 64–79.

A story is told of Rabban Gamliel and the Sages: Once they were reclining at the house of Boethus ben Zonim in Lydda and were occupied with the laws of Passover all evening until the early morning. They removed [the table] from before them, gathered themselves and went to the study hall.²²

While this narrative differs in several ways from the seder in the Haggadah, perhaps the most critical distinction is in the contents of the service. At the seder in Bnei Brak, the sages spend the evening telling the story of the Exodus, while Rabban Gamliel and the unnamed sages with him spend the evening “engaged with the laws of Passover.” What motivates the difference in practice between these two gatherings?

Barry Wimpfheimer has argued for the importance deconstructing the division between so-called halakhic (legal) and aggadic (narrative) in reading the rabbinic literature. At a minimum, he maintains that the narrative material should be read within a legal context or vice versa.²³ Such a methodology is useful here. Immediately prior to the story of the sages, the Haggadah enjoins the act of communal memory: “Even if we were all sages—even if we all knew the Torah, we would still be obligated to tell of the Exodus from Egypt. And all who expand in their telling of the story is deemed praiseworthy.”

Rabban Gamliel’s seder, though, comes as an example of fidelity to a different legal tradition cited in the Tosefta:

One should not consume dessert, such as nuts, dates, or roasted grains, after the [eating] the Passover offering. A person is obligated to occupy themselves with the **laws** of Passover all evening, whether with his son, his students, or even with himself alone.²⁴

We have, then, two traditions about what the content of the Passover seder should be—one that privileges the study of the law and another that centers the seder around the telling of the story. It is

²² Tosefta Pesachim, 10:7.

²³ See Barry Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

²⁴ Tosefta Pesachim, 10:7.

rather surprising that the Judaism ultimately embraced the second approach. Indeed, the liturgy is called the Haggadah—literally, *the telling!* Yet legal debate is at the heart of the rabbinic tradition—why did the sages endorse narrative and memory as a the most appropriate modes of discourse for Passover?

S. Daniel Breslauer argues that these two approaches are reflective of divergent ethical traditions within rabbinic literature. Rabban Gamliel's seder "focuses on actions rather than on thought, on deed rather than on motivation." The seder at Bnei Brak, conversely, is an example of Rabbi Akiva's messianic optimism, even if it predates his revolutionary activities: "The purpose of telling stories is to motivate political action," he argues, "Political action does not precede but depends upon theology. In such a case, theology can succeed even when the political action fails." Breslauer understands the Haggadah's call to remember the Exodus as an example of Abraham Joshua Heschel's "depth theology," which he understands to mean "the sense of divine challenge and the desire of human beings to answer that challenge."²⁵ Or, as Heschel writes, "[t]heology declares. Depth theology evokes....Theology deals with permanent facts. Depth theology deals with moments."²⁶

Similarly, Levinas asserts that the memory of a singular moment—the Exodus—becomes the very *breath* of Jewish existence. Reflecting on Eleazar ben Azaria's enjoinder to recall the Exodus in the evening that follows the seder in the Haggadah, he writes:

The going forth from Egypt — the Exodus — and the evocation of that exodus in which freedom was given to a people, the coming to the foot of Mount Sinai where that freedom culminated in Law, constituted a privileged past, the very form of the past, as it were. But by the same token it is a thought virtually obsessed by the theme of freeing slaves.... Here we

²⁵ S. Daniel Breslauer, "When Halakha is Haggadah: The Ethics of the Passover Seder," *Shofar* 3, no. 4 (1985), 5-18.

²⁶ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence*, (New York: Noonday Books, 1967), 118.

have a dimension of the memorable and as it were the spirituality — or the respiration — of consciousness, which already, in its content of presence, is memory of affranchisement, and lived concretely as the soul of freedmen. The Jew is free qua affranchised: his memory is immediately compassion for all the enslaved or all the wretched of the earth, and a special flair for that wretchedness that the wretched themselves are prone to forget.²⁷

Perhaps, by including the seder at B'nei Berak and excluding Rabban Gamliel's seder at Lod, the editors of the Haggadah were simply preserving the tradition best known to them by its transmission in the Babylonian Talmud. It seems, though, that the text is making a more sweeping claim about the function of memory as a redemptive act.

In the rabbi's telling, the two Passover meals come at a time of crisis for the Jewish community: the Jerusalem Temple lies in ruins, and Jewish ritual practice must find a way to move forward. In recalling the specific laws of Passover as they would have been followed in the Temple, Rabban Gamliel is memorializing a recent past to which he was a direct witness. A psychoanalytic reading might suggest that Rabban Gamliel is trapped in a pathologized melancholy: he longs to maintain and restore those customs and rituals that were central to his identity when the Temple stood. This perhaps contributes to the lack of empathy he displays toward his contemporaries. In Rabban Gamliel's world, there is no room for the kind of innovative teaching that Levinas sees manifest in Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah. How can one innovate? "Our Temple has become the haunt of foxes. Should we not weep?"

At the seder at Bnei Brak, another mode of memory prevails. Where Rabban Gamliel wept, Akiva laughed. These sages are no less traumatized—they are the products of the same calamity as Rabban Gamliel. They deploy, though, a messianic vision of history that sees the world not through the lachrymose lens of recent destruction but rather with an eye—or, better still, a soul—toward

²⁷ Levinas, "Beyond Memory."

past and future redemptions. Telling the tale of redemption is an act of defiance against destruction. How are we to understand such an approach to memory?

The philosopher Enzo Traverso has contemplated the fate of Marxism after the collapse of the Soviet Union and has suggested an approach to mourning that might also be applied to Rabbi Akiva: “This melancholia does not mean lamenting a lost utopia, but rather rethinking a revolutionary project in a nonrevolutionary age. This is a fruitful melancholia that, one could say with Judith Butler, implies the transformative effect of loss.” Traverso also offers a moving example of this kind of “fruitful melancholia:”

One of the most significant examples of a fruitful work of mourning that, instead of paralyzing action, stimulates it in a self-reflexive and conscious way deals with the reactions of gay activists to the disruptive consequences of AIDS, a pandemic whose outbreak coincided with the fall of communism.... Rather than escaping melancholia, [activists] channeled it toward a fruitful work of reconstruction, creating medical centers, assuring psychological care, defending recently achieved rights, and rebuilding a network of associations. Act Up was the product of a fruitful, political melancholia.²⁸

Rabbi Akiva’s approach to memory is similarly productive. As Gillian Rose has written in another context, “Not to tell the story...would make the occurrence of the catastrophe absolute: it would fix the catastrophe as the meaning, or, rather, as the devastation, of meaning.”²⁹ Conversely, for Rabbi Akiva and his fellows, telling the tale of redemption and plunging its interpretive depths while experiencing their own personal loss inspires them to work for a better future. Instead of striving to rebuild an irreplaceable past, their memories remind them of what was and what might be possible again: as Levinas asserts, the Exodus is evidence that it is possible, against all odds, to move from suffering to freedom. In renewing this memory, then Rabbi Akiva and his fellows were

²⁸ Traverso, 21.

²⁹ Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation*, (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 100.

simultaneously bearing witness to a redeemed past and calling on each other to be agents in creating holier future. It is in this way that Akiva brings comfort to his colleagues. And it is, perhaps, for this reason that today new approaches to Jewish memory are ascendant: we live in a turbulent time, when the impacts of catastrophes beyond name are regularly experienced by so many. While petty tyrants may call on their followers to seek refuge in imagined pasts that never were, Rabbi Akiva's seder teaches us that embedded within crisis is the promise of redemption, if we only seek it out and heed its call to action.