

The Story of Five Rabbis

Contributed by [VBS](#)

Source: VBS Haggadah

Five rabbis, living under the Roman oppression in the second century, gather for a Seder and lose track of the time, until reminded by their students that dawn has come. Some scholars suggest that they used this Seder, with its themes of liberation from oppression, to plan a revolution. With their students posted as look-outs to warn of the approach of Roman authorities, the debate raged all night long:

Pacifism or militant revolt? Is there a right time to take up arms against an enemy? Do the ends of revolution justify the means of violence? Is war ever justified? Does Judaism require political freedom, political power to survive? May we step away from the world of politics and practice our spirituality, oblivious to the material conditions of human existence? Or is our spirituality tied intimately to the real lives of our people? Perhaps it was the passion of their teachers in debate, that moved the students to exclaim: Dawn has arrived!

-

A story is told of Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Tarfon, who were sitting at a Seder in B'nay Brock. All night long, they told the story of the Exodus from Egypt until their students came and said to them: "Our teachers, dawn has broken, it is time to say the morning prayer!"

-

"Pharonic oppression, deliverance, Sinai, and Canaan are still with us as powerful memories shaping our perceptions of the political world. The "door of hope" is still open; things are

not what they might be even when what they might be isn't totally different from what they are. This is a central theme in Western thought, always present though elaborated in many different ways. We still believe, or many of us do, what the Exodus first taught, or what it has commonly been taken to teach about the meaning and possibility of politics and about its proper form:

First, that wherever you live, it is probably Egypt;

Second, that there is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land;

Third, that "the way to the land is through the wilderness." There is no way to get there from here to there except by joining together and marching.

—Michael Walzer

-

Baruch Ha-Mokum. Baruch Hoo. Baruch Sheh-Natan Torah L'amo Yisrael. Baruch Hoo. Praised is God. Praised is the One who gave Torah to the People Israel. Praised is God.