

There's A Darkness Upon Me That's Flooded in Light
Rabbi Neil Sandler
Tisha B'av 5782/August 7, 2022

*From "Keeping the faith: Hope and resilience in Times of Despair" –
Kelilah Miller*

Makkot 24b

Rabbi Akiva and his companions were traveling past the site of the destroyed Temple.

When they arrived at the Temple Mount, they saw a fox coming out of the place that had been the Holy of Holies. They began weeping, and Rabbi Akiva was laughing. They said to him: For what reason are you laughing? Rabbi Akiva said to them: For what reason are you weeping?

They said: This is the place that was once so holy that only priests could tread there, and now foxes walk in it. Shall we not weep? Rabbi Akiva said to them: That is why I am laughing! In the prophecy of Uriah, it is written: "Therefore, for your sake Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become rubble, and the Temple Mount as the high places of a forest" (Micah 3:12), where foxes are found. In the prophecy of Zechariah, it is written: "There shall yet be elderly men and elderly women sitting in the streets of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 8:4). ...

Now that the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled, it is evident that the prophecy of Zechariah will also be fulfilled.... The Sages said to him: Akiva, you have comforted us; Akiva, you have comforted us...

(Translation adapted and abridged for clarity)

Unknown Source

Joshua and Caleb, two of the twelve men sent to spy on Canaan, shared a view different from their companions. They believed that the people could successfully take the land. And while they suffered wandering through the wilderness for 40 years due to the weeping of their people, they were also the only two of those original spies who settled in Canaan. They showed that by saying "we can," they could.

Yismach Yisrael on Pesach Haggadah, Magid, First Fruits Declaration 2:3

The evil inclination causes us to sin through **despair**. It forces us to see our shortcomings and inadequacies and makes us lose hope of fulfilling God's service. We thereby fall into the net of sinfulness. We need to strengthen ourselves by acknowledging that we are precious to God and that each of us contains a piece of the divine.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

In everything you do you encounter sparks full of life and light, aspiring to rise toward the heights. You help them and they help you.

Micah 7:8

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy (reference to Damascus)! Though I have fallen, I rise again; Though I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The Dignity of Difference, p. 177

One of the most important distinctions I have learned in the course of reflection on Jewish history is the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the faith that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope. Knowing what we do of our past, no Jew can be an optimist. But Jews have never – despite a history of sometimes awesome suffering – given up hope. Not by accident did they call the national anthem of their new state Hatikvah, meaning, the hope.