

# The Rav's commentary on the Haggadah

## A Lesson regarding the dipping in saltwater

We must dip in saltwater. This is the first dipping. It corresponds to the secret of the Splitting of the Sea; that they crossed; that they בקעו the Sea. Preceding [the dipping in the Charoses is dipping the] Karpas [in saltwater]. This corresponds to the six-hundred thousand [the Nation of Israel] that toiled in labor and crossed in the salty waters of the Sea; this is saltwater. And afterwards, we perform the second dipping [of the Charoses].

We dip specifically in saltwater and specifically in Charoses. Since the salt water corresponds to the Splitting of the Sea; that there Pharaoh drowned. "The Chariots of Pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea and his army He shot in the Sea." Inside the saltwater, Pharaoh drowned. And afterwards, we dip a second time in Charoses. Charoses is the secret of 'Chas [Ruth] Rus (חס רות).' So, says the Ari in Pri Etz Chaim; that the entire redemption is through Ruth. The entire redemption [from] Egypt is through Ruth. Since through Ruth, who was a convert, who [represents] the soul of converts, only through her was it possible for there to be a redemption.

## A lesson regarding the importance of relating miracles

Whoever relates more miracles, he merits to see more miracles. According to how much one prolongs the Seder Night, until the 'light of the morning,' and he relates the miracles and the wonders, in this way he merits that miracles and wonders that never existed in the world are revealed to and for him. Since G-d wants to perform for every single generation miracles and wonders that never existed in the world. And this is all dependent now on the joy of Pesach; in the intellects of Pesach that will be received during the Seder Night and they are drawn down throughout the seven days.

The main [purpose] of the entire creation is only to testify regarding the Creator. Just as the verse says, "This Nation I formed; they shall say my תהילה." A person is created only to להלל and give thanks to G-d; only to sing before G-d. This is [the purpose of] His entire creation. And prayer is the thanksgiving. Prayer is the true thanksgiving that one enjoys singing to G-d, may He be blessed.

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Why did they all travel to Rebbi Akiva; to B'nei Brak. How is it that Rebbi Eliezer and Rebbi Yehoshua are traveling to Rebbi Akiva? How is it that Rebbi Akiva allows his teachers to travel to him?

Rather, when Pesach arrives, the mitzvah is to see the miracles and wonder during one's entire life. The Seder Night arrives; the seven days of Pesach arrive; how can one be joyous? How can one dance? Behold, everyone has [their own] baggage [of sins]. With what means will he be joyous? With what means will he dance? And then [in order to be joyous despite one's sins], every person needs to open the Book of Memories and remind himself only of the good things; only of the wonderful things that happened to him; of the wonderful things that occurred to him since the day he was born until today.

And this was the greatness of Rebbi Akiva. He, about everything said, 'everything is for the good.' His candle blew out; a lion came, it ate his donkey; a cat came, it ate his rooster; everything is for the good.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, all of them [the Sages mentioned here in the Haggadah] travelled to Rebbi Akiva.

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<sup>1</sup> See Tractate Brachos 60b that Rebbi Akiva once went into a city and did not find an inn to stay in. He said 'everything that G-d does is for the good,' and he decided to stay in a field. He had along with him a candle, a rooster and a donkey. A wind came and blew out the candle, a cat came and ate the rooster, and a lion came and ate the donkey. Rebbi Akiva said 'everything that G-d does is for the good.' Soon afterwards, an enemy army

Since Reb Yosi derived that there were ten [plagues] in Egypt. And in the Sea, there were fifty. And Rebbi Eliezer derived that in Egypt, there were forty [plagues]. And in the Sea two-hundred; this is 240. Came Rebbi Akiva and he derived, in Egypt fifty, and in the Sea two-hundred and fifty. Rebbi Akiva knew to derive the most miracles. Since Rebbi Akiva was completely [the quality of] delivering one's soul. Rebbi Akiva was entirely, "And You shall love G-d with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your assets." [Rebbi Akiva desired to fulfill serving G-d with 'all of your soul' literally.] "Hear O Israel, G-d is our Lord; G-d is One;"<sup>2</sup> four death penalties. "All of my days I was troubled by this verse." All of the time he thought about the four death penalties; about stoning, burning, sword, and strangulation. His entire life he thought about saying Shema; how he will deliver his soul with the four death penalties. The Rebbi says that he thought about all of the four death penalties. And now that it has come to my hands, will I not fulfill it?<sup>3</sup> His entire life is only delivering his soul; only to deliver the soul to the Holy One blessed be He.

A person like this who lives only for delivering his soul to the Holy One blessed be He, then he sees every second miracles. Every second is 'this is also for the good.' And then he is able to derive 250 [plagues] upon the sea and 50 in Egypt.

Therefore, all of the plagues when combining all of the counts together [of the different sages]; ten and fifty of Reb Yosi equals sixty, and another 240 of Rebbi Eliezer is 300, Rebbi Akiva is fifty and another 250 which is another 300; behold the sum total is 600. "Datzach' Adash' Beachav ( דצ"ך עד"ש ) ( באה"ב ),<sup>4</sup> behold another ten; everything together equals 610. And another three wonders beforehand that Moshe took water, poured it upon the ground; it turned into blood, he threw the staff, it turned into a snake, and he placed his hand [and] removed it, it received leprosy and "returned like the rest of his flesh;" everything together is 613 miracles.

[The meaning behind this is] that every single mitzvah that we merit to fulfill; this is a miracle; this is a wonder. Every single mitzvah is a wonderful miracle. Every single mitzvah that a person fulfills is a wonderful miracle. Therefore, we have exactly 613 [mitzvos to equal] the count of the miracles; corresponding to the 613 mitzvos.

Therefore, they [the Sages] all traveled to Rebbi Akiva. Since he was capable of deriving for every movement; for everything he was capable of deriving another miracle. Another miracle, another miracle, another miracle; for every movement a miracle.

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## A lesson regarding the relevance of 'Shema' to the Seder

Reb Aharon of Karlin says; what is the explanation of - that they [the students] stopped them; what is the explanation that the students arrived and said that the time for Kriyas Shema has arrived? They waited already that it should be the end of the time for Kriyas Shema; what is going on here? [What is the relevance of Kriyas Shema?]

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came to the city that Rebbi Akiva planned to stay in and captured the city. Rebbi Akiva said [seemingly to his students] that had he stayed in the inn, he himself would have been captured. And had he had along with him a candle, rooster, or a donkey, the army would have heard them or seen his light and captured him. 'Did I not tell you that everything that G-d does is for the good?'

<sup>2</sup> When Rebbi Akiva was dying, he said "Hear O Israel, G-d is our Lord; G-d is One."

<sup>3</sup> Rebbi Akiva's students, when seeing Rebbi Akiva dying asked, "This is the Torah and this is its reward?"

Rebbi Akiva answered that all of his days he was troubled as to how to fulfill the verse, "With all of your soul." Now that it has come to my hands to fulfill the verse, will I not fulfill it?

<sup>4</sup> Reb Yehuda's acronym for the Ten Plagues.

Reb Aharon of Karlin explains that the entire concept that we are relating the exodus of Egypt; all of the praises are all to achieve, “Me and not an angel; Me and not a seraph; Me and not a messenger; Me and not another;” that we should know that there is a Holy One blessed be He in the world. And a person is unable to know that there is the Holy One blessed be He in the world, other than through His miracles and wonders.

A person in general is broken, shattered and in despair and he doesn't see the Holy One blessed be He. He doesn't merit to see. And through this that we sit and relate the exodus of Egypt the entire night, a special light descends that [through it], it is possible now to scream, “Hear O Israel; G-d is our Lord; G-d is One.”

And this is what they [the students] said. Our sages, after your meriting to relate the entire night the miracles and wonders, you know that G-d is One and His name is One. So, now the moment has arrived to scream, “Hear O Israel, G-d is our Lord; G-d is One.” So, now let us scream “Hear O Israel [etc.]”

A person's entire service of G-d is that he should be able to scream, “Hear O Israel, G-d is our Lord; G-d is One.” Therefore, Rabbi Akiva came and derived 250 plagues; Rabbi Eliezer Hagadol (the Great) came and derived 200 plagues; Rabbi Yosi HaGalili came and derived fifty plagues.

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## Another lesson regarding the relevance of ‘Shema’ to the Seder

### The Sages illuminated the night and revealed that ‘G-d is One’

The Zera Kodesh [authored by] Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz says that the holy Tannaim, Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Tarfon, Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azariah, they illuminated the night. They were relating [the exodus of Egypt] the entire night. [The word, “To relate (לספר)”] is similar to “sapphire (ספיר)” i.e. shining; they illuminated the night; there became such a light. At dawn, the students saw such a light; they said, “Our teachers, ‘G-d is One!’ We must scream, “Hear O Israel, G-d is our Lord, G-d is One;” only G-d! There is nothing! Only G-d is One! We must see this during every moment. During every moment we must see that G-d is One. Not only that once upon a time there was the exodus of Egypt; rather, during every single moment we must see that G-d is One.

Through words of Torah, we must draw down such an illumination that there should be, “G-d is One;” that everyone should see “G-d is One.” And the students suddenly saw such an illumination; they were unable to sleep due to their profuse relating [the exodus of Egypt] throughout the entire night. So, the students were also unable to sleep. They related [the exodus of Egypt] here [in our physical world] and the students saw the amazing light that radiates throughout all of the worlds.

Just like the Maggid sent to notify Reb Aharon of Karlin that your [saying the] Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs) is disturbing me from sleeping! Since it radiates throughout all of the worlds. I can't fall asleep! They related the exodus of Egypt the entire night; they illuminated the entire night with such a light that in the morning, the students screamed, “G-d is One! We see only, “G-d is One.”

There became such a great light that they uplifted the entire generation. At that night, they uplifted everyone; all of the students, they uplifted to such a light that the entire light radiated; it was a watch night [a night without sleeping]. And in that generation, at that night they illuminated it [the night] literally with the light of the redemption. Just like they [The Jews in Egypt] saw during the Seder Night of the exodus from Egypt; like the night of the festival's sanctification [i.e. the night of the actual exodus from Egypt]. And everyone saw G-d face to face.

## Why did the Sages travel specifically to Rabbi Akiva?

That illumination, Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azariah, and Rabbi Tarfon succeeded to draw. Therefore, they travelled to Rabbi Akiva. Since Rabbi Akiva, they knew would be able to draw down this illumination. Since Rabbi Akiva ‘forged his dealings’ (to forgive and to be flexible with others). When a person forgoes his insults, then he is able to draw down this illumination; to show that G-d is One; there is nothing else!

## How does one forge his dealings? By knowing that everything is G-d

What does it mean to ignore being insulted? [What relevance does realizing that G-d is One (the illumination of the Seder Night) have with forgoing one’s dealings?] That which people do to him he says, this, G-d did it. David said, G-d said to curse David.<sup>5</sup> When one knows that G-d does [everything], then [one knows that] they [G-dly ministers] sent me Shimi, the son of Gera.

Immediately after illuminating this illumination, immediately we say, “Blessed is ‘The Place’ [G-d who is ‘The Place of the world’]; Blessed is He; The Torah spoke corresponding to four children.” [What is the relevance between the illumination that the Sages revealed to “Blessed is He?”] Now, it has been made clear that all of the wicked people in the world that curse and scorn, all of them are actually demons and spirits that G-d created them. They’re not at all people. And had it not been for these wicked people, there would be no atonement for the Tzaddikim; there would be no rectification for the Tzaddikim. A person commits transgressions; he sinned sins; [by doing so] he created stripped souls; he created demons and spirits! It’s the demons that he created, these wicked people.

They revealed such a great light that it is possible to say, “Blessed is G-d” even about a wicked person. It is possible to say, “Blessed is the Creator of wicked people in the world that will atone for our sins.

## A lesson regarding the “story (מעשה)” about the Sages

During the Pesach night, the Hidden World radiates into the Revealed World until the point that it is possible to draw the 370 lights of the resurrection of the dead. [Therefore, we read during Pesach the Haftarah of the resurrection of the dead. This is] the secret of “A baby shall ‘play (שעשע) over a viper’s hole.”<sup>6</sup> This is the [same] secret of “A story (מעשה)”<sup>7</sup> about Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Akiva and their friends; that they wanted to draw the 370 lights; the מ"ע מ"ה of the resurrection of the dead. Through them [the above-mentioned letters of מ"ע מ"ה], it is possible to attain a complete nullification; the aspect of, “And we are ‘what (מה)”.<sup>8</sup> This verse relates [the quality of ‘what (מה)] to Moshe and Aharon; that they merited through it [‘what (מה)] to remove the Children of Israel from Egypt.

## Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azariah completed Shmuel Hanavi’s life-time

It is mentioned in the Haggadah of the Ari that Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azariah was a spark of Shmuel Hanavi (Samuel the Prophet). Shmuel Hanavi lived fifty-two years and Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azariah was eighteen years old. And he [Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azariah] says, “Behold I am today seventy years.”<sup>9</sup> He completed the eighteen years of Shmuel Hanavi. He was such a sage and

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<sup>5</sup> Shimi, the son of Gera, the head of the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court), publicly humiliated and cursed David. Avishay, the son of Tzeruyah told David; let me go and behead him! David told him that he is simply a messenger of G-d. G-d sent him to curse me.

<sup>6</sup> The numerical value of שעשע equals 370. This word seems to allude to the 370 lights twice.

<sup>7</sup> The word “מעשה” consists of the letters שעשע.

<sup>8</sup> “What (מה)” i.e. being nothing alludes to complete nullification.

<sup>9</sup> He is as if he is seventy years old when we add the fifty-two years of Shmuel Hanavi.

such a Tzaddik. There are Tzaddikim that at the age of eighteen, they already complete [the purpose] of a different Tzaddik. Therefore, he is as if he is seventy years. And he is the continuation of Shmuel Hanavi. Therefore, he says, "I am as if I am seventy years old."