

Give us a wave: miracles and fear at the Red Sea

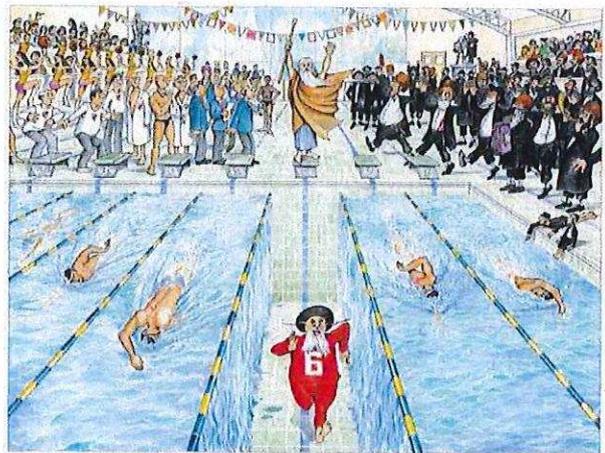
Text 1 – Exodus 14:5-11, 15-16, 21-29

Pharaoh and his courtiers had a change of heart about the people and said, "What is this we have done, releasing Israel from our service?" He ordered his chariot and took his men with him; he took six hundred of his picked chariots, and the rest of the chariots of Egypt, with officers in all of them. God stiffened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he gave chase to the Israelites. As the Israelites were departing defiantly, the Egyptians gave chase to them, and all the chariot horses of Pharaoh, his horsemen, and his warriors overtook them encamped by the sea.

As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites caught sight of the Egyptians advancing upon them. Greatly frightened, the Israelites cried out to the Eternal One. And they said to Moses, "Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness?"

Then the Eternal One said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to Me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. And you lift up your rod and hold out your arm over the sea and split it, so that the Israelites may march into the sea on dry ground."

Then Moses held out his arm over the sea and God drove back the sea with a strong east wind all that night, and turned the sea into dry ground. The waters were split, and the Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.



The Egyptians came in pursuit after them into the sea, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and horsemen. At the morning watch, God looked down upon the Egyptian army from a pillar of fire and cloud, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. God locked the wheels of their chariots so that they moved forward with difficulty. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Eternal one is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then God said to Moses, "Hold out your arm over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians and upon their chariots and upon their horsemen." Moses held out his arm over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal state, and the Egyptians fled at its approach. But God hurled the Egyptians into the sea. The waters turned back and covered the chariots and the horsemen, Pharaoh's entire army that followed them into the sea: not one of them remained. → *angels sang*

But the Israelites had marched through the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Text 2 – Talmud, Megillah 20b and Shabbat 32a

There was a dilapidated wall in Neharde'a, under which Rav and Shmuel would not pass, although it stood in place thirteen years. One day the great sage Rav Adda bar Ahava happened to come there and walked with them. As they passed the wall, Shmuel said to Rav: "Come, Master, let us circumvent this wall, so that we do not stand beneath it." Rav said to him: "It is
5 not necessary to do so today, as Rav Adda bar Ahava is with us, whose merit is great, and therefore I am not afraid of its collapse."

Rabbi Yannai would examine the ferry before crossing the water in it, saying, "A person should never stand in a place of danger saying that they on High will perform a miracle for them, lest in the end they do not perform a miracle for them. And, moreover, even if they do perform a
10 miracle for them, they will deduct it from the person's merits." Similarly, Rabbi Zeira would not go out and walk among the palm trees on a day when there was a southern wind blowing due to the fear that the trees might fall on him.

Rav Huna had a certain quantity of wine in a certain dilapidated house and he wanted to move it, but he was afraid that the building would collapse upon his entry. He brought Rav Adda bar
15 Ahava to there, to the ramshackle house, and he dragged out a discussion with him concerning a matter of Jewish law until they had removed all the wine. As soon as they exited, the building collapsed. Rav Adda bar Ahava realized what had happened and became angry.

The Gemara relates another story about the righteous deeds of the Sages involving a dilapidated wall. On every cloudy day they would take Rav Adda bar Ahava out in a golden
20 carriage, and he and I would survey the entire city. And he would command that every unstable wall be torn down, lest it fall in the rain and hurt someone. If its owner was able to build another, Rav Huna would instruct them to rebuild it. And if they were unable to rebuild it, Rav Huna would build it himself with his own money.

25 *Text 3 – Talmud, Sotah 37b*

Rabbi Meir would say: "When the Jewish people stood at the Red Sea, the tribes were arguing with one other. This one was saying: I am going into the sea first, and that one was saying: I am going into the sea first."

Rabbi Yehuda said to Rabbi Meir: "That is not how the incident took place. Rather, this tribe
5 said: I am not going into the sea first, and that tribe said: I am not going into the sea first. Then, in jumped the prince of Judah, Nahshon ben Amminadab, and descended into the sea first."