

# **A Seder Reading: Miracles That Are Awakenings**

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And the Israelites cried out on that October day... after one of the most horrific terror attacks in the history of their nation.

Their anguish poured out from unimaginable horror—murder, destruction, desecration, and mass kidnapping—leaving a searing pain unlike anything they had known before.

And their pleas of help rose up to G-d. And G-d heard their groaning, and He remembered His covenant with them. And with signs and wonders and a mighty hand and an outstretched arm... He came to them....

**And akin to the ten miraculous plagues, He brought ten miracles to Am Yisrael.**

But in THIS moment in modern-day history, instead of acting alone as He did in ancient times, with the Israelites as passive bystanders, here the Holy One, Blessed by He, joined hand in hand with Am Yisrael to bring about the miracles that saved the Jewish people from their enemies.

1. On October 7 and the immediate days after, Hashem gave countless Israelis – both soldiers and ordinary citizens - the extraordinary courage to fight with all their might to save lives and defend against the attack of terrorists, even when it meant risking and in many cases sacrificing their own lives.

2. Hashem inspired Israelis—and Jews the world over—to put aside their differences and stand united to support in every way possible our soldiers and those who were injured, emotionally harmed, displaced, or in terrible grief and distress over their lost or missing loved ones.

3. He gave our IDF soldiers the strength to go into battle and fight arduously and heroically against the enemy for longer periods of time than ever before, until Hamas was no longer in a position to be a threat of significance to our people.

4. He gave the hostages the unfathomable courage to survive in the worst conditions imaginable, despite hunger, mental and physical torture, and abuse by their captors.

5. He reawakened in so many of us a deeper connection to our Judaism as a source of strength, comfort, and peoplehood. He led us to feel and connect to His presence in ways we never had before.

6. He helped us succeed in removing the evil leadership of Hamas who sought our destruction—including Saleh al-Arouri, Marwan Issa, Muhamed Deif, Yahya Sinwar, Muhammad Sinwar, and Ismail Haniyeh. These men built a regime of terror whose obsession with Israel's destruction brought devastation not only upon Israelis but also upon the people of Gaza themselves. Like Pharaoh before them, their cruelty and reckless pursuit of our destruction tragically led to the suffering and death of thousands of Gazan civilians who lived under their rule.

7. He brought down the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, one of the greatest enemy states of Israel, and helped the IDF destroy their advanced weaponry capabilities.

8. He enabled Israel through mind-bending ingenuity to destroy much of Hezbollah's power through the beeper/pager campaign, the death of Hassan Nasrallah and his associates, and the continuing operations to weaken this evil force.

9. He gave Israel, with the partnership of the United States, the ability to deal an incredibly powerful blow to the head of the snake - Iran - with military maneuvering that has defied all odds - so that its ability to threaten Israel's future has been profoundly weakened.

10. And He gave what felt like the truly greatest gift of all - a gift we fought voraciously for and prayed for but feared was not possible. He brought every hostage home.... some to the loving arms of their families and friends...and some to a resting place of honor with respect and dignity. And with this we were finally freed from the grip of Gaza.

With all of this, we were largely released from the growing axis of evil intent on the destruction of our precious State of Israel.

And it happened that when the Jewish people saw the wondrous power of the Lord.... when they beheld His strength, His compassion, and His loving care for His people ...

When they gathered around their tables on the Pesach that followed... reliving the miracles that freed their forefathers from slavery... it gave them the powerful opportunity to say:

**Hashem is with us and remains our protector, partner and guiding force as we journey on as Am Yisrael through history. Just as He brought us out of EGYPT, from our suffering and pain, so too has He helped our Jewish Homeland survive and succeed against our enemies so that we can fight for peace and stability for future generations.**

The late great Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Z”L wrote:

*Jewish mystics distinguished between two types of Divine-human encounter. They called them itaruta de-l’eylah and itaruta deletara, respectively “an awakening from above” and “an awakening from below.” The first is initiated by G-d, the second by humankind. An “awakening from above” is spectacular, supernatural, an event that bursts through the chains of causality that at other times binds the natural world. An “awakening from below” has no such grandeur. It is a gesture that is human, all too human.*

*But there is another difference between them, in the opposite direction. An “awakening from above” may change nature, but it does not, in and of itself, change human nature. In it, no human effort has been expended. Those to whom it happens are passive. While it lasts, it is overwhelming, but only while it lasts. Thereafter, people revert to what they were. An “awakening from below”, by contrast, leaves a permanent mark.*

*Because human beings have taken the initiative, something in them changes. Their horizons of possibility have been expanded. They now know they are capable of great things, and because they did so once, they are aware that they can do so again. An “awakening from above” temporarily transforms the external world; an “awakening from below” transforms our internal world. The first changes the universe. The second changes us.*

It is hard to imagine that Rabbi Sacks wrote this for anything other than this moment, as THIS “awakening from below” is arguably the most powerful force we’ve encountered in Jewish history. As we sit at our seder tables remembering the “awakening from above” that was the Exodus from Egypt, hopefully each one of us will feel the energy of this present force reverberate through us. Hopefully each of us will realize that this “awakening from below” gives us a responsibility in this moment: To keep the force going strong. To continue the legacy of the giants who have stood tall since that fateful October day. To be strong and proud members of Am Yisrael. To stand united with each other. To summon each of our unique, divinely inspired abilities. To counter those who are against us, in whatever ways that may be. To awaken our Jewish spirit ever more strongly and use it to build and secure a brave and bright future.

G-d brought us out of Egypt and inspired us to be a nation capable of great things. With the strength of his divine partnership, may we continue this greatness and continue to pass it on, adding new stories of miracles to pass down, seder table to seder table, through the years.