

# A Fish Tale

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Source: Gerald Weiss (modified)

## Gefilte Fish - A Mythical Midrash

According to Ashkenazi Jewish custom, we eat Gefilte fish on Passover. The question arose as to why Gefilte fish is so closely associated with Passover, and why it seems to appear on so many Seder tables.

Here is one answer:

When the Israelites found themselves trapped between the Sea of Reeds (sometimes mistakenly called the Red Sea) and the pursuing Egyptian chariots, they panicked. They cried to Moses, who cried to God who said: wait, let me think ...

*Aha!*

As it happens, in a quirky moment during the evolutionary process, God created an odd kind of sea creature. It was awkward looking and lumpy, with no fins, no scales, no eyes, no tail...and very, very pale. *Yuch!* So God stuck this evolutionary oddity in an out of the way place where it could live out its life-cycle in peace, unobserved. God put this wild Gefilte fish species in only one body of water on Earth – somewhat off the beaten path – in the Sea of Reeds (again, often mistakenly called the Red Sea) – where the species lived and multiplied in obscurity for ages.

So anyway, suddenly, God, who has a really long memory, remembered the wild Gefilte fish and the unique capability they developed, namely, the ability to suck in and hold 40 times (400 times, according to Rabbi Akiva) their weight in water.

And God spoke to the wild Gefilte, numbering in the tens of thousands, saying, "OK, fellas, at the count of three, SUCK IN!" All at once, tens of thousands of wild Gefilte fish made a whooshing, sucking sound, as they simultaneously sucked in so much water that the middle of the Sea of Reeds (yes, often mistakenly called the Red Sea) dried up and a path opened up for the Israelites, enabling them to cross to the other side. BUT, when the Egyptian chariots tried to follow them across the dry sea bed, the wild Gefilte fish, unable to HOLD 40 times their weight in water (or 400 times, according to Rabbi Akiva) any longer, let go, and the ensuing tsunami swept the Egyptian chariots away.

Israel was saved, and with tambourines and song, they praised God for God's foresight in creating the now heroic and celebrated, albeit rather unattractive, wild Gefilte fish.

So, from that day to this, in gratitude for the part they played in rescuing Israel at the Red Sea (oh, whatever), the wild Gefilte fish were domesticated and granted a place of honor on the Seder table.

Now, how's THAT for a fish story?