

# Dayenu!

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Source:

## How Dry?

In the *Dayenu* hymn, sung at the Passover Seder, we enumerate fifteen things that G-d did for us when He liberated us from Egypt and took us to be His chosen people. We thank G-d for each of these things individually, recognizing each as a distinct and unique gift. Thus we say: "If He had taken us out of Egypt, but had not punished [the Egyptians] -- it would have sufficed for us...." "If He had fed us the manna, but had not given us the Shabbat -- it would have sufficed for us...." and so on.

In the stanza that relates to the Splitting of the Sea, we sing:

*If He had split the sea for us, but did not take us across it on dry land--it would have sufficed for us*

Many of the commentaries on the Haggadah are puzzled by the meaning of these lines: what does it mean that it would have sufficed for us if G-d had split the sea for us but did not take us across it on dry land? Of what use would the splitting of the sea have been to us, had it not enabled us to cross to the other side and escape Pharaoh's pursuing armies?

The Avudraham (classic commentary on the Siddur by Rabbi David Avudraham, 14th-century Spain) explains that the emphasis is on the fact that we crossed the sea *on dry land*. In order to save us from the Egyptians, it would have been enough that the sea split and we trudged through the mud and silt that naturally covers the sea bottom. To show His love for His people, G-d performed an additional miracle, making our path as dry and firm as land that has never been covered by water.

But the fifteen things enumerated by the author of *Dayenu* are not simply a list of miracles performed by G-d in the course of the Exodus (of which there were many others), but major developments in Jewish history: the Exodus itself, the splitting of the sea, the manna, the giving of the Torah, the entry into the Holy Land, the building of the Holy Temple -- events that profoundly impacted our lives as Jews to this very day. What, then, is the lasting significance of the fact that not only did the sea split for us, but that it also revealed to us a wholly dry passage through its depths?