בס"ד

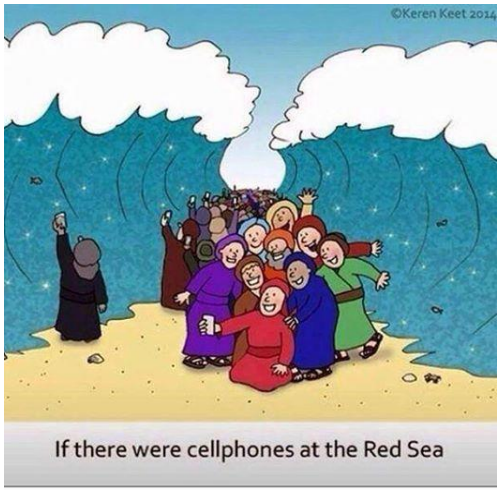
Paths in the Red Sea: Redemption Narratives and Limits of Pluralism

Tzvi Benoff

1. Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer 42

Rabbi Eliezer said, [At the time of the parting of the Red Sea], the waters congealed to form twelve parts for each of the Twelve Tribes. And [the water] formed walls between each path and the Jews saw each other and saw Hashem walking in front of them	ר' אליעזר אומר, [בעת קריעת ים סוף] נקפאו המים ונעשו שנים עשר חלקים כנגד שנים עשר שבטים ועשו חומות מים בין שביל לשביל והיו רואין אלו את אלו וראו הקדוש ברוך מהלך לפניהם

2. Maimonides Commentary to Mishnayos Avos 5:4



British Library MS Harley 14763

http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=44644

The fifth [miracle] is that [the Red Sea] split into twelve paths like the number of tribes like a curved bow, **as per this drawing**. And that is its stating (Psalms 136:13), "To tear the	והה' שנבקעו לדרכים רבים כמספר השבטים כעין קשת עגול על זאת הצורה והוא אמרו לגוזר

Reed Sea into pieces." The sixth is that the water congealed and became as hard as boulders. And about this, it stated (Psalms 74:13), "you broke the head of the 'sea monsters' upon the waters" - meaning to say that the waters hardened to the point that they went back in such a way that heads would break on them.	ים סוף לגזרים. והו' שנקפאו המים ונתקשו כאבנים ועל זה אמר שברת ראשי תנינים על המים ר"ל שנתקשו המים עד ששבו בענין שישבור הראשים עליהם.

3. Passover Haggadah

"And the Lord took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched forearm and with great awe and with signs and with wonders" (Deuteronomy 26:8).	וַיּוֹצִאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה, וּבִזְרֹעַ נְטוּיָה, וּבְמֹרָא גָּדֹל, וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבְמֹפְתִים.
"And the Lord took us out of Egypt" - not through an angel and not through a seraph and not through a messenger, but [directly by] the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, as it is stated (Exodus 12:12); "And I will pass through the Land of Egypt on that night and I will smite every firstborn in the Land of Egypt, from men to animals; and with all the gods of Egypt, I will make judgments, I am the Lord."	וַיּוֹצִאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם. לֹא עַל־יְדֵי מַלְאָךְ, וְלֹא עַל־יְדֵי שָׂרָף, וְלֹא עַל־יְדֵי שָׁלִיחַ, אֶלָּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא בִּכְבוֹדוֹ וּבְעַצְמוֹ. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְעָבַרְתִּי בְאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, וְהִכֵּיתִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם וְעַד בְּהֵמָה, וּבְכָל אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים. אֲנִי ה.'
"And I will pass through the Land of Egypt" - I and not an angel. "And I will smite every firstborn" - I and not a seraph. "And with all the gods of Egypt, I will make judgments" - I and not a messenger. "I am the Lord" - I am He and there is no other.	וְעָבַרְתִּי בְאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה – אֲנִי וְלֹא מַלְאָךְ; וְהִכֵּיתִי כָל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם. אֲנִי וְלֹא שָׂרָף; וּבְכָל־אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים. אֲנִי וְלֹא הַשָּׁלִיחַ; אֲנִי ה'. אֲנִי הוּא וְלֹא אַחֵר.

4. Exodus 11:4

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה כַּחֲצֹת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרָיִם:

Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: Toward midnight I will go forth among the Egyptians

5. Targum Onqelus Exodus 11:4

וַאֲמַר מֹשֶׁה כִּדְנָן אֲמַר יְיָ כְּפַלְגוּת לֵילְיָא אֲנָא <u>מִתְגַּלֵי</u> בְּגוֹ מִצְרָיִם:

And Moshe said, “So says Hashem, ‘Toward midnight I will <u>reveal</u> myself in the midst of Egypt.’”

6. Exodus 15:2

עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָהּ וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֵלִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וַאֲרֹמְמֶנְהוּ:

The LORD is my strength and might; He is become my deliverance. This is my God and I will enshrine Him; The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.

7. Rashi Exodus 15:2

זה אלי. בִּכְבוֹדוֹ נִגְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם וְהֵיוּ מַרְאִין אוֹתוֹ בְּאֶצְבַּע, רָאָתָה שִׁפְחָה עַל הַיָּם מַה שֶׁלֹּא רָאוּ נְבִיאִים (מכילתא):

THIS IS MY GOD — In His glory did He reveal Himself to them and they pointed to Him — as it were — with the finger exclaiming "This is my God!" (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 3:15) A maid servant beheld at the Red Sea what even the prophets never saw (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 15:2:2).

8. Exodus 12:13

וְהָיָה֩ הַדָּ֨ם לָכֶ֜ם לְאֹ֗ת עַ֤ל הַבָּתִּים֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר אַתֶּ֔ם שָׁ֖ם וְרָאִיתִ֣י אֶת־הַדָּ֑ם וּפָסַחְתִּ֤י עֲלֵכֶם֙ וְלֹא־יִהְיֶ֣ה בָכֶ֔ם נֶ֖גֶף לְמַשְׁחִ֑ית בְּהַכֹּתִ֖י בְּאֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם׃

And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood I will pass over you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

9. Midrash Tanchuma Bishalach 27

וְכִי הַדָּם מַהֲנִי לַמַּלְאָךְ הַמַּשְׁחִית אוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. אֶלָּא בִּזְמַן שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל נוֹתְנִין מִן הַדָּם עַל פִּתְחֵיהֶם, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא נִגְלָה וְחָס עֲלֵיהֶן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְרָאִיתִי אֶת הַדָּם וּפָסַחְתִּי וְגוֹ', וְלֹא יִתֵּן הַמַּשְׁחִית לָבוֹא אֶל בָּתֵּיכֶם לִנְגֹּף

Similarly, [in the verse] "And the blood shall be to you for a token" (Exod. 12:13), did the blood help the angel of destruction or the Israelites? Rather, at the time the Israelites smeared blood upon their doorposts, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself and had pity upon them, as it is said: "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (ibid.) i.e., the angel of death will not be permitted to come to your homes to smite you.

10. Exodus 14

יאוַיֹּאמְרוּ֙ אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֔ה הֲמִבְּלִ֥י אֵין־קְבָרִ֖ים בְּמִצְרַ֑יִם לְקַחְתָּ֣נוּ לָמ֔וּת בַּמִּדְבָּ֖ר מַה־זֹּ֣את עָשִׂ֥יתָ לָּ֛נוּ לְהוֹצִיאָ֖נוּ מִמִּצְרָֽיִם׃

11They said to Moses, Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Egypt?

יבהֲלֹא־זֶ֤ה הַדָּבָר֙ אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּ֣רְנוּ אֵלֶ֔יךָ בְּמִצְרַ֖יִם לֵאמֹ֑ר חֲדַ֣ל מִמֶּ֗נּוּ וְנַעַבְדָ֤ה אֶת־מִצְרַ֙יִם֙ כִּ֣י טוֹ֔ב לָּ֖נוּ עָבֹ֣ד אֶת־מִצְרַ֑יִם מִמֻּתֵ֥נוּ בַּמִּדְבָּֽר׃

12Isn't this the thing [about] which we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, Leave us alone, and we will serve the Egyptians, because we would rather serve the Egyptians than die in the desert

יגוַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה֮ אֶל־הָעָם֒ אַל־תִּירָ֣אוּ הִתְיַצְּב֗וּ וּרְאוּ֙ אֶת־יְשׁוּעַ֣ת יְהוָ֔ה אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂ֥ה לָכֶ֖ם הַיּ֑וֹם כִּ֣י אֲשֶׁ֤ר רְאִיתֶם֙ אֶת־

13Moses said to the people, Don't be afraid! Stand firm and see the Lord's salvation that He will wreak for you today, for the way you have seen the

Egyptians is [only] today, [but] you shall no longer continue to see them for eternity.	מִצְרַ֣יִם הַיּ֗וֹם לֹ֤א תֹסִ֙פוּ֙ לִרְאֹתָ֣ם עֵ֔וד עַד־עוֹלָֽם׃
14The Lord will fight for you, but you shall remain silent.	**יד**יְהוָ֥ה יִלָּחֶ֖ם לָכֶ֑ם וְאַתֶּ֥ם תַּחֲרִשֽׁוּן׃
15The Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel.	**טו**וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה֙ אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֔ה מַה־תִּצְעַ֥ק אֵלָ֖י דַּבֵּ֣ר אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל וְיִסָּֽעוּ׃

11. Sotah 37a

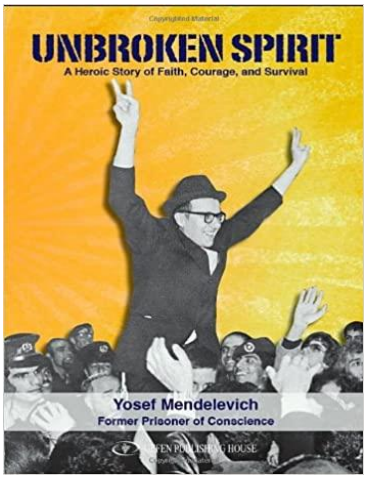
Rabbi Yehuda said to Rabbi Meir: That is not how the incident took place. Rather, this tribe said: I am not going into the sea first, and that tribe said: I am not going into the sea first. Then, in jumped the prince of Judah, Nahshon ben Amminadab, and descended into the sea first, accompanied by his entire tribe, as it is stated: “Ephraim surrounds Me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit, and Judah is yet wayward toward God [rad im El]” (Hosea 12:1), which is interpreted homiletically as: And Judah descended [rad] with God [im El].	אמר לו רבי יהודה לא כך היה מעשה אלא זה אומר אין אני יורד תחילה לים וזה אומר אין אני יורד תחילה לים קפץ נחשון בן עמינדב וירד לים תחילה שנאמר (הושע יב, א) סבבוני בכחש אפרים ובמרמה בית ישראל ויהודה עוד רד עם אל
And in this regard, the tradition, i.e., the Writings, explicates: “Save me, God; for the waters are come in even unto the soul. I am sunk in deep mire, where there is no standing…let not the water flood overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up” (Psalms 69:2–3, 16).	ועליו מפרש בקבלה (תהלים סט, ב) הושיעני אלהים כי באו מים עד נפש טבעתי ביון מצולה ואין מעמד וגו' (תהלים סט, טז) אל תשטפני שבולת מים ואל תבלעני מצולה וגו'
At that time, Moses was prolonging his prayer. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: My beloved ones are drowning in the sea and you prolong your prayer to me? Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, but what can I do? God said to him: “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward. And you, lift up your rod and stretch out your hand” (Exodus 14:15–16).	באותה שעה היה משה מאריך בתפלה אמר לו הקב"ה ידידיי טובעים בים ואתה מאריך בתפלה לפני אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם ומה בידי לעשות אמר לו (שמות יד, טו) דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו ואתה הרם את מטך ונטה את ידך וגו'

12. Rambam Foundations of Torah 7:3

The matters concerning which a prophet is informed by vision of prophecy, are imparted to him allegorically, but the interpretation thereof is engraved upon his heart	הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁמּוֹדִיעִים לַנָּבִיא בְּמַרְאֵה הַנְּבוּאָה דֶּרֶךְ מָשָׁל מוֹדִיעִין לוֹ וּמִיָּד יֵחָקֵק בְּלִבּוֹ פִּתְרוֹן הַמָּשָׁל בְּמַרְאֵה

simultaneously with the vision and he knows what it means, as the vision of the ladder which Jacob our father saw: "The angels of God were ascending and descending upon it" (Gen. 28.12); which was a parable, the interpretation of which is the rise and fall of kingdoms, or as the Living Creatures which Ezekiel saw (Ezek. 1. 1–27), or the Seething Pot and the Almond Rod which Jeremiah saw (Jer. 1.12–13), or the Scroll of Parchment which Ezekiel saw (Ezek. 2.9), or the Measure which Zechariah saw (Zech. 2.5). And so with the rest of the prophets; some of them relate the parable and its interpretation as these; others relate the interpretation alone; and still others relate the parable only without the interpretation, as parts of the prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah, but all of them are prophesying in parables and metaphors.	הַנְּבוּאָה וְיֵדַע מָה הוּא. כְּמוֹ הַסֻּלָּם שֶׁרָאָה יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ וּמַלְאָכִים עוֹלִים וְיוֹרְדִים בּוֹ וְהוּא הָיָה מָשָׁל לְמַלְכֻיּוֹת וְשִׁעְבּוּדָן. וּכְמוֹ הַחַיּוֹת שֶׁרָאָה יְחֶזְקֵאל וְהַסִּיר נָפוּחַ וּמַקֵּל שָׁקֵד שֶׁרָאָה יִרְמְיָה וְהַמְּגִלָּה שֶׁרָאָה יְחֶזְקֵאל וְהָאֵיפָה שֶׁרָאָה זְכַרְיָה. וְכֵן שְׁאָר הַנְּבִיאִים. מֵהֶם אוֹמְרִים הַמָּשָׁל וּפִתְרוֹנוֹ כְּמוֹ אֵלּוּ. וְיֵשׁ שֶׁהֵן אוֹמְרִים הַפִּתְרוֹן בִּלְבַד. וּפְעָמִים אוֹמְרִים הַמָּשָׁל בִּלְבַד בְּלֹא פִּתְרוֹן כְּמִקְצַת דִּבְרֵי יְחֶזְקֵאל וּזְכַרְיָה וְכֻלָּן בְּמָשָׁל וְדֶרֶךְ חִידָה הֵם מִתְנַבְּאִים:

13. Unbroken Spirit (Yosef Mendelevich 2012)



At the same time, I am overwhelmed upon arrival. My stepmother, Rivka, Eva, Chaim. I must shut my eyes for fear of being blinded, reign in my feelings for fear that my heart might burst. This transition into a new world is indescribable. Minister David Levy hands me an immigration certificate. I feel like a soldier returning in triumph from a combat mission. Thousands of friends and well-wishers greet me. Forgive me, I feel like saying, for not being able to talk with each of you, to answer all your questions. Forgive me for not knowing how to be happy. You are not greeting me alone. Together with you, I am greeting the great day of exodus, the day of divine wonders.

I dreamed of arriving in Jerusalem quietly, of walking to the Western Wall on foot. For now I do not have the chance to be alone with my thoughts. Soon enough, my land, I will come to you and converse with you alone and be close to you. I will yet come to you, my Judean Hills.

For now, I rush to the Western Wall, back to the place from which we were first exiled from God's city, to herald the news of its sons' return.

My first request – to pray at the Kotel. I am pouring out all my hardships to G-d.

14. "Up Close with Yosef Mendelevich" (Jewish Action 2012)

JA: After you arrived in Eretz Yisrael in 1981, how did you end up in yeshivah?

RM: At first, I decided to attend Hebrew University to study international relations. A short while later, I visited a kollel in Glasgow, and the rosh kollel asked me about my plans. I told him I was going to study at Hebrew University and he replied, "But you are a role model for Am Yisrael; you have to study in yeshivah!" When I returned to Israel, a rabbi at Mercaz HaRav said the same thing. Dr. Bernard Lander, the founder of Touro College, called me to relay a message from Rabbi Ovadia Yosef: I have to continue to be a role model for the Jewish people in Israel; I must go learn Torah.

15. Night (Eli Wiesel) 2006

OUR FIRST ACT AS FREE MEN was to throw ourselves onto the provisions. That's all we thought about. No thought of revenge, or of parents. Only of bread.

And even when we were no longer hungry, not one of us thought of revenge. The next day, a few of the young men ran into Weimar to bring back some potatoes and clothes—and to sleep with girls. But still no trace of revenge…
One day when I was able to get up, I decided to look at myself in the mirror on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto.
From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me.
The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me.

16. Eli Wiesel Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech 1986

I remember: it happened yesterday, or eternities ago. A young Jewish boy discovered the Kingdom of Night. I remember his be-wilderment, I remember his anguish. It all happened so fast. The ghetto. The deportation. The sealed cattle car. The fiery altar
upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind were meant to be sacrificed…
And now the boy is turning to me. "Tell me," he asks, "what have you done with my future, what have you done with your life?" And I tell him that I have tried. That I have tried to keep memory alive, that I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.

17. Pesachim 85b-86a

The windows and the thickness of the wall [are considered to be on the inside]. Rav said: Roofs and upper stories were not sanctified. [Therefore, the roofs of the chambers in the Temple courtyard did not have the sanctity of the courtyard, and the roofs of buildings in Jerusalem did not have the sanctity of Jerusalem.] The Gemara asks: Is that so? Didn't Rav say the following aphorism in the name of Rabbi Ḥiyya: The Paschal lamb is the size of an olive-bulk. And the hallel that is said during its consumption breaks the roof.	החלונות ועובי החומה וכו': אמר רב גגין ועליות לא נתקדשו איני והאמר רב משום רבי חייא כזיתא פסחא והלילא פקע איגרא
What, is it not the case that they eat the Paschal lamb on the roof and say hallel on the roof [which would mean that roofs have the sanctity of Jerusalem]? No, there is no proof from here - they eat on the ground and say hallel on the roof.	מאי לאו דאכלי באיגרא ואמרי באיגרא לא דאכלי בארעא ואמרי באיגרא

Is that so? But didn't we learn in a mishna: We do not conclude after eating the Paschal lamb with afikoman, and Rav said that this means that after eating the Paschal lamb one may not uproot themselves from one group to another group? [This would indicate that one must complete the entire Passover seder in one place.] It is not difficult. <u>Here [where it says that one may not change places] it is during the time of eating. There [where it says they would say hallel on the roof] it is not during the time of eating.</u>	איני והתנן אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן ואמר רב שלא יעקרו מחבורה לחבורה לא קשיא <u>כאן בשעת אכילה כאן שלא בשעת אכילה</u>

18. Eiruvin 89a

כל גגות העיר רשות אחת – All the rooves of the city are one domain

19. Tana Divei Eliyahu Rabbah 23

Even Dovid praised those who left Egypt that the single *mitzvah* they had was more pleasing to Hashem than the multitude of our mitzvos. And what was that mitzvah that was in their hands? That they should gather together as one group and form a covenant that they will do kindness to one another	אף דוד היה משבח את יוצאי מצרים כי אפילו המצוה האחת שהיתה בידם נוח לפני הקב"ה הרבה יותר מן כמה מצות שלנו ומהו המצוה האחת שהיתה בידם שנתקבצו כולם באגודה אחת וכרתו ברית שיעשו גמילות חסדים זה עם זה...

20. Mechilta D'Rashbi 13:8

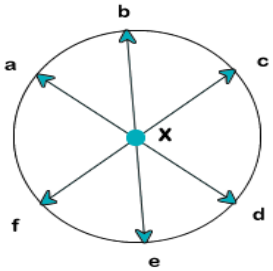
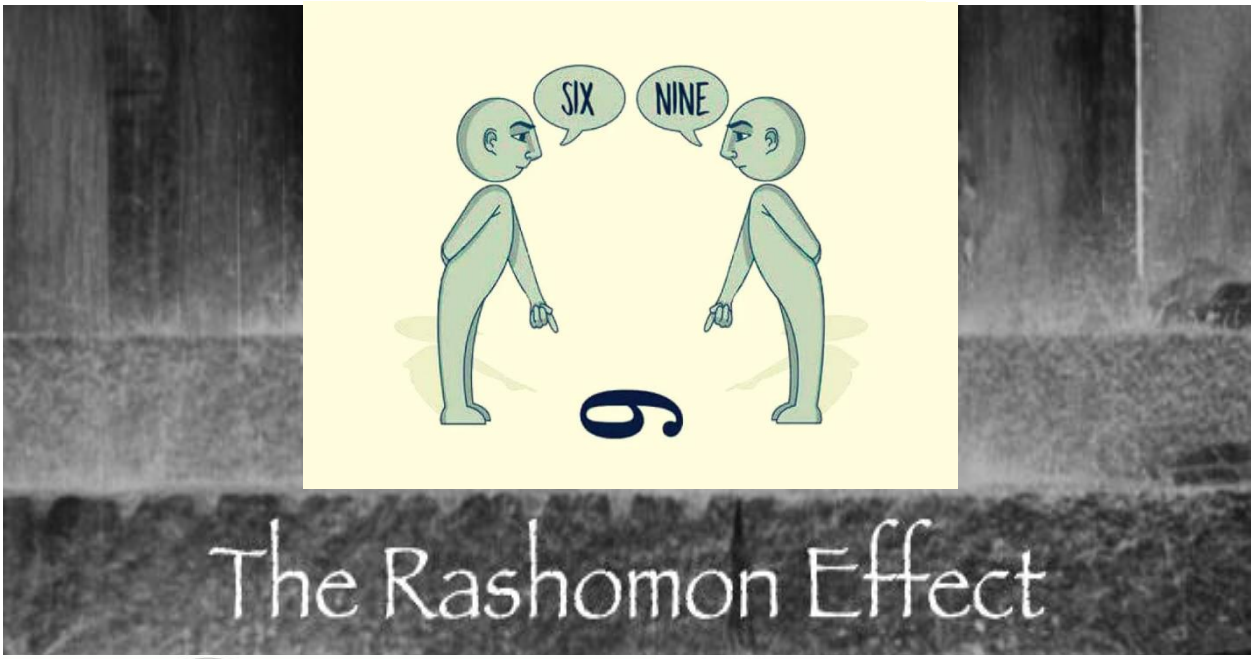
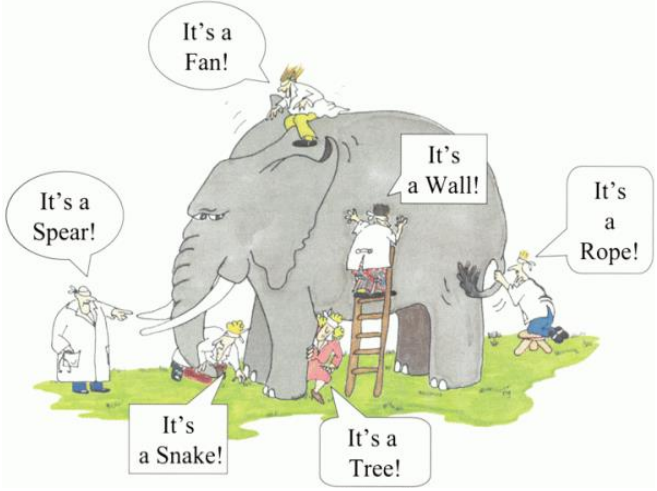
"And you shall tell your children…because of this Hashem did for me [taking me out of Egypt]." I might have thought the merits of all [of the Jews in Egypt] needed to be combined, and without that they would not have been worthy [of redemption]. Therefore the Torah says "Because of this…" which shows that every individual Jew was worthy of having miracles performed on their behalf.	והגדת לבנך ... בעבור זה עשה ה' לי יכול עד שנצטרפה זכות כולן אילו כן לא היה כדאי בדבר ת"ל בעבור זה מלמד שכל אחד מישראל היה כדאי שיעשו נסין על ידו.

21. Passover Haggadah

What does the evil [son] say? "'What is this worship to you?' (Exodus 12:26)" 'To you' and not 'to him.' And since he excluded himself from the collective, he denied a principle [of the Jewish faith]. And accordingly, you will blunt his teeth and say to him, "'For the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me	רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲבוֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם. לָכֶם – וְלֹא לוֹ. וּלְפִי שֶׁהוֹצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכְּלָל כָּפַר בְּעִקָּר. וְאַף אַתָּה הַקְהֵה אֶת שִׁנָּיו וֶאֱמוֹר לוֹ: "בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי

in my going out of Egypt' (Exodus 13:8)." 'For me' and not 'for him.' If he had been there, he would not have been saved.	בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם". לִי וְלֹא־לוֹ. אִלּוּ הָיָה שָׁם, לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל:

22. Taanis 31b

עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לעשות מחול לצדיקים והוא יושב ביניהם בגן עדן וכל אחד ואחד מראה באצבעו ואומר זה ה׳ קוינו לו

In the future Hashem will form a circle for the righteous and he will sit in the middle of them in the Garden of Eden. And each one will point with his finger and say, “This is the G-d I have longed for.”