

# SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 17

### *Shabbos Hagadol*

#### The Great Miracle:

The Alter Rebbe writes that the Shabbos preceding Pesach is called “Shabbos Hagadol (the Great Shabbos)” because of a “great miracle” that happened then. On that Shabbos, each Jewish family set aside a sheep in their home for a sacrifice, as G-d had commanded. When the Egyptian firstborns learned that this was in preparation for the plague of the death of the firstborn, they confronted Pharaoh and a civil war broke out resulting in many Egyptian deaths. (Hilchos Pesach, 470:1)

#### The Questions:

1. Why does the miracle have to be classified as “great” to warrant calling that Shabbos “great”? Even an “ordinary” miracle suffices to distinguish that Shabbos as “great” in comparison to other Shabbosim where no pedestrian miracles occurred?

2. Why is the miracle classified as “great”? It did not result in the Jewish people’s freedom, they remained in Egypt when all was said and done.
3. Why was the commemoration of this miracle established on the day of the week it occurred, the Shabbos preceding Pesach, and not on the day of the month it occurred, as is the case with every other holiday that commemorates a miracle?

#### The Explanation:

The day of Shabbos expresses the theme of transformative change. The Midrash comments that on the first Shabbos, the wild animals were transformed into docile creatures. The time of Shabbos itself alludes to this transformative power, as follows: Shabbos, says another Midrash, introduced serenity into the world. The prior six days are defined by the relentless movement of time. Shabbos reverses this process, introducing calmness and transforming the limiting nature of time into a transcendent space above time.

The miracle of the firstborn waging war against the Egyptian establishment is a

powerful illustration of a “transformational” miracle. The strength and pride of Egypt itself turns against the powerful apparatus and demands that they let the Jewish people go. This is why this miracle is called “great,” because it is not a miracle that neuters the opposition, but one where the opposition itself (the Egyptian firstborn) transforms into a positive force.

This is why we mark this miracle on Shabbos, because the theme of the miracle reflects the theme of this day, the day of transformational change.

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