

WOULD IT HAVE SUFFICED?

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

In the "song" Dayenu, we seem to say some odd things, like 'If G-d has split the sea for us and had not crossed us through on dry land, it would have sufficed.' How could this have sufficed? We would not be alive! What does Dayenu (it would have sufficed) mean?

The Malbim explains that the recitation of Dayenu serves a very important purpose. When we reach Dayenu, we have completed analyzing all the verses that speak about our life in Egypt. We are finished with this part of our telling over what happened when we left Egypt. At this point, the next appropriate step is to thank G-d for saving us. The way the nation of Israel usually does this is by saying Hallel - praises of Hashem.

Before we start saying Hallel, we want to be sure that we truly appreciate all that Hashem did for us. After all, G-d is not interested in empty and meaningless expressions of thanks. Dayenu serves the purpose of reminding us of all that Hashem did for us. The truth is that Hashem deserves thanks for each one of these steps individually, even if the next event had not occurred. Yes, if G-d had 'merely' split the sea for us and not brought us through on dry land, G-d would deserve our thanks. Would it have been enough in terms of our development as a nation? Probably not. However, that is not what Dayenu - it would have sufficed, means. Dayenu means that this act alone would have sufficed to bring upon us the obligation to thank G-d!

When we say Dayenu, we thank Hashem for 15 different acts of kindness he performed for us. Each one alone is enough to warrant our great thanks and praise. How much more so are we to praise Hashem when we are presented with these 15 acts in the aggregate! After reading through Dayenu, we should most certainly be inspired so that when we arrive at the praises of Hashem in the Seder, we say these praises sincerely, and with a full, happy and thankful heart.