

# SOMETHING GREAT AND AWESOME

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

There is a story about Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar Ben Azaria, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon who assembled in Bnei Brak. They were so absorbed in telling the story of the exodus from Egypt that the entire night passed when their students came over and said to them; "Our masters, it is time to recite the morning SHEMA!" (Haggada)

Behold I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day. (Malachi 3:23) (Haftora for Shabbos HaGadol)

Here we have the last words of the last historical prophet pointing the final day of history and declaring that it is "great" and "awesome" and the "the day of HASHEM". Rabbi Aaron Kotler ztl asked about this description offered by the prophet Malachi, "What's so great and awesome about that final day?"

What can be more awesome than, for example the Days of Awe, Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur when determinations about life and death and livelihood lie in the balance? What can be more frightening than the unavoidable life review we all must eventually face when our entire lives are before HASHEM and His ultimate throne of justice?

Answers Reb Aaron that let's say there's a person named Rashi who was born in 1040 and passed on in 1105, almost thousand years ago, and in his less than seventy years on this earth he built a wine business, learned Torah, taught Torah raised a couple of daughters. Every year on the High Holy Days like so many others he prayed with fervent hope for his own personal wellbeing and the success of the Jewish People. After his time was up his soul ascended to the Heavens and there he gave a detailed account of his honesty in business and as to what kind of husband, father, neighbor, friend, and servant of HASHEM he had been.

What's more awesome than that?! King Solomon says in Mishlei, "Pri Tzadik Eitz Chaim- The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life". Realizing that he has a limited time to live and act on earth, Rashi had the foresight, the wisdom, the mazal to marry his daughters to extraordinary Talmud Scholars, the Baale' Tosfos, and they made a career scrutinizing the notebook of commentaries their father-in-law Rashi had carefully scripted on the entire Talmud and Tanach. For the next one thousand years every person who has learned Torah properly and observed Mitzvos with precision has done so with

Rashi's help. It's as if Rashi is still teaching. He is more alive today than ever.

When the final buzzer of history rings on the last day the tally of Mitzvos and Torah learning credited to that one man based upon the cumulative impact of his life over the many generations adds up to something so incalculable so as to be titled "great and awesome".

On the flip side there was a person name Marx, Karl Marx. He wrote a bible of his own, a manifesto that gave license to Lenin and Stalin and Mao to eradicate what he called the "opiate of the masses". They spread out an iron curtain and a wet blanket that snuffed the light of religiosity out of a quarter of humanity for almost a century, including millions of Jews who were left stripped of thousands of years of tradition. We cannot fathom the ever widening angle of darkness that continues to expand from this fallacious theory over time. The negative result is frighteningly "great and awesome".

The secret is that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar Ben Azaria, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon were so enthused at the Seder, talking about the Exodus from Egypt that the wake from their influence is kept alive till the dawn of history when their students, of all time, come to remind them of **something great and awesome**.

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