

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Recognizing the “Mundane” Miracles of Life

RABBI
NOSSE
WIGGINS



The awe-inspiring miracles which Hashem performed during the Exodus from Egypt and at the Yam Suf threw most of the civilized world into a state of trepidation. Certainly, such unusual events as these should be relevant to us today. The Ramban, at the end of *parshas Bo*, explains the relevance of the Miracles of the Exodus: “Through recalling and acknowledging the great miracles of the Exodus, a person ultimately acknowledges the ‘hidden’ miracles of everyday life.” The Ramban goes on to emphasize that living with such an awareness that everything which happens to us in life, both on a personal and communal level, is Divinely orchestrated and is one of the foundations of the Torah.

The Ramban has taught us that the miracles of the Exodus are supposed to enable us to realize and acknowledge the miracles of everyday life. However, if everything is Divinely orchestrated then we must wonder, what in fact is the difference between a *nes* (a miracle) and *teva* (nature)? If the so-to-speak “natural occurrences” of the world are in fact Hashem’s Will, how can we distinguish *teva* from *nes*?

Rav Eliyahu Dessler (*Michtav M’Eliyahu*, vol. 1, p. 177) explains that *teva* is nothing more than a façade. The only difference between a miracle and nature is its frequency. Miracles are only astonishing because they are out of the ordinary, and *teva* is only normal and expected because it continuously, or

almost continuously, occurs. The fact that we can walk, talk, smell, and see day in and day out is nothing short of a miracle. We only consider these abilities to be natural because they are gifts which we are fortunate to receive daily.

Rav Dessler illustrates this point with a fantastic parable. Imagine a country where, instead of wheat stalks sprouting from decomposed kernels that are buried beneath the soil, dead bodies that are revitalized from their state of total decay would rise up from the earth. In such a place, *techiyas hamayyim* (resurrection of the dead) would be natural and growth of wheat would be miraculous. It is only because we are accustomed to the nature of the world in which we live that we perceive it as natural instead of miraculous.

The *avodah* (responsibility) of a Jew is to recognize and internalize the “hidden” or mundane miracles that occur each and every moment of our lives. It is for this reason that Chazal instituted the blessing of *Modim* in which we acknowledge and thank Hashem thrice daily for the wonders and good which he so graciously bestows upon us constantly; *al niflaosecha v’tovosecha sh’bchol eis erev va’voker v’tzaharayim* (the interpretation of these words is based on Rav Shimon Schwab, *Iyun Tefillah*). When we fully recognize the bounty of blessing which we constantly receive we will be filled with an immense feeling of love for Hashem. 🕯

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Q. I noticed that the *passuk*, by the plague of *arbeh*, says *ain ha-aretz*. What is the eye of the land?

A. Rashi addresses this question that although the literal translation of *ain ha’aretz* is “the eye of the land,” *ain* is an idiom for “appearance of.” This is because the appearance of something is accomplished through the eye. I believe that this is the source of the word “*me’ain*” that is translated as “kind of.” The more precise translation may be “the appearance of.” We refer to Shabbos as *me’ain olam haba* – it is kind of, or looks like, the world to come. The formal name of the *al hamichya bracha* that we say after eating *mezonos*, wine, and certain fruits is *birchas me’ain shalosh* since it is akin to and contains elements of the three biblically required *brachos* in *bentching*. Friday night the *chazan* recites a quasi *chazaras hashatz* (repetition of the Amida) known as *birchas me’ain sheva* containing elements of the the seven *brachos* of the Shabbos *amida*. As an aside, I have wondered about the phrase used in the *birchas me’ain sheva* “*me’ain habrachos*” which is commonly translated “with appropriate blessings” connecting it back to the words *v’nodeh b’chol yom tamid*, “and we thank His name continually, every day.” Is it a coincidence that this terminology is used in a *bracha* that

➡ CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ➡

Sponsorship & feedback:
parasha@cincykollel.org

Sponsored in honor of the
Rosedale wedding this week
by friends in the Kollel

Cincinnati Torah
is distributed weekly
to local shuls
and the community
e-mail list.



THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

is itself *mei'ain habrachos* which could be translated as “looks like the *brachos*” – a potential reference to this paragraph being a part of *birchas mei'ain sheva*? 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Dvir Goldstein was an Israeli soldier killed in the Gaza war in the summer of 2008. His mother Na'amah, who had lost her husband a few years earlier in a car accident, was very down and depressed about losing her oldest son. About six months later she was still feeling very down and one night before going to bed she said “God if you're out there and still watching me send me a sign, send me a hug from Dvir.” The next morning her young daughter asked her if they could go to an art exhibit in Jerusalem. Na'amah had no energy to

go, but not wanting to disappoint her daughter, she decided take her daughter to the exhibit. As they were there looking at the art exhibits a little boy came over and stood next to her. Being a preschool teacher with a love of children she began a conversation. “What's your name?” asked Na'amah. “Oren” answered the boy. Just then the boy's mother called out “Oren come sit next to your baby brother Dvir,” she said pointing to a spot next to the stroller. Hearing her son's name, Na'amah Goldstein couldn't help but ask, “Why did you name your baby Dvir?” “When I was pregnant with my baby the doctor suspected a very severe heart defect and, naturally, we were very distraught. When we got home, we saw on the news that a soldier named Dvir Goldstein, had been killed that day in Gaza. I was very saddened at the loss of a young life so I told God, “if you give me a healthy baby, I will name him Dvir after that soldier. A few months later we had a healthy baby and we named him Dvir.” “I'm Dvir Goldstein's mother!” Said Na'amah. Overcome with emotion the baby's mother handed the baby to Mrs. Goldstein and said “Here, Dvir wants to give you a hug.” 🤖

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

Upon entering the shul at the beginning of the davening we say *Mah Tovu*, which is a collection of verses that discuss the greatness of a shul and our privilege to serve Hashem. We say this upon entering shul to remind us of our special opportunity to speak to Hashem. The opening line is a quote from Bilam, who, in *parshas Balak*, was hired to curse the Jewish people. However, Hashem in His mercy switched around his words and caused Bilam to bless us. Part of his blessing was how great are the tents of Jacob the dwelling places of Israel. Rashi explains this to be referring to the modesty of the tents of the Jewish people, that the entrances of the tents weren't opposite each other. However, the Sforno explains that the words of Bilam refer to the shuls, and that Hashem rests His presence in a shul and accepts the *tefillas* davened there. 🤖



THE BAN AGAINST THE MEOR ANAYIM (PART III)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Rabbi Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai (Chida) in his halachic work *Machzik Beracha* (Kuntres Acharon, siman 307, #5) reports a fascinating discovery he made. He writes: “I found in the archives of a prominent rabbi a letter which was written and signed by Rabbi Elisha Galliko and Rabbi Moshe Alshich, I [Chida] copied the text of the letter word for word and this is what it said:

So that the truth not be withheld, I inform with faith that the book authored by Rabbi Azariah min ha-Edomim called *Meor Anayim*. When I opened it, I shuddered, for certainly one who retains a copy violates “it [chametz] should not be seen” and “should not be seen”. It was brought before the leader of the generation, the great rabbi, our master and teacher Rabbi Yosef Karo and after several days, he [Rabbi Yosef Karo] sent for me and instructed me to write a paper which he would sign upon. The thrust of the letter was that it is proper to burn the book wherever it is found. And he [Rabbi Yosef Karo] was bewildered how the Rabbis let such a book be published and weren't concerned with the honor of the Torah and its fundamental beliefs.

Because I delayed in the matter, and in the meanwhile the Rabbi [Rabbi Karo] fell ill with the sickness which would return his soul to heaven and was unable to sign with his hand, I hereby notify his words with truth, and with all the rabbis who uphold the truth, I speak with peace.

The letter, bearing signatures of additional rabbis, was eventually published and posted in Tzfas and other cities thereby reinforcing the ban against the *Meor Anayim*.

Stay tuned for the next intriguing series in the Jewish history column. 🤖