



When Miracles Intrude on Nature

The Midrash relates [1] that at the time of the splitting of the Yam Suf (Sea of Reeds), fruit-bearing trees sprouted forth from the bed of the sea. The children picked the fruit from the trees and gave them to the birds, who joined the Jews in their song of praise to G-d.[2] There is a general principle in Jewish thought: [3] "The Holy One, blessed be He, does not perform a miracle without a purpose." This is not a canon to be accepted on faith alone; it has a rational basis.

Nature is one of G-d's creations, as reflected by the verse: [4] "I laid down... the laws of heaven and earth," i.e., it is G-d who structured nature's pattern, and He did so with a specific intent. Since a miracle, by definition, involves a disruption of the natural order, G-d will not work a miracle unless it is absolutely necessary.

It is true that nature conceals G-dliness. In that vein, Chassidus explains [5] that the Hebrew word for nature, *teva*, has an alternate meaning, "sunk." For just as an entity submerged in water cannot be seen, all that is perceived is a watery mass, so too, the natural order covers up the G-dly light which maintains it.

"In His goodness, He renews each day, continuously, the work of creation." [6] Nevertheless, because the world follows a stable, ongoing pattern, [7] it is possible to think, heaven forbid, that this structure lacks a Master, [8] but rather proceeds on its own. This said, it is nonetheless true that it is G-d who laid down and maintains the rules of nature, and He will not disrupt them needlessly. An explanation is therefore necessary. [9]

In order to save the Jewish people, the miracle of the splitting of the sea would have been sufficient. Why was it necessary for there to be an additional miracle: that fruit-bearing trees with ripe fruit should sprout from the sea's bed?

According to the natural order, it takes time from trees to grow, more time for them to bear fruit, and still more time for the fruit to ripen and become fit to eat. In this instance, the trees sprouted and bore fruit immediately, and that fruit was fit to be fed to the birds. Also, the very nature of the miracle of the splitting of the Sea requires explanation. The water in the sea did not dry up. Instead, the water continued to flow, and yet this very water stood firm as a wall protecting the Jewish people as they crossed the sea, as it is written: [10] "And the water was like a wall for them on their right and on their left." Seemingly, it would have been sufficient for the Jews to have passed through the sea on dry land. Why was it necessary for the water to stand erect like a wall? [11]

It is therefore necessary to conclude that this miracle, that the water stood erect like a wall (and similarly the miracle that the sea's bed sprouted fruit-bearing trees) was an intrinsic element of the miracle of the splitting of the sea. For this reason, when the Torah relates the miracle of the splitting of the sea, it mentions the fact that the water stood erect as a wall twice: once in the beginning when the Jews first entered the sea, and once at the end, when the Jews had completed crossing the sea, indicating that the water had continued standing erect throughout the Jews' crossing.

Footnotes:

1. Shmos Rabbah 21:10; Kuntres Bikkur Chicago, p. 60.
2. See Tosafos Shabbos as cited in Orchos Chayim, sec. 324.
3. See Derashos HaRan, Discourse 8: "The first introductory principle is that G-d desires to maintain the natural order to whatever degree possible. Nature is very dear in His eyes, and He will not change it unless it is absolutely necessary." See Shabbos 53b, et al.
4. Yirmeyahu 33:25.
5. See the maamar entitled Mah Tovu 5689, and the maamar entitled Nasata L'yerei'acha 5693 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5711, p. 290).
6. Daily liturgy, Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 43.
7. See Avodah Zarah 54b.
8. Cf. Bereishis Rabbah beginning of ch. 39.
9. See the gloss of the Tosafos Yom Tov to Avos 5:4.
10. Shmos 14:22, 14:29.
11. Even if it was necessary for the water to stand erect so that the Jews could pass through the sea (see Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah, ch. 2, the commentaries to Avos, loc. cit., and Avos D'Rabbi Nassan), one might still ask: Why was it necessary for the Torah to mention this fact twice?

Recently, we noted the Shloshim of the passing of our dear fellow mispallel and friend Yaakov (Eugene) Fischer. In the last months of his life, Yaakov expressed a special interest in stimulating the dedication of plaques on the Shul board which is prominently located in the hall at the entrance to the Shul. I believe this would be a most appropriate way for us to honor him and support the Shul as well. Below is the list of items available. Please contact Rabbi Kaplan for more information.

1. Top (large) Plaques \$5,400
2. Medium Plaques \$3,600
3. Small Plaques \$1,000
4. Simcha leaf \$150

Mazel tov to Rav and Rebbetzin Kaplan:

1. On the birth of a grandson to their children R' Schneur Zalman and Mushka Minkowitz.
2. On the engagement of their son R' Yaakov Yehudah Leib to Chana Harrison (from Montreal).

Yahrzeits This Week:

Maggie Silver

17 Nissan - Sunday night / Monday for mother

Rina bas Yehudah Aryeh

Davening and Shiurim Schedule

Friday – Erev Pesach, 3/30 - 14 Nissan

Fast of first born begins – 5:28 a.m.
 Shacharit – 7:00 a.m.
 Finish eating Chametz before – 11:04 a.m.
 Finish burning Chametz before – 12:07 p.m.
 Candles – 7:11 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv – 7:15 p.m.
 Kiddush after – 7:56 p.m.

Shabbat -Pesach, 3/31–15 Nissan

Shacharit – 9:30 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema – 9:59 a.m.
 Minchah – 7:00 p.m.
 Ma'ariv – 8:10 p.m.

Start counting Omer

Candles/Seder prep – 8:10 p.m.
 Kiddush after – 8:10 p.m.

Sunday - Pesach, 4/1 – 16 Nissan

Shacharit – 9:30 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema - 9:58 a.m.
 Mincha – 7:00 p.m.
 Ma'ariv – 8:11 p.m.

Monday – Chol Hamoed, 4/2 – 17 Nissan

Shacharit – 6:40 a.m./8:00 a.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:15 p.m.

Tuesday Chol Hamoed, 4/3 – 18 Nissan

Shacharit – 6:40 a.m./8:00 a.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:15 p.m.

Wednesday Chol Hamoed, 4/4–19 Nissan

Shacharit – 6:40 a.m./8:00 a.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:15 p.m.

Thursday Chol Hamoed, 4/5 – 20 Nissan

Shacharit – 6:40 a.m./8:00 a.m.
Eruv Tavshilin
 Candles – 7:16 p.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:10 p.m.

Friday Shevii shel Pesach, 4/6 – 21 Nissan

Shacharit – 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema – 9:54 a.m.
 Candles – 7:17 p.m.
 Minchah/Ma'ariv – 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat – Acharon shel Pesach, 4/7–22 Nissan

Shacharit – 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema – 9:53 a.m.
 Yizkor – after 10:45 a.m.
 Minchah – 5:45 p.m.
 Seudat HaMoshiach – 6:15 p.m.
 Ma'ariv – 8:17 p.m.

Sunday - 4/8 – 23 Nissan

Shacharit – 8:00 a.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:20 p.m.

Monday, Thursday 4/9, 12 – 24, 27 Nissan

Shacharit – 6:50 a.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:20 p.m.

Tues, Wed 4/10, 11 - 25, 26 Nissan

Shacharit – 7:00 a.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:20 p.m.

Friday 4/13 - 28 Nissan

Shacharit – 7:00 a.m.
 Candles – 7:24 p.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv – 7:00 p.m.