

The Nature of Miracles; the Miracles of Nature

I heard the words of the title a long time ago from Rabbi Natan Lopes-Cardozo. Loved the wording - love the idea. Thank you, Rabbi Cardozo.

Parshat B'shalach contains the account of, perhaps, the greatest miracle ever to occur for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael. Our Tradition is that the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea was known, not only to our Nation, but to all nations of the world.

It was a supernatural miracle which demonstrated G-d's power in this world to reverse and overturn nature - the nature that He created.

And even if you want to believe that the sea could have split as part of nature - as some people prefer to accept - then the exquisite and perfect timing of the event at the Sea is in itself miraculous.

And the sedra has other miracles as well:

A tree (or wood) that can turn bitter, undrinkable water, into sweet drinkable water.

Quail that came in such large quantities that 2-3 million people

were able to "eat meat".

Miraculous "bread for the Heavens" that fell daily - except for Shabbat to feed the Nation and sustain it for almost 40 years in the Midbar.

Water that miraculously poured forth from a rock that G-d had instructed Moshe to strike.

Very impressive miracles. And, of course, B'shalach isn't the only sedra that tells us of supernatural miracles.

Specifically, the Splitting of the Sea and the return of the waters to drown the Egyptians led to Bnei Yisrael to revere HaShem and to believe in HaShem and in Moshe His servant.

But we need to take miracles to a further level. We need to realize and appreciate the miracles of G-d's creation that we call "nature".

Remember the sea that split? Well, what about it when it doesn't split. Like all the time except for the rare or one-time that it did split?

The seas of the world are pretty amazing and impressive. The teeming life they contain. The minerals they contain. The ships that sail on them. Their waves and tides. The salty undrinkable water that can be desalinated and made suitable for drinking - or, at least, irrigation. The water of the seas of the world that evaporate, form clouds, are blown by the wind, and deliver rain.

MA RABU MAASECHA HASHEM...
How great are Your works, HaShem!
You have made them all with wisdom;
the earth is full of Your possessions!
(T'hilim 104:24).

and - KI SIMACHTANI HASHEM...
MA GADLU MAASECHA HASHEM...
For You, HaShem, has made me
rejoice through Your work: I will exult
in the works of Your hands. How
great are Your works, HaShem: Your
thoughts are very deep. (92:5-6)

Supernatural miracles capture our
attention. But that awareness should
not be restricted to the specific
miracle itself. we should let the
miracle be the trigger to our
reflection, study, and awareness of
countless other miracles - the ones
that people tend to take for granted.

Note also in the sedra is the description
of the 12 springs and 70 date
palms that the people enjoyed when
they camped at EILIM. Just as
amazing as the splitting of the sea,
the fact that in a desert or wilderness
there are oases.

Miracle. Nature. The only difference
between them is their frequency. By
all means, be impressed with the
account of miracles. And the experience
of miracles. But don't take the
miracles of this world - the day-to-
day ones - for granted.

TU BiShvat - which is always around
Shabbat Shira time, underlines the

attention we should be paying to
nature.

Which reminds me of a quote from
Anton Chekhov's short story, The Bet
(The Wager). In the protagonist's final
words of his rejection a what
humanity has become, he writes:

You would marvel if suddenly apple
and orange trees should bear frogs
and lizards... (but do not see the
wonder and miracle of trees bearing
fruit).

Yes, we have brachot for the WOW
kinds of miracles, but don't forget the
brachot we have for everyday
wonders and miracles of nature:

Borei Pri Ha'eitz, Pokei'ach Ivrim,
Oseh Maasei V'reishit... and so many
more.

Let AZ YASHIR trigger in you the
appreciation and gratitude for ALL of
G-d's miracles - the open ones and
the ones we tend to take for granted.

PTDT