

LIVING MIRACULOUSLY

by Rabbi Label Lam

Suddenly the word of HASHEM came to him saying, "That one shall not inherit you. Only him that comes from within you shall inherit you." And He took him outside and said, "Gaze now, toward the Heaven, and count the stars if you are able to count them!" And He said to him, "So will be your offspring!" (Breishis 15:4-5)

According to the simple meaning he took him outside to see the stars... (Rashi)

Why would we need to know that Avraham was inside that he had to be taken outside to see the stars? The Torah is not a French novel filled with frivolous details or choreography. What type of chair was Avraham sitting on? How had the expression on his face changed? These would be interesting things to know but we are taught only those points that have eternal relevance. Hence Rashi continues to tell us: "According to the Midrash He said to him, "Go out from your astrology, which you have seen by the signs of the Zodiac to the effect that you are not destined to have children... Alternately, He took him out of the cavity of the world, and this is what the expression "habata" -gazing means which denotes looking down from above." (Rashi)

We see that the prime Patriarch and Matriarch of the Jewish People according to normal means were not able or destined to have children together. It is only by stepping outside of the natural realm of the universe does the building of the Nation of Israel begin. By definition the Jewish People, are therefore, an unnatural people. We do not exist in a normal and natural way ultimately. Perhaps this is the meaning of, "There is no Mazel in Israel!" (Tractate Shabbos 156A) It doesn't mean we have no-good mazel but rather we are not locked-in and limited to the normal format of national existence.

Arnold Toynbee in his monumental work, The Study of History, explores the rise and fall of not less than 21 civilizations. He found the Jewish People to be an historical anomaly. Leo Tolstoy wrote, "The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter or torture of thousands of years could destroy, he who neither fire nor sword nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth, he who was able to produce the oracles of G-d, he who has been for so long the guardian of prophecy, and transmitted it to the rest of the world such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself." It was Mark Twain too who observed and wondered aloud, "All things are mortal but the Jew; All other forces pass but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Rabbi Yakov Emden wrote in the early 1700's "Many have tried to injure us but they were not able to

destroy or wipe us out. While all the great civilizations have disappeared and been forgotten- the Nation of Israel who clings to G-d is alive today! What will the wise historian answer when he examines this phenomenon without prejudice? Was all this purely by chance? By my soul, when I contemplated the these great wonders of our continued existence, they took on greater significance than all the miracles and wonders that HASHEM, Blessed be He, performed for our fathers in Egypt, in the desert and when they entered the Land of Israel. And the longer this exile extends, the miracle of Jewish existence becomes more obvious to make known G-d's mastery and supervision over Nature and History!"

The Story is told of Louis XIV asking the philosopher Pascal for some proof of a supernatural force in the world to which Pascal is reputed to have replied, "Why the Jews, you majesty, the Jews."

We have lived for millennium as a sheep amongst seventy wolves, and we continue down the gauntlet of history like those who walked through the split sea. It can easily be observed that according to natural means those surging walls of water should have drowned us and those hungry wolves have had their fill a long time ago but for the grandest mystical reason we are originally founded and continue to find ourselves living miraculously. Text Copyright © 2005 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.