

# MIRACULOUS GROWTH

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

In the final moments before his death, Moshe climbed Mount Nevo. From that position, G-d miraculously showed him the entirety of the Holy Land. "Moshe ascended from the plains of Moav to Mount Nevo, to the summit of the cliff that faces Jericho and G-d showed him the entire land... And G-d said to him, 'This is the land I swore to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov...I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you shall not cross over to there.'" (Devarim/Deuteronomy 34:1,4) Rashi and other commentaries note the Moshe not only saw the whole of the geography, but also prophetically saw scenes of the entirety of Jewish history in the land, its prosperity and oppression under future conquerors.

The Torah's narrative implies that Moshe's climbing Mount Nevo aided in his viewing of the land, but if miracles and prophecy were employed, could this not have all occurred on the plains? Why was the elevation to the summit necessary?

Michtav Me'Eliyahu (collected writings and discourses of Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1891-1954) of London and B'nai Brak, one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement) explains that the ultimate understanding of nature is the appreciation that nature is simply another facet of G-d's creation. In truth, there is no division between "miracles" and "nature", but "nature" is simply the category of miracles to which we are privy on a regular, daily basis. The ultimate appreciation of all of creation being truly miraculous was exhibited by Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa (Tractate Ta'anis 25a) who, late Friday afternoon consoled his daughter who accidentally bought vinegar instead of oil for the Shabbos lamps. "He who commanded oil to burn will command vinegar to burn," and it did, throughout the entire Shabbos. There was no need for G-d to provide him with oil, because, for Rabbi Chanina, the burning of oil was no less wondrous.

But, Rabbi Dessler continues, most of the great leaders in Jewish history desired to remove the blatant nature of the miracles they experienced or performed for fear that being allowed to perform open miracles would foster a sense of haughtiness. Thus, miracles performed by the prophet Elisha (Melachim/Kings 2 4) were performed in "natural" circumstances. He first helped the debt-ridden widow of the prophet Ovadiah, pouring from her one jug of oil to "fill" the countless pots and vessels she borrowed with oil for her to sell to pay her creditors. He later resuscitated the dead son a wealthy Shunamite woman by lying on him, eyes to eyes, mouth to mouth, palm to palm, and praying, after which the boy came back to life. While these feats are still obviously miraculous, the "efforts" surrounding them dulled the glaring nature of G-d's gift. Even G-d Himself utilized this

practice. It was logically impossible to fit two of every animal species in the world (and fourteen of each Kosher animal) AND the food necessary to sustain them for a whole year onto an ark 525 feet long, 87 feet wide and 52 feet high, yet G-d had Noach build one...and they fit! Why bother with an ark at all? To minimize the spectacle of the miracle. Even Rabbi Chanina's miracle had its root in nature, in that the flame had a fuel and did not burn from nothing. So, too, concludes the Michtav Me'Eliyahu, Moshe climbed the mount for G-d to give him the visual tour of the land and history beyond his reach. Even Moshe, whom the Torah calls the greatest prophet of the Jewish people and the most humble person in the history of the world, was concerned for the impact of an open miracle on his humility.

Autumn marks the entry to the darker, colder days of winter. But autumn is not only a time of harvest; it is also a time to plant that that will bloom in the coming spring. We know that the physical realm is really a reflection of the spiritual. With Simchas Torah we culminate the sowing of these last thirteen weeks. The Three Weeks, Tisha B'Av, the four weeks of Elul, Rosh HaShanah, the ten days of return, Yom Kippur, Succos and Simchas Torah have been months invested with contemplation, invigoration and commitment to make this new cycle one of development and progress in our spiritual growth.

To be sure, there will be challenges to our resolve, times that are "dark and cold". But we are secure with the confidence that G-d rewards human efforts with the daily gifts called "the course of nature" and these presents are forthcoming for our spiritual sustenance as well as our physical. We will have our successes - some "miraculous", some "natural". But come next spring, when Pesach brings the cycle of holidays that celebrate a new harvest of spiritual bounty, we will recall these days of planting and humbly rejoice in the Divine presents each day brings.

Good Shabbos and Good Yom Tov!

---

Copyright © 2002 by [Rabbi Pinchas Avruch](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Kol HaKollel is a publication of the Milwaukee Kollel Center for Jewish Studies 5007 West Keefe Avenue; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 414-447-7999