

ENOUGH WITH THE MIRACLES

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

The story of our exodus from Mitzrayim is resplendent with magical tales of wondrous events and miraculous feats. Moshe is a towering figure of fearsome g-dliness fearlessly wielding his staff against the evil forces of Pharaoh's intentions. Aharon is Moshe's faithful assistant who silently tempers Moshe's awesomeness with his humanness and legendary compassion. Their confrontations with Pharaoh were premeditated to increasingly display G-d's unlimited power in contrast with Pharaoh's childish attempts at exerting control over the Jews and his own people. The story of our exodus is related in a series of Parshios that direct our questioning to the purpose of miracles and their contrast with nature.

The simple understanding of miracles is that they are changes from the expected norm of nature that are motivated by crisis or emergency. They must provide an immediate service that benefits the needy and reestablishes a balance between the forces of good and evil. The Jews were downtrodden and unfairly enslaved and G-d sent a series of miracles to punish the evil Egyptians and free the good Jews. The bad were punished, the good were freed, and the balance of justice has reestablished. However, this view of miracles presents a fundamental contradiction to our understanding of G-d's almighty power and control.

Our understanding of G-d's awesome might is that He should never have to engage in crisis management or intervention. G-d is the master of time and circumstance. G-d is all-powerful and knowing. He knows what will happen and when it will happen. He manages the intentions and actions of humankind and coordinates them with His ultimate plan. "The end result is as He originally intended! Therefore, anything that appears to be miraculous and seemingly last minute in truth must have been planned way back at the beginning of time itself! Otherwise, We wouldn't be able to claim "The Watchman of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps!"

In ancient China, the wealthier families would have a family physician who was responsible for keeping the family healthy. He would only receive his wages for those months that the family wasn't ill. On any month that a member of the family took ill, and the physician would have to cure the illness, he would not be paid because he had not done his job! His job was to prevent the illness from ever occurring. That was considered a good doctor! Likewise, as magnificent a display of G-d's power as miracles may be in order to get us out of a "tuff situation", it's even more miraculous when we don't get into trouble to begin with!

The Ramban in Vayikra (26:11) explains that when Klal Yisroel keeps the Torah and follows the

Mitzvos, then all the blessing for national success, security, and prosperity will come true. If they don't do as they are supposed to, then the curses for sickness, warfare, exile, and dispersion will come true. The fact that individuals are sometimes successful or not doesn't necessarily reveal the guiding hand of Hashem. These fluctuations in "luck" are considered to be the norm and the expected. However, when a nation seems to prosper without the expected fluctuations in economy or national security, then G-d's presence is obvious. If we do as we are supposed to, then our continued success in all things as a nation is guaranteed. Hashem will not have to crisis manage our security and well being. G-d will not have to make miracles for our benefit. The constancy of our national prosperity would be the greatest revelation of Hashem's power and majesty, and the greatest of all miracles.

"For if one righteous man lives and G-d takes away sickness from him, and he lives out his days, this also happens to some wicked people and is thus not acknowledged as miraculous. But when an entire land and a whole people always have rains coming in their season, and plentitude, security, peace, health, strength, and defeat of their enemies, in a manner unparalleled in the whole world, it becomes known to all that this is the Eternal's doing." (Ramban, Vayikra: 26:11).

In the beginning of this week's Parsha, Hashem differentiated between two of His manifestations. His name - Sha-kai". The name "Hashem" described the nature of G-d's relationship with Moshe and the Bnai Yisroel; while "Sha-kai" described the manner in which G-d had related to the fore- fathers. My Grandfather Zt"l explained these two different manifestations in the following way. The name "Hashem" reflects upon G-d's ability to create new things, such as the creation of the universe and the "doing of miracles." The name "Sha-Kai" reflects upon G-d's ability to set limits within the world. This is actually contained within the name itself - "the G-d who says " - Dai - enough!"

When G-d promised the forefathers that He would redeem their children from the bondage of Mitzrayim, He promised to do so with the power of the manifestation of "Sha-Kai" - the G-d who sets limits to all things. This meant that there would come a time at the end of the prophesied 400 years when the Egyptians themselves would have, without any "new miracles", set the Jews free and sent them to Eretz Yisroel. It would have been a time when G-d's control over all things would have become apparent.

G-d does not allow anything to happen that doesn't have a set purpose and a set limit. The full impact of that purpose requires the allotted amount of time for G-d's divine reasons to be accomplished and revealed. G-d had a reason for the Jews to be enslaved for 400 years. His purpose required the full amount of time, after which there would have no longer been a need for the slavery. Therefore, at the allotted 400 year limit, the Egyptian's themselves would have realized this and simply set the Jews free without any other need for G-d to "flex His muscles" and do wondrous miracles. (Such as what occurred when idol worship, human slavery, and Communism came to a seemingly abrupt end). In fact, it would have been a far greater manifestation of G-d's power and actuality because it would have proven that there truly is a G-d who controls all things.

There really is a G-d who has pre-planned everything and who is never taken by surprise. G-d never has to "crisis manage" or intervene on an emergency basis.

The Egyptians themselves would have recognized His absolute mastery and joined the Bnai Yisroel in their mission of teaching all the other nations about the true G-d. It would have been complete redemption and the last exile we would have had to endure. Instead, G-d felt that He had to manifest Himself as "Hashem", the G-d who creates new things. The G-d who had to intervene in the intentions of humankind in order to save the Jews from total assimilation and eventual annihilation. He had to fulfill His promise to the forefathers of freeing their children from bondage - before the end of the 400 years. This meant that neither the Jews nor the Egyptians were ready to be saved. The redemption was going to require a new manifestation of G-d through miracles and wonders that would shock the world into recognizing the existence of a Master who controls nature and the universe. It would make a spectacular impact upon the Jews and the Egyptians that would force an early redemption. However, it would not be the last redemption. It would not usher in a partnership between the Jew and the non-Jew that would herald the Messianic era of universal understanding and acceptance of the G-d who is self evident within the natural limits of time and circumstance.

In the Aleinu that concludes each of our Tefilos we say, - to fix the world through the kingdom of the G-d who manifests Himself as Sah-kai - the G-d who says "Dai" - enough! This is the prayer of each and every Jew - to reach that point in human development and history when the world will recognize that nature and history are the greatest manifestation of G-d's power and mastery possible. We will then understand that the past events of history were all part of G-d's ultimate intention, and that any changes within that plan were only out of necessity due to our failings and frailties. When this will occur, it will herald the redemption that will be the end of all the exiles. No longer will the Jew have to suffer persecution and dispersion. No longer will the world suffer ignorance of G-d and His reasons for selecting us as His Chosen People. Instead, the world will have been "fixed" through the manifestation of Sah-kai - the G-d who says "Dai" - enough!

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