

Maamar *Kimei Tzetcha* 5712 (1952)

“Just like the days that you left Egypt, I will show them wonders.”

—the prophet Michah

1a. Puzzles to Unravel

Only a few short words, but carrying many puzzles to unravel. For one thing, the comparison seems an understatement. Everyone knows that the final redemption will far transcend the redemption from Egypt¹. Why does the prophet insist, then, on describing it by a comparison, “Just like the days that you left Egypt, I will show them wonders”—implying that the glory of the future redemption lies in this that G-d will show us miracles *just as He did in Egypt*? State that the wonders will be far beyond, or incomparable!

It's also strange that the emphasis is not on the wonders themselves, but that “I will *show* them wonders.”

Then the grammatical switch in midstream: “*you* left Egypt—I will show *them* wonders.” The language is actually ambiguous: it could also be read as “I will show *him* wonders”—which the Zohar says refers to Moses. Moses will descend from his burial place on Mount Nebo to witness the wonders of the final redemption.

But that just opens up another puzzle: The simple meaning of the verse is that it is talking about the Jewish People. The Zohar, by interpreting it as a reference to Moses, is saying that the two must somehow come together, that there is a necessary connection between Moses being there and the Jewish People witnessing these wonders.

We need to unravel just what that connection is.

1b. Miracology 101

There's one essential point we need in order to explain all this:

Miracles, generally speaking, can be divided into two categories.

1. Miracles that transcend the patterns of nature—such as those that occurred in the exodus from Egypt whereby water turned into blood etc.—up to the miracle of the Sea of Reeds whereby the sea was transformed into dry land.
2. Miracles disguised as natural events. (We'll call these *intra-natural miracles* for short.)

Actually, those intra-natural miracles can occur in two different ways. Sometimes the natural events serve only as a thin veil for the miracles within them. For example, the miracles for which we celebrate Chanukah and Purim. In those cases it was readily apparent—even universally recognized—that miracles had occurred.

¹ The Mishnah (quoted in the Haggadah), cites the opinion of Ben Zoma, who implies that in the messianic era we will no longer make mention of the exodus from Egypt. The sages argue with Ben Zoma, asserting that after the future redemption we will still be telling the story of the exodus. Yet, they too would agree that this would be only an adjunct to the principle narrative at that time—the telling of the story of the final redemption.

But then there are natural events that truly conceal the miracles within.

Nevertheless, intra-natural miracles stem from a higher source than supra-natural miracles. Furthermore: The most highly-rooted miracles are those so concealed that the cover-up no longer appears to be just a disguise, i.e. miracles that appear entirely natural.

We see this in another teaching of the sages. The verse says, “To the One who He alone makes great wonders.”² The sages take those words “He alone” to relate to the sort of wonders in which “even the person for whom the miracle was made does not recognize the miracle done for him.”³ They are saying, then, that these hidden miracles stem from G-d in a modality that can be called “He alone.”

Now we can understand why the verse stresses not the wonders themselves, but that “I will *show* you wonders.” It is because the wonders of the future redemption, too, will be drawn from this “He alone” modality. As the Midrash teaches:

G-d says: The last time around [i.e. Egypt], I and my heavenly court went before you, as it says, “And G-d went before you by day⁴.” In the time to come, however, it will be I alone, as it says, “For G-d will go before you, and the G-d of Israel will be the one who gathers you in.”⁵⁶

What this is saying is that the miracles that occurred in Egypt came from G-d to us through His heavenly court. The miracles of the future redemption, however will come directly from Him alone—without intervention of His court.

So this is the accomplishment attained in the time to come that is implied by “I will show you wonders”: Even though wonders that come from “Him alone” generally occur in such a way that He alone knows that this is a miracle, nevertheless, “I will show you wonders”—the miraculousness of these wonders of the future redemption will be openly visible.

In simple terms: The miracles that today are disguised within the natural order—which are truly the greatest of miracles—will be out in the open for all to see.

2. Like the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds

Now there’s a textual inquiry commonly made into these words: *As the days that you left Egypt....* Didn’t the exodus from Egypt occur on a single day? In fact, when telling us to remember the exodus, the Torah says, “Remember this *day* that you left Egypt,” and “In order that you should remember the *day* of your leaving the land of Egypt.” So why, here, does it say *the days*, in plural form?

One possible explanation is that included in the exodus from Egypt is the splitting of the Sea of Reeds. And so we find in the mitzvah of remembering the exodus every day, that this also includes the mention of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds. So too with the mitzvah of telling the

² Psalms 136:4

³ Nidah 31a

⁴ Shemot 13

⁵ Isaiah 52

⁶ Shemot Rabba 19:6

story of the exodus on the night of Passover, when the rule is, “The more you tell, the better”⁷—which includes telling of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds.

So that is why it says, “As the *days* that you left Egypt”—multiple days, to include all seven days from the beginning of the exodus until the splitting of the Sea of Reeds.⁸

If so the meaning of “As the days when you left Egypt, I will show you wonders” is that in the future redemption there will be the miracles and wonders that occurred in the exodus from Egypt itself, including the miracle and wonder of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds. This is as the prophet tells us, “And G-d will dry up the tongue of the Sea of Egypt...there will be a pathway...just as there was for Israel on the day he went up from the land of Egypt.”⁹

We know need to understand the relationship between these two things in the same verse:

1. The miracles that extend from “He alone” will occur in a way of “I will show you” (meaning that we will see the miracle within them).
2. In the wonders that will occur in the future redemption is included also the wonder of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds.

3a. Two advantages of the intra-natural miracle

To understand this, let’s first explain something we said earlier:

We said that intra-natural miracles are rooted higher than supra-natural miracles. What is it about them that supersedes the supra-natural miracles?

All miracles involve the release of the Infinite Light that precedes creation into the the creation. The Infinite Light is a state that knows no bounds or limitations and transcends the orderly progression of the creation. In the case of supra-natural miracles, the order of nature is annulled as a result of this release, its systems hacked. If so, this release of the Infinite Light never really extends into the natural world—since the world is not natural in the time and place of this release.

In intra-natural miracles, on the other hand, and infinite, unbounded light transcending the cosmos extends into the natural world itself—since the natural order remains intact for the duration of the release of light.¹⁰

Now, something wondrous is happening here: The world is a bounded system. A bounded system and unbounded light are two opposites. For an infinite, boundless light to be released

7 Haggadah

8 As for the the mitzvah to remember the exodus, there only one day is mentioned, because the principal requirement of remembering the exodus applies only to remembering the first day. Remembering the splitting of the Sea of Reeds is not an absolute requirement.

9 Isaiah 11:16

10 This includes an instance where the guise of natural order is to such an extent that even the subject of the miracle does not recognize the miracle that occurred for him. A miracle, by definition—even such a disguised miracle—means that an event occurred in this world that does not follow the patterns of natural law. It is only hidden insofar as human perception is concerned. As far as the world itself is concerned, through this miracle—i.e. this change in the world which is outside the pattern of natural law—an unbounded, infinite light has been released within it. [note 22 in the original maamar]

within the very bounded natural world, it must be drawn from the very quintessence of the Infinite Light, a place that transcends the entire construct of finite and infinite, and is therefore found in every place, including within the boundaries—and nature—of the natural world.

Intra-natural miracles, then, bring a third element into play: the quintessence of all things, the Infinite at His essence.

That is one way of explaining how intra-natural miracles supersede supra-natural miracles. There is another explanation, as well:

The point of a miracle is to demonstrate G-d's dominion over the natural order. This is made much more apparent through intra-natural miracles. With supra-natural miracles, we see that He has the power to annul and hack the laws of nature. With intra-natural miracles, however, it becomes apparent that the Infinite Light rules and controls the natural order itself—that the natural order itself runs by His will. Intra-natural miracles, then, demonstrate a greater dominion than supra-natural miracles.¹¹

4a. Understanding Natural Law

We now have two ways by which intra-natural miracles supersede supra-natural miracles. What really is the distinction between these two explanations? To understand this, we should first look at nature itself.

We'll look at an idea presented in the Akeidat Yitzchak (authored by Yitzchak ben Moshe Arama, Spain c. 1420–1494). There he explains how we can know the greatness of the Creator from our observation of nature. Of course, through contemplating the harmony of the entire natural world—beginning with the movement of the constellations, etc.—we come to the realization that there must be a “master to this mansion.” But beyond that, we can also contemplate the *consistency of nature*, how its order continues relentlessly, unchangingly, as the verse says, “they do not cease.”¹²

Meaning, close to 6,000 years have passed since the creation and there has been no weakening of physical law. (Also, the power of the creations themselves has not diminished. Each of the hosts of heaven endure and each of the species of earth endure, “just as strong as the day they were created.”) Through contemplating this, we can perceive the greatness of the Creator, that His power—from which the flux of energy into the world extends—is infinite and boundless.

Now, each creation derives its nature from the charge of G-dly energy within it. It makes sense, then, that the particular nature of each thing is defined by the particular way that this G-dly charge enters within it. If so, this vital energy must itself be a defined, bounded force.

¹¹ The same advantage could be said of the miracles which the subject does not recognize relative to those in which the miracle is apparent. If it is apparent that the natural means are nothing more than a guise, the change effected in the natural order is to some extent overt. This is comparable to a hack in the natural order. When, however, the natural order works seamlessly, providing no hint that it is just a disguise (although even in such a miracle there must be some change), this is because the effective change is entirely concealed. Meaning, that in these miracles, the natural order remains robust. The fact that nevertheless there was a change in nature (at least, a concealed change), is evidence of the dominion of the Infinite Light over the natural order even when that order remains robust and intact. [note 25 in the original maamar]

¹² Genesis 8:22 in reference to the seasons and the order of day and night.

Yet this is only as far as the *particular* nature of each thing is concerned. The consistency of nature over time, however, is unchanging and non-deteriorating. How is this possible? Only by the power of the Infinite Light, a force so unbounded that it transcends infusion within the creation and remains unbounded even as it engages the bounds of the creation. As it turns out, within a bounded, natural order, we perceive an infinite, unbounded Creator.

So the unbounded, infinite power of the Creator can be perceived without miracles, simply through the observation of the natural order. The problem is that this path requires contemplation. A miracle, on the other hand, takes that perception of the Creator's infinite power a step further: When you see a miracle—meaning, an alteration of natural law—you see immediately, without need for contemplation, that this is derived from a source unbounded by the limitations of our world.

Yet another way that miracles go a step further than the natural order in revealing the Infinite:

The infinite, boundless power evident through the ceaseless consistency of the natural order comes to us within a context of boundedness. Even after our contemplation, when we see the boundless wonder of the natural order, we are still seeing nature—boundedness—continuing without change or interruption. The infinite power remains external, providing us evidence through an epiphenomenon. But in a miracle, the Infinite Light itself is apparent, as we witness directly the release of a force entirely beyond that bounded context.

Nevertheless—and for this reason itself—there is much to be said for the expression of an infinite power through the consistent order of nature. Nature is in a way more revealing than a miracle. When boundlessness is expressed through miracles, through hacking the world's nature, *then it remains unrelated to the world*. When that boundlessness becomes apparent through the consistent order of nature, then we see that the vital energy of this world—a very bounded world—is tied up with the Infinite Light which has no bounds.

4b. Hidden Beauty

This idea of a boundless force within nature is best understood when taken in a larger context. Let's look at such a context provided by the Rebbe Rashab (Rabbi Sholom Dovber of Lubavitch, 1860–1920) in the series of maamarim he provided for the years 5666–5668 (1905–1908).

There he discusses how the natural order is driven by a G-dly force invested within the creation. Being invested *within*, that force is of necessity a bounded force. Yet there is an unchanging consistency within nature, as we noted above. If the force is bounded, how is it that things remain so consistent, without winding down over time?

The Rebbe Rashab explains this in terms of the Kabbalah of the Ari:

The Eitz Chaim is the major work of Rabbi Chaim Vital, presenting the teachings of his master, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, "the Ari". In the introduction, is a metaphorical description of the origin of the universe. It begins by describing an initial state, in which the Infinite Light (Ohr Ein Sof) filled all of existence. This was followed by a *tzimtzum*—a retraction, or withdrawal, whereby a void

- Keilim: receptacles of energy.
- Ohr, Orot: Light, or energy.
- Kav: measured beam of energy drawn from the Infinite Light (Ohr Ein Sof).
- Tzimtzum: contraction of light.

was created within the Infinite Light, and encompassed by it. Then, the Creator drew a straight line from the encompassing circle of the Infinite Light into the void, giving life to a series of worlds.

The backbone of these worlds are *keilim* — receptacles of energy — and *orot* — light, or energy that enters into those receptacles. The *orot* reach the *keilim* by way of a *kav* — the measured beam of energy that is drawn from the Infinite Light into the creation.

If so, the G-dly force invested within all created things does not originate with the *keilim*, but from the light of the *kav*. In turn, the *kav* originates in the Infinite Light that precedes the initial *tzimtzum*, or contraction of light. This is actually explained in many places: The *keilim* are rooted in the *tzimtzum* itself. The *kav*, on the other hand, is from the Infinite Light that precedes the *tzimtzum* — only that it is drawn out through the *tzimtzum*. This explains the phenomenon of consistent, undiminishing order in the natural world.

This line — the *kav* — is said to have burst through the darkness of the *tzimtzum*. In a later maamar (from the series of maamarim for the years 5772–5776 (1911–1916)), the Rebbe Rashab points out that to burst through a barrier implies a surge of energy. If so, he concludes, the *kav* must originate in *tiferet hane'elam* (literally, “the hidden beauty”), a source beyond the Infinite Light that preceded the *tzimtzum* — or at least, beyond the overt expression of that light.¹³

Knowing this, we have a better understanding in our comparison of the natural order with the miraculous. In both of them, the unbounded power of the infinite light is expressed — in the natural order through its consistency, and in miracles, openly. The expression of the infinite light within miracles, however, has this limitation: It is limited by its very unlimitedness. This is why it cannot be expressed within the limitations of a bounded world. When this transcendental light that preceded the *tzimtzum* is released, thereby causing a miracle, the miracle must occur through hacking the natural order, by annulling the boundaries of the cosmic order.

The light of the *kav*, from which the consistency of the natural order proceeds, doesn't have that limitation. Since it is rooted in *tiferet hane'elam*, in it the two opposites of boundedness and unboundedness are an integral whole. Unboundedness expresses itself within boundedness, as the unbounded light of the *kav* is expressed also within the boundaries of the natural order.

5a. Best of Both

We've now explained two critical issues:

1. Not only miracles, but also the consistent patterns of the natural order are evidence of an unbounded infinite light that transcends the created worlds. Miracles simply take that evidence a step further.
2. The advantage of a miracle is that the Infinite Light that transcends bounded infusion is itself released — and not just the evidence of such.

Accordingly, we could say this: The two sorts of miracles, supra-natural and intra-natural, are two modalities by which the Infinite Light that transcends the bounds of infusion presents itself within a bounded world. In a supra-natural miracle, it presents itself by shattering those

¹³ This passage relies on elucidation which will be provided in the class.

bounds; in an intra-natural miracle, it presents itself by transcending the entire paradigm of boundedness and unboundedness.

Earlier, we provided two ways in which intra-natural miracles supersede supra-natural miracles: One, in that they release an infinite, unbounded light within a bounded world, invoking a power beyond both the finite and the infinite. Two, in that they demonstrate G-d's mastery over the natural order even as that order remains intact and robust. We can now explain these two ways further:

When we talk about the advantage of this form of miracle presenting unbounded light within a bounded world, we are saying that this miracle has not only the advantage of a miracle, but also that of the natural order—for the natural order also expresses this nexus of these two opposites, a nexus that is lacking in supra-natural miracles.

But then, the intra-natural miracle also has the advantage that miracles in general hold over the natural order—the release of an infinite, unbounded light that transcends infusion. This is expressed in the way these intra-natural miracles demonstrate G-d's mastery over the natural order, in such a way that the natural order runs entirely according to His will, no matter what that will may be.

	An Unbounded Force Is...			
	...at Work	...on Display	...Dominating	...Infused within Boundedness
Natural Order	✓	X	X	✓
Supra-natural Miracles	✓	✓	✓	X
Intra-natural Miracles	✓	X	✓	✓

5b. The redeeming features of supra-natural miracles

Our comparison between the way the Infinite Light manifests in the natural order and its manifestation in miracles helps us better understand the supra-natural miracles as well. Clearly, these have an advantage over the natural order—and over intra-natural miracles as well—in that they are open miracles, meaning, the release of unbounded power from Above is immediately apparent. But also when it comes to demonstrating the mastery and control of the Unbounded Infinite Light over the natural order—in this regard, there is one detail in which supra-natural miracles supersede intra-natural miracles:

Since the natural order continues its existence for the duration of an intra-natural miracle, it follows that the mastery of the Infinite Light over the natural order is apparent only in the *behaviors* of the natural order—that this behavior is dictated not by laws of nature, but entirely by the supernal will. When it comes to supra-natural miracles, however, the *very existence* of

the natural order is annulled. If so, we see that the Infinite Light holds dominion over that very existence.

But if all miracles involve a release of unbounded power into the world, why is it that not all of them demonstrate mastery over the very existence of the natural order? Why is it that intra-natural miracles only demonstrate mastery over the behavior of nature?

One way of explaining this distinction between the two forms of miracles:

We said that every miracle involves a release of the unbounded, Infinite Light into our world. But when we say this light is unbounded, that unboundedness could come in two ways.

An intra-natural miracle is a release of a kind of unboundedness that is relative to—and therefore leaves for—space and boundedness. Therefore, even within the context of this release of light, the natural order continues to exist—only that it exists in whatever way the unbounded Infinite Light wills it to exist.

In supra-natural miracles, however, this release of unbounded, Infinite Light entirely transcends the very concept of boundedness. Therefore, within the context of this release of light, the natural order ceases to exist.

A parallel to this can be found described elsewhere, in a discussion of the faculties of will and intellect—will and intellect being analogous to the *encompassing force* (from whence come miracles) and the *pervasive force* (from whence comes the natural order). Will is often drawn into intellect and influences it, so that the will now takes on a reason. Yet it has been noted that this only applies to that aspect of the will that is reflected within intellect. It does not affect the essential will, so that in essence, there remains no reason to that will.

	Form of Gilui	Degree of Bittul Expressed
Supra-natural	Absolutely transcendent	Subjective
Intra-natural	Relatively transcendent	Objective
Natural	Bounded	

5c. Application and Comparison

Notwithstanding, there remains an advantage to intra-natural miracles. It's specifically in these sort of miracles that the dominion of the Infinite Light over the modality of natural order is made apparent.

Perhaps we could compare the distinction between these two sorts of miracles to a distinction made between two modalities in serving G-d:

1. The bittul of Yechuda Ila'ah—a sense of nothingness before the “higher level unity.”
2. The bittul of Kabalat Ol—a surrender of self expressed in “accepting a yoke.”

The bittul of yechuda ila'ah is a complete surrender of one's very existence. It comes through an intense contemplation and recognition that all existence is “considered as naught relative to

Him." This is similar to the supra-natural miracles, where the very existence of the natural order is annulled.

The bittul of Kabalat Ol is one by which the person retains his sense of self and his own desires, but nevertheless surrenders that to G-d's will to serve Him in action, speech and thought, independent of any real cognition of who he is serving—similar to a simple servant who would rather doing whatever he likes, but instinctually puts that aside to do his master's will. This is similar to an intra-natural miracle, whereby the natural order retains its existence, while its actual behavior is not according to the laws and properties of nature, but according to G-d's will.

6a

Each of these forms has its advantage. The advantage of yichuda ila'ah is that the bittul pervades his entire being. There is nothing left of him that is not bittul—unlike the bittul of kabalat ol, which relates only to actual behavior.

The advantage of kabalat ol is not in the subject, but in the degree of bittul. The bittul is a true and absolute bittul, not connected to the person's own entity. When it comes to yichuda ila'ah, the bittul emerges out of his own cognizance and awareness that "all is naught relative to Him," so the bittul is tied up with the person's entity and his own recognition. It cannot, then, be an absolute bittul. The bittul of kabalat ol, on the other hand, is one in which he accepts to do whatever G-d wants even though the instructions may conflict with his own desires—like a servant who is compelled to fulfill his master's will. This is a sort of bittul that does not take the person's own entity into account—and is therefore a true bittul.

6b

We could then apply the same paradigm to intra-natural miracles. The bittul of the natural order to the Infinite Light relates only to the behavior of nature, but not to its fundamental existence. Nevertheless, as far as the laws and properties of nature are concerned, there is no place for the natural order to function in a miraculous way. If so, the change—the miracle—that does occur demonstrates that the Infinite Light dominates nature and directs it according to His will.

If so, the bittul demonstrated here is an absolute one.