

Bais Yaacov Bnos Malka Newsletter

לעילוי נשמת יצחק עקיבא בן אהרן ז"ל

October 2023

Parshas Lech Lecha

פרשת לך לך

חשון תשפ"ג



Above Nature

After Avraham Avinu arrives in Eretz Canaan, Hashem promises him, "ושמתי את זרעך", "כעפר הארץ אשר אם יוכל איש למנות את עפר הארץ גם זרעך ימנה, I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring too can be counted" (Bereishis 13:16). Just as it is impossible to count the dust of the earth, it will be impossible to count the Jewish People.

This is difficult to understand. At every point in history, it has been possible to count the Jewish People! What does the pasuk mean?

Rav Hirsch explains that this nevu'a doesn't refer to the population of the Jewish people at any particular time, but rather the total of all the generations throughout history. That number is impossible to count, because it goes on forever. The Jewish People is immortal. That is the deep pshat of this bracha that Hashem gave to Avraham Avinu. The midrash teaches that just as dust is always there – it's on your shoes and in the air and everywhere around you – the Jewish People, Avraham's offspring, will outlive all of the nations that persecute them. As Mark Twain put it, the Jewish People walk on the graves of their enemies.

Everything in the natural world eventually disintegrates. Very few things last forever. Hashem lasts forever, the Torah lasts forever, and Olam HaBa lasts forever – and so does the Jewish People. We say about Shabbos, "ביני ובין בני ישראל אות היא לעולם". Shabbos is an eternal sign between Hashem and the Jewish People, indicating that Am Yisroel is eternal as well. In this sense, the Jewish People exist outside of the natural world.

Rav Schachter shlit"za notes that this yesod is reflected in other contexts in Parshas Lech Lecha as well. When Hashem promises Avraham that he will have a child, the pasuk describes, "ויוצא אותו החוצה"; He took him outside (15:5). Rashi, citing a midrash, explains that Hashem took Avraham outside of the realm of nature. Sarah was an akara, and Avraham was also unable to have children for many years. It would have been impossible for them to have children together naturally. Hashem therefore told Avraham Avinu, "Your creation is going to be above nature." Similarly, later in the parsha, Hashem changes Sarai's name to Sarah and promises once again that she will have a child. In order for her to have a child, Hashem had to in a sense recreate her as a different person; "naturally," she was unable to have children. In fact, one of the reasons that Hashem made the Imahos barren for so long was to demonstrate that the creation and continued existence of the Jewish People is above nature. The birth of the Jewish People was a neis! From the very beginning, Am Yisroel was above the teva.

The Netziv suggests a related idea. He notes that since Rivka was the sister of Lavan, who was a rasha, and she grew up surrounded by rishus, "היה בדרכך הטבע שיהיו בניה אכזרים" the rules of nature would have dictated that her children be resha'im. The Avos and Imahos passed their spiritual genes on to the Jewish People. The ruchniyus DNA of Am Yisroel includes the middos developed by the Avos, and b'derech hateva, Rivka should have introduced some negative traits into our lineage. The Netziv explains that this is why Hashem made her barren. Since her pregnancy and giving birth were completely miraculous, the natural transmission of the negative genes from her family did not take place! By creating Am Yisroel in a miraculous manner, Hashem formed the nation in kedusha, without any pesul mixed in. Rav Schachter likes to say that Jews are born differently, they live differently, and they die differently.

Rav Schachter quotes other ideas from the Rav ztz"l that are based on this yesod of Am Yisroel being above nature. The krias haTorah on the second day of Rosh Hashana is the story of the akeida. After the story of the akeida is over, we continue to read the next few pesukim, which talk about Avraham Avinu's extended family and the children that were born from them. Why don't we conclude the laining after the story of the akeida? One reason is to have more pesukim available for all of the aliyos, but the Rav explains that these extra pesukim are read to create a contrast. Avraham's family developed "normally." They married and had children right away. Avraham and Sarah, in contrast, waited many years before Yitzchak was born, and when they finally had him, Avraham was told to kill him! This highlights the uniqueness of Am Yisroel. We are different; we do not develop or exist "naturally."

A corollary of being above nature is that the way we obtain zechusim is different as well. Am Yisroel's success depends on our dedication to avodas Hashem and to ruchniyus. On Rosh Hashana, we remind ourselves that we are different than the nations of the world. We must serve Hashem well in order to be zocheh to a good din. The idea that Am Yisroel's existence is miraculous is further reflected in Yitzchak's name. When Avraham was informed that he would have a child, he laughed out of simcha, "ויצחק" Bereishis 17:7. But צחוק also refers to something laughable; it is "crazy" that this could happen! The fact that Avraham and Sarah could have a child is indeed laughable – unnatural and completely unexpected. At the same time, it happened, and it brought great joy to Avraham and Sarah. The name Yitzchak captures the message that the birth of Am Yisroel and our continued existence is miraculous.

This is further reflected in the victory of Yaakov Avinu in his struggle with the malach. Just as Yaakov defeated the malach in a supernatural manner, the survival of Yaakov's descendants is completely miraculous. Rav Schachter further notes that a malach symbolizes nature, as Chazal say that every blade of grass has a malach that encourages it to grow. When Yaakov defeated the malach, he was showing that he has control over nature. Am Yisroel is above teva and does not work within the normal rules of nature.

Rav Schachter explains that the fact that the Jewish People is above nature – that our birth and existence is essentially miraculous – helps explain antisemitism. Organisms reject foreign entities. It is for this reason that organ transplants don't always work; the body rejects the donated organ. Similarly, the Jewish People is like a foreign entity to the entire outside world.

We are above nature! This is why the natural world rejects us.

Furthermore, the existence of antisemitism depends on spiritual factors. When Am Yisroel serves Hashem well, the non-Jews treat us better; when we are lacking in our avodas Hashem, there is increased antisemitism. This is not a natural cause and effect – because our existence is not natural. This is a supernatural cause and effect! Am Yisroel is immortal; we began with miracles, and we continue to exist through miracles. Indeed, Rav Yaakov Emden writes that the greatest miracle is the miracle of the survival of the Jewish people.

Many have tried to injure us, but they were not able to destroy or wipe us out. While all the great ancient civilizations have disappeared and been forgotten, the Nation of Israel who clings to Hashem 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 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.

We are the Am Hashem. We are above nature, and we will therefore survive forever.

Shabbat Shalom

Chana Ginsburg

It has been a week in flux. Ever changing emotions, situations and locations. The girls have handled things with flexibility and grace, as their smiling faces demonstrate. Their success is a testament to the inner strength of our families and the unending dedication of the BYBM staff. May we continue to 'roll with the punches' as we await the ultimate Yeshua b'karov.





Kita Daled prepared shoko balls as they adjusted to a new environment beautifully!

Hafsaka at the 'guest' shetach!



Kita Alef began the letter 'nun' and received a sweet reminder to start b'regel yamin!. They learnt about starting to daven for rain and discussed how we are all under one 'umbrella', handling difficult situations together.





Kita Gimmel Kebatz bobbin knit, baked, made rainbow cards and enjoyed each others company at all the different hosts through the week.

