

Ordinary Miracles? **Rabbi Maury Grebenau**

Our parsha contains a famous list and an equally famous question about that list. As our ancestors make their way to Egypt the Torah lists their names and tells us that they were seventy souls (Bereishis 46:27). If one counts the number of people listed, however, they will find only sixty nine. The Rashbam says that the missing person is Yaakov himself, but the Gemara takes a different approach. The Gemara (Bava Basra 120a) tells us that the missing person was the daughter of Levi who was born as they entered Egypt but was still in utero when the count took place. This daughter of Levi grew up to be the mother of Moshe, Yocheved.

The Ibn Ezra brings up a serious issue with the Gemara. He points out that if indeed Yocheved was born when they went down to Egypt that would make her 130 years old when Moshe was born. The Ibn Ezra finds it very problematic that the Torah could leave out such an amazing miracle as a woman giving birth at such an advanced age when much fanfare is made when Sarah gives birth at a considerably younger age. The Ramban (Bereishis 46:15) defends the Gemara¹ and in doing so lays down an important principle of Hashem's interaction with the world.

The Ramban says that the Torah only mentions miracles which were either previously prophesized by a Navi or mentioned by an angel. There were many other miracles which didn't merit being mentioned. The Ramban here is extending his well known concept mentioned at the end of parshas Bo. It is a mistake to look at the world as Teva, nature and a miracle as a departure from the natural. The central mistake of this world view is that they see the world as running by itself and Hashem stepping in when necessary to change things. Instead, argues the Ramban, we need to see childbirth, sunrise, the human eye and really any aspect of nature, as the miracles they are. The mere fact that they occur frequently, and even predictably, does not make them any less miraculous.

Being able to see the hand of Hashem in our everyday life is an important skill and an enriching experience. The days of outright miracles have ended and now we need a more sensitive instrument to detect Hashem in the world. The Ramban tells us that Hashem is just as present in the birth of a child as He was at the splitting of the Yam Suf. It is up to us to be able to sensitize ourselves to this and not become callous to the wonder we experience every day. The more we are able to notice Hashem's presence in this world, the more a part of our lives He will be. The answer to the age old question of 'where is G-d?' may be, 'wherever you let Him in.'

¹ See the Maharsha (Bava Basra 119b) who answers that the pasuk really does hint to it in calling Yocheved 'bas Levi' which implies youth as the Gemara itself explains