

Geulas Yisrael #57: Korach

A 2500-year old Earthquake

Some punishments are more dramatic than others. Few are as horrifying as being swallowed alive by a desert crater. Frustrated by Korach's mutiny, Moshe warns him and his band of rebels that Hashem will *create* a "new invention" to confirm Moshe's selection and to punish Korach. Moshe's prediction came true, as the earth opened wide and swallowed Korach whole.

Though Moshe's prediction materialized, his terminology wasn't *completely* accurate. Similar to a new invention, the earthquake seemed to appear out of nowhere, but, in reality, it was a 2500-year old earthquake. It had already been designed at the dawn of history, during the first week of creation

The Mishnah in Pirkei avot delineates ten items which were composed during twilight, immediately after the six days of creation. The universe was "almost" complete, Shabbat was fast approaching, and Hashem fashioned ten "elements" instrumental for Jewish history. Among the more well-known supernatural objects manufactured during these fading minutes were the be'er (desert well of water) the match (staff of Moshe), the manna (heavenly bread), the luchot and, of course, the earthquake which devoured Korach. Why were these materials, most of which would not be useful for centuries to come, fashioned during the initial week of creation? Moreover, why not create them during the six days of creation *proper* and not during this in-between phase of twilight?

Materials for future miracles were developed during creation because the *miracles themselves* were programmed during creation. We typically assume that a miracle entails Hashem dramatically intervening in our world, tearing the natural order asunder, and reshaping our reality. The Rambam had a very different view of miracles. Any miracle vital to Jewish history was already *preprogrammed* into the natural order from the dawn of time. For example, Hashem programmed the molecular structure of the Red Sea molecules to solidify 2448 years into history. Similarly, Hashem programmed the DNA of the Nile-frogs to instinctively migrate en masse from the Nile during the plague of tzaferdei'a.

Likewise, the sun's astronomical orbit was engineered so that this star would halt its movement on a Friday, when Yehoshua required extra time to rout his enemies. Miracles don't arise suddenly, but are embedded in Nature and subsequently *invoked* by Hashem. Anomalies of Nature which are necessary for Jewish history are baked into creation and into Nature.

For this reason, all the materials necessary for "Jewish miracles" were prefabricated at the time of creation. The potential of miracles is hot-wired into Nature, and this potential is roused when necessary. As miracles don't represent the "daily routine" or "normal Nature" they could not have been created during the six days *proper*. During those six days the natural systems which govern our routine were set in motion. Instead, the material for miracles was manufactured just as the six days of "normal Nature" faded, but the overall week of creation was still unfinished. During the twilight of "creation week", Nature was embedded with *inherent potential* for miracles.

Suppressing Korach's insurrection was vital to Jewish history. Without firmly establishing Moshe's selection, everything would be up for grabs. After the meraglim debacle we were in a very fragile and vulnerable state. We had lost the land of Israel and with it, we lost our unifying narrative. No longer did every Jew in the hot desert share a common future and a common fate. Had the Korach riot spread, it could have torpedoed Jewish destiny. We could have fallen into forty years of infighting and political squabbles. Forty years would soon become four hundred years, and we would be forever lost in the sands of dispute, wandering endlessly and aimlessly. Korach endangered Jewish history and for that reason, as is true with all miracles of Jewish history, the earthquake was pre-fashioned. It felt like a *creation*, but was, in fact, an *invocation*.

The Great Love

Viewing miracles are pre-fashioned, stresses the great love Hashem possesses for our people. Despite the flurry of activity during creation, and despite Hashem creating a vast cosmos, our needs and the needs of Jewish history were still paramount. Knowing that we would require food and water as we trekked through the desert, Hashem lovingly prepared supernatural "providers", as part of the landscape. We imagine the creation of our world as a cosmic event, and it

was. However, within that cosmic moment the needs of a chosen people were already on His mind.

Nature and Redemption

There is a more important takeaway from the fact that miracles were pre-fashioned into Nature. We inhabit two domains: the world of “Nature” and the world of “History”. Similar to every other creature, we were crafted by Hashem and placed in His natural world. In the sphere of Nature time cycles endlessly and is vacant of any meaning. Seasons roll, winds rush, oceans ebb and flow and time marches ceaselessly and mercilessly.

However, we inhabit a second world- the world of History. We were inserted into History to shape human experience and to redeem it. Just like "Nature" which began in Tishrei when the world was created, “History” has a point of inception – the month of Nissan when we left Egypt. Unlike Nature, though History has a terminus. We call that terminus “redemption” and we are meant to advance humanity toward it.

Though they feel so different, Nature and History are inseparable. Redemption is part of Nature. Miracles necessary to advance redemption were woven into the fabric of Nature, to demonstrate that Redemption doesn’t subvert or circumvent Nature. Rather Redemption expresses Nature’s potential and perfects her.

Redemption is part of Nature and is as irrepressible as the tides and as the orbits themselves. Redemption isn’t an external layer but an integral part of the course of Nature. When Redemption concludes, Nature herself will be perfected.

These two spheres- Nature and History, each with a different Rosh Hashanah, are one. Redemptive miracles are stitched into Nature because they drive Nature to her own redemption. We don’t live in two worlds, but in one reality embodying different spheres. They are all one, just like their Creator.