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Three Types of Miracles:
(Shmuz #37)
Rabbi Bentzion Shafier

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”. The Sforno says that this was the first moment in time, literally “in the beginning”. There was no time before it. But certainly God had to exist before creating the world. We are told that God wrote the Torah before creation. So how could this be possible? When God runs the world, there are three types of miracles he does. The first type is, for example, a story of Rabbi Akiva who needed money, so he went to borrow from someone. The woman said I will lend you and God and the sea will be the witnesses/ guarantors. When the time came, Rabbi Akiva didn't have the money. The woman went to the sea and asked God and the sea to have forgiveness on Rabbi Akiva because he is sick and can't pay back. Immediately, the daughter of the Caesar became insane, she was on a boat, took a chest full of diamonds and threw it in the sea. The sea brought the chest to shore and the woman picked it up and left. A few days later, Rabbi Akiva came back with the money to pay her back. The woman said, I already went to the guarantor and collected the money, and she gave him the left over money. This is one of the ways how Rabbi Akiva became rich. This miracle is type number one, where God orchestrates the world much like a conductor and his baton. This is the system we rely on.

God causes things to happen within the framework of nature. He put ideas into people's heads, he makes someone meet someone else. He is behind the scenes. Another example, the whole group of people is traveling and it starts to rain, so they sleep next to a wall. In the middle of the night, a dog comes and urinates on one of the people. He gets up angry, he goes to the river and starts cleaning himself. A while later, he goes back and sees that the wall had collapsed and everyone was killed. God is behind the scenes. It happens in everyone's lives, but in reality it is not a miracle. Every step is well within the framework of nature. For example Rabbi Akiva's story. Nothing there is a change of nature.

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Level 2 of miracles is when God changes nature, the Gemara in Shabbat says there was a man whose wife died and left him a young child to nurse and he couldn't pay for a person to nurse the baby, so a miracle happened, and he had a milk in his chest and he nursed. Rabbi Yosef says look how great this man was that nature changed for him. Clearly, this was a miracle. But if you read nowadays, there are drugs that men could take, and such things can happen to them. G-d takes the existing nature and manipulates it. These things existed in nature, but God just made him have the capabilities of the woman. (A hundred years ago if you would have told someone that you could take a cold cup of water, put it in a box, and two minutes later, its steaming hot, he would think you are doing witchcraft.) But it's not a miracle, it's taking the existing system and manipulating it. If the world is round, then how come people don't fall off? Because the world is large (a circumference of 24,000 miles), in a distance of a mile, the curve is not noticeable. Even every 10 or 20 miles. So it turns out that everyone is on flat land. But viewing this from space is amazing, we think it's not possible, but it is. In the 1800's, they didn't know about bacteria, they would operate without gloves wearing street clothes. Bacteria was a reality, but it wasn't noticeable. There are things that exist, that we don't see.

There are four levels of faith. The first level is understanding that God created the world. The second level is understanding that God is involved in the big picture issues like life and death, hurricanes, tornadoes, war, etc.. Level 3 of faith is understanding that God knows my thoughts as I am thinking them. Level 4 is knowing that God is intimately involved in my day-to-day life, who I meet, who says what, how events happen etc. The fifth level is as follows: when God, he created something from nothing. It wasn't just black in color. There was absence, no physicality -- no domes, molecules, and from this, he created matter and that is very difficult to understand. Everything we create in this world is from something else. Imagine you're standing at the bus stop on a freezing February day and you close your eyes and imagine a beach. It is 85°, perfect weather, waves, scenery, seagulls flying by. And as you're imagining this, the bus comes by and you wake up. What happened to that dream? It's gone. The relationship to that dream, is God's relationship to this world. When God created something from nothing,

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he also had to sustain that creation. It's impossible for us to fully comprehend how God made something for nothing. God not only created the world, but he sustains it. So when I'm dreaming about the beach, it is I that is keeping the waves blue, the sand white, and the sun in that angle. I am sustaining it. God does the same thing. If you would like to grow in faith, find a large rock, bank a couple times to see how sturdy it is, and then say "this wasn't." This did not exist, and God brought the whole thing from nothing. Studying the most inanimate object can we do to the highest levels of faith. If God stopped maintaining the world, like my dream, it would disappear.

Level 3 of miracles is this reality. So when the Sforno says that God created the first moment of time when he created the world, he means that there was no physicality before then. So length and time did not exist at all, because only physical things have a length and time. When we leave this world, we leave for eternity because in the next world there is no time. That is what the Sforno was saying, there was nothing before the creation of the world, hence, there was no time and God created the first moment when he created the world, physicality starts now! If God is all-knowing, it seems to be a contradiction to free will. If God knows what I'm going to do, how do I have free will? God doesn't know what did to the do I'm going to do, God knows what I did before I did it. Imagine we go with a time machine today that transports us 20 years into the future. We see one guy Reuvein a gun to another guy Shimon. We want him not to shoot, but he shoots and kills him. We get back in a time machine, go back 20 years, and we see Reuvein, we tell him that he killed him on. Reuvein things were crazy, but we saw it happen. G-d knows the future because God is not limited by time. So God sees what we are going to do all the way until the end of our lives, he doesn't know were going to do, rather he and he knows what we did. Just like we didn't know that Reuvein would kill Shimon, but he does, and we see him do it. The race is so I can understand is because we're physical and limited by time. If we could understand these concepts however, will allow us to become closer to God. Another example demonstrating this idea is that of a teacher giving a test to his students. Imagine that the teacher knows what the student is going to get on the test before the student takes it. Imagine also that the teacher makes each test specifically for each student, knowing each student's capabilities, capacities, and

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potential. It is up to each student to study for the test and do well on the test. If the students study, it is a guarantee that they will do well. But if you do not study, they will fail. When we are put into this world, God gives us each a test, a test specifically designed for each and every one of us. God knows that if we put in our efforts, we will pass this test. But if we do not put in effort, to try to pass this test, we will fail. It is all up to us. Rabbi Shafier was moving from Monsey to Rochester, New York. He left earlier than his family, his wife was planning to, couple hours later. On her way to Rochester, his wife stopped at two of her best friends houses. Each one of the friends felt on ease the by the way bear car seat for this position in the car. So was my main attempted to fix the car seats, with the second woman actually giving her all her own car seat. As his wife was on the freeway, she got into an accident. Her car hit a patch of ice, flipped over twice with five kids in the car and one baby. Thank God no one was hurt. The car seats had become attached, but the baby was okay. God orchestrates the world because he knows what's going to happen in the future. The fact that this woman stopped by her friends before she left Rochester. And the fact that her friends felt that the car seat was not safe, with not a coincidence. God is watching our every action.

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