Parsha Halacha – Parshat Va'et'chanan – Shabbat Nachamu

The Ten Other Miracles in the Beit HaMikdash

Not Listed in Pirkei Avot

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In the beginning of Parshat Va'et'chanan, we read that Moshe Rabeinu prayed to G-d that he be allowed to enter the land of Israel and see "this good mountain and Levanon (Lebanon)."[1] According to Rashi, "this good mountain" refers to Jerusalem (which is called a mountain by both Abraham[2] and Isaiah[3])[4] while "Levanon" refers to the Beit HaMikdash. (Levanon can mean "to whiten" or cleanse, and since the Beit HaMikdash cleanses the sins of the Jewish people, it's called Levanon.[5])

This article will discuss ten of the miracles which occurred regularly in the Beit HaMikdash that are not enumerated in the fifth chapter of Pirkei Avot (5:4). In addition, we will strive to explain why these miracles aren't included in the list found in Pirkei Avot and what lessons may be learned from these miracles. It's especially appropriate to learn about these matters during this time as per the encouragement of the Lubavitcher Rebbe to study about the Beit HaMikdash at this time of year.

1. **The Voice of Gvini Kruz**[6]

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[1] Deut. 3:25.
[2] Gen. 22:14.
[3] Isaiah 2:3.
[4] The Vilna Gaon in Aderet Eliyahu.
[5] Yoma 39b.
[6] Yoma 20b.

The Kohen who would alert the Kohanim to be ready for their daily service was known as "Gvini Kruz" – Gvini, the announcer.[7] Every morning he would cry out "Arise, Kohanim, to your service, and Leviyim to your (singing) platform, and Israelites to your watch (i.e., to be present when the communal offerings are offered)." His voice was so loud that it could sometimes be heard from a distance of 3 *parsah* (approximately 7.5 miles). When King Agrippas once heard his voice from that distance, he was so moved that he sent him gifts. He was impressed that Gvini put so much effort into announcing this loudly even though it only needed to be heard by those in the vicinity of the Beit HaMikdash.[8]

Why Not Listed in Pirkei Avot?

The commentaries explain that Gvini's voice would sometimes not carry as far as three *parsah* as it depended on factors such as the weather.[9] Thus, it's not listed as it wasn't a miracle which was constantly replicated. In addition, this miracle was only recognizable outside the Beit HaMikdash and is therefore not counted (see below).

The Possible Lesson

One should invest all of one's efforts to inspire others to begin serving G-d. If one does so, he will be granted Divine assistance to succeed.

2. The Voice of the Kohen Gadol[10]

When the Kohen Gadol would recite G-d's name (during the service on Yom Kippur), it could be heard in the city of Jericho which was 10 *parsah* away (approximately 25 miles). The Talmud points out that the Kohen Gadol's feat was greater than that of Gvini cruz (besides the fact that it traveled a longer distance[11]) because his voice carried by day (when there is more natural noise present) and, additionally, he was weak from fasting.

The Raavad explains[12] that Jericho had some of the holiness of Jerusalem since it was the first city conquered by Yehoshua and, as such, it was "more in tune" to the goings-on in the Beit HaMikdash which allowed for various sounds (and smells[13]) to reach there.

Why Not Listed in Pirkei Avot?

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[7] Bartenura on Shekalim 5:1.

[8] Ben Ish Chai in Benayahu.

[9] Tiferet Yisrael, Yachin 67 on Mishnah Tamid 3:8.

[10] Yoma, ibid.

[11] But see Mishnah Tamid ibid. that Gvini's voice would also carry until Jericho. Tosfot (Yoma 21a D.H. Shalosh Parsa'ot) explains that although Gvini's voice could be heard in Jericho, it was impossible to make out what words he was saying, whereas the Kohen Gadol's actual words could be heard in Jericho.

[12] On Tamid 30b.

[13] See Yoma 39b.

The Raavad explains (ibid.) that this miracle isn't listed in Pirkei Avot since it occurred (i.e., was recognized) outside the Beit HaMikdash (see below).

The Possible Lesson

One who is "in tune" to spiritual matters can be inspired even by matters that take place in distant places and times.

3. The Earthenware Shards, Crops, and Stomachs of the Bird Sacrifices, Ashes of the Inner Mizbe'ach and Menorah were all swallowed up in the earth on a daily basis[14]

The earthenware vessels which were used to cook sacrifices had to be broken since they had absorbed a flavor of the sacrifice which one may not eat past a certain time and they cannot be kashered.[15] It was forbidden to remove them from the Beit HaMikdash due to the fact that they contained flavor of the Korbanot (which must stay in the Beit Hamikdash). As such, miraculously, they would be swallowed up by the earth of the Azarah (courtyard of the Beit HaMikdash) on a daily basis. Similarly, the crop and stomachs of the bird *Olah* (burnt) offerings (which the Torah states must be thrown near the Mizbe'ach[16]) would be swallowed by the earth near the altar. The same would happen to the ashes of the inner Mizbe'ach and the Menorah. (The ashes from the outer Mizbe'ach were taken out of the camp).[17]

Counted in the List

According to the Talmud this miracle should be counted in the list of Pirkei Avot. (The list will still only include ten miracles as several of the miracles listed there can be counted as one).

The Lesson

The Chatam Sofer (on Yoma ibid.) says that shards of earthenware are particularly associated with kelipot (negative forces). Despite this, since by absorbing the flavor of the sacrifices, they become sanctified to the degree that they were absorbed within the Beit HaMikdash. We can learn from this that by sanctifying oneself with mitzvot one can be protected from evil forces and attractions.

4. The Lechem Hapanim (showbread) Remained Fresh and Hot from Friday until the Following Shabbat

Counted in the List

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[14] Yoma 21a.
[15] Levit. 6:21.
[16] Ibid. 1:16.
[17] Ibid. 6:4.

According to the Talmud this miracle should be counted in the list of Pirkei Avot. (As mentioned above, the list will still only include ten miracles as several of the miracles listed there can be counted as one). Although miracles that occurred inside the building of the Beit HaMikdash aren't counted in this list (see below), this one is included since the table with the showbread was lifted and brought to the door of the sanctuary during the pilgrimage festivals so that the people could see how the bread was still steaming and be awed by how great was G-d's love for them.

The Lesson

The Ben Ish Chai explains that bread represents the Torah which nourishes our souls like bread nourishes the body. One should retain one's enthusiasm when studying Torah so that when he finishes studying, the Torah is still as "fresh" to him as when he started.
In addition, the Torah is acquired through 48 (מ"ח) qualities. To symbolize this, the showbread remained warm (חם).

5. The Aron Kodesh Did Not take up Space in the Kodesh Kodashim (Holy of Holies)[18]

This means that when measuring the Holy of Holies, it always measured 20 amot, whether or not the space of the Aron was included in the measurement.

Why Not Counted in the List?

The Talmud says that the miracles which occurred "inside" (i.e., within the building of the Beit HaMikdash) and weren't visible to the Jewish people aren't counted in this list which only includes miracles which publicly showed G-d's love for the Jewish people. In addition, any of the miracles which occurred constantly (i.e, 24 hours a day, seven days a week) aren't included in the list.

The Lesson

The Aron Kodesh contained the Luchot which represent the entire Torah. A person who devotes himself to Torah will find that this doesn't diminish from his *parnasah* (livelihood) at all. This is the inner message of the Aron not taking up any space.[19]

6. The Keruvim which Shlomo HaMelech Made Didn't Take up Any Space[20]

King Solomon made Keruvim which stood on the floor of the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. These were separate from the ones on the *kaporet* which covered the Aron.[21] The wing span of Shlomo's

[18] Yoma, ibid.
[19] Ben Ish Chai in the Ben Yehoyadah.
[20] Yoma, ibid.
[21] See I Kings 6:22.

Keruvim took up the entire length of the *Kodesh HaKodashim* leaving no room for the body of the Keruvim. As such, the Talmud says that miraculously the *keruvim* didn't take up any space.

Why not Counted?

As mentioned above, the miracles which occurred "inside" aren't counted in this list. In addition, as mentioned above and below, miracles which occurred constantly aren't included in the list.

The Lesson

The *keruvim* represented the Jewish people (the two *keruvim* represented the Jewish men and women respectively). The fact that they didn't take up space represents that the sustenance of the Jewish world is a free gift from G-d and that it doesn't diminish from our reward in the next world.[22]

7. Golden Fruit

The Talmud says, "When [King] Solomon built the [First] Temple, he planted all sorts of precious golden fruits there, and these brought forth their fruit in their appointed season like other trees, and when the wind blew, the fruit would fall, as it is stated,[23] 'May his fruits rustle like Lebanon.' (See above that Lebanon refers to the Beit HaMikdash.) And when the gentiles entered the Sanctuary[24] the golden trees withered, as it stated,[25] 'And the blossoms of Lebanon wither.' And the Holy One, Blessed be He, will restore the miraculous trees to Israel in the future, as it is stated,[26] 'It shall blossom abundantly, it shall also rejoice and shout, the glory of Lebanon will be given to it.'

Why Not Counted?

The Talmud says that miracles which were constant aren't counted in the list (see above).

The Lesson

According to the Sefat Emet, the reason Solomon planted these trees in the Beit HaMikdash was to show that the blessing for all the trees in the world came from the Beit HaMikdash. (The Torah forbids planting actual trees in the Beit Hamikdash[27] which is why Solomon planted

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Psalms 72:16.
[24] According to the Jerusalem Talmud (Yoma 4:4), this occurred when King Menashe brought an idol into the sanctuary.
[25] Nachum 1:4.
[26] Isaiah 35:2.
[27] Deut. 16:21.

golden trees instead.) Possibly this teaches us that when the Jewish people serve G-d faithfully, they bring blessing to the entire world.

8. The Lottery "For G-d" Would Come Up in the Kohen Gadol's Right Hand

The Talmud says,[28] "During all forty years that Shimon HaTzaddik served as the Kohen Gadol, the lot "for G-d" (used to decide which goat would be sacrificed and which would be thrown off a mountain to "*azazal*") arose in the right hand. From then onward, sometimes it arose in the right hand and sometimes it arose in the left hand… During the forty years prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, the lot "for G-d" did not arise in the Kohen Gadol's right hand at all."

Why Not Counted?

This miracle wasn't counted since it didn't occur consistently except for the 40 years of Shimon HaTzadik.

The Lesson

According to the Shem MiShmuel,[29] the lot "for G-d" coming up in the right hand represented that all of one's actions (which are usually done with the right hand) should be done for the sake of serving G-d. While the lot "for *azazel*" coming up in the left hand indicates that all negative powers (symbolized by *azazel*) should be subjugated to holiness (just like the left hand is secondary to the right hand).

9. The Red String from the *Azazel* Ram Would Turn White

The Talmud says,[30] "During the tenure of Shimon HaTzadik as High Priest… the strip of crimson wool that was tied to the head of the goat that was sent to *azazel* turned white (indicating that the sins of the people had been forgiven, as it is written,[31] 'Though your sins be as crimson, they shall be white as snow.') From then onward, it sometimes turned white and sometimes it did not turn white… During the forty years prior to the destruction of the Second Temple… the strip of crimson wool (that was tied to the head of the goat that was sent to *azazel*) did not turn white."

Why Not Included?

As mentioned above, only miracles that occurred on a regular basis were included in the list whereas this miracle was sporadic.

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[28] Yoma 39a and b.
[29] Toldot, Year 5674 paragraph beginning VeHinei Nireh BiMidrash.
[30] Yoma ibid.
[31] Isaiah 1:18.

The Lesson

The Talmud says that when the red string was regularly not turning white, the sages established that it shouldn't be displayed publicly as it may cause the people to become sad. The Shem MiShmuel explains[32] that when a person has hope that he will be forgiven from his sins, he can find motivation to serve G-d. Whereas when a person thinks that he is beyond redemption, it's likely that he will not even try to serve G-d. As the verse says,[33] "Forgiveness is with you so that You should be feared" (i.e., the people will fear G-d more if they are forgiven for their sins and therefore have hope.) This is why the sages didn't want the Jewish people to find out that they weren't forgiven, so as to fall into despair and deteriorate further. Instead they would hope they were forgiven and strengthen themselves to serve G-d with alacrity. (This service is valuable even if they aren't forgiven for previous sins.)

10. The Western Lamp Lasted the Longest

The Talmud says,[34] "For the forty years that Shimon HaTzaddik served as High Priest… the western lamp of the Menorah burned longer than all the others. (This was a sign that G-d's presence rested upon the nation. They would light it first, then use that fire to ignite the others. Despite this, when they came to clean the Menorah in the morning, they would find that it outlasted the others.[35]) From then onward, it sometimes burned longer and sometimes it went out earlier... During the forty years prior to the destruction of the Second Temple… the westernmost lamp of the candelabrum did not burn longer than the others at all."

Why Not Included?

Since this miracle was sporadic, it wasn't included in the list as explained above.

The Lesson

The Western lamp burned the longest in the merit that its fire was used to ignite the others. We may learn from here that by teaching and inspiring others, our own inspiration will become more consistent.

There were several other miracles that occurred in the Beit HaMikdash which can be discussed another time, G-d willing.

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[32] Shabbat Shuva 5672, paragraph beginning Od Yesh Lomar Al Pi Divrei HaShas. See also Erev Rosh HaShana 5670 D.H. Barishona Hayu Koshrin.
[33] Psalms130:4.
[34] Yoma, ibid.
[35] See Shabbat 22b.

May we receive a true nechoma with the building of the Third Beit HaMikdash speedily in our days and experience these miracles there!

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom Umevorach!

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