

“Miracle of Miracles”

Brachos 20a

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Have you ever seen or witnessed a real miracle? For example, walking into your home and finding millions of dollar bills on the floor, or you walk outside and it is pouring rain but wherever you walk, it is sunny and dry. Most people have not been privy to such a miracle. What is the secret to merit seeing miracles like these? The secret is found in this week's *amud*, 20a in Tractate *Brachos*. The *Gemara* says that it is not merely *Torah*, *Mitzvos* and good deeds that cause a person to see miracles, rather, what causes miracles is *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice for the purpose of serving Hashem. We find this same concept when the Jewish people were leaving Egypt to go into the desert. The *Torah* tells us that it was not the prayers that caused the splitting of the sea but it was *Nachshon ben Aminadav* going into the water over his mouth. Only after that happened, when the water was all the way past his neck, did the miracle of the splitting of the sea start. *Hashem* was waiting for an act of *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, in order to perform the miracle. *Mesiras nefesh* can directly cause miracles.

What exactly is the connection between *mesiras nefesh* and seeing miracles? Most people would think that it is learning of *Torah* and doing *mitzvos* that cause *Hashem* to do miracles! Why specifically *mesiras nefesh*? I believe that the answer is as follows. When a person is *moser nefesh*, he is showing that he is willing to give up his life in order to serve *Hashem*. He is saying that all the pleasures of this world do not mean anything to him without complete service of *Hashem*. If a person would come with a gun and threaten to take his life if he will not serve *avodah zarah*, he has an obligation to give up his life. When that person does give up his life and is *moser nefesh*, he is saying that life is not worth living without the ability to serve *Hashem*. This is the foundation of *mesiras nefesh*, giving up on life's pleasure and desires for the sake of Heaven.

It is not only through dying that one can be *moser nefesh*. For example, a person can be *moser nefesh* to learn on a Sunday afternoon instead of watching the football game. This would show that pleasure in this world is worth less than the service of *Hashem*. Additionally, we can invite people to our homes fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *hachnasas orchim* even when we are not such good friends and it is solely to help and give *chizzuk* to another person. When a person does that and goes above and beyond their comfort level while diminishing his pleasure in this world, it allows a person to see miracles.

Hashem runs our lives through *tevah*, the natural system in the world. When a miracle occurs, *Hashem* is deviating from His “natural” way of running the world for you. When a person is *moser nefesh* and overcomes his desires for the sake of heaven, then *Hashem* will respond measure for measure, *middah kneged middah*, and perform a miracle, going above and beyond the natural *tevah* of this world. When a person goes above his natural inclination to get pleasure, *Hashem* will also go against the natural way of this world. When one sacrifices for *Hashem*, *Hashem* sacrifices back!