

Spiritual Insight For The Week

with Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

The Kick In The Leg That Saved A Life



My interest in martial arts began when I was 12 years old. I wrestled in high school and was on my college judo team, and over the years, I have practiced various techniques. More recently, I trained extensively in Israeli Krav Maga with world-renowned expert Amir Perets.

Workouts can be strenuous and painful. Injuries are common, and getting kicked is par for the course.

However, on February 16, 2020, while training with a former Navy Seal, I was surprised when he “accidentally” kicked me on the inside of my right thigh.

I noticed a lump in the area a few days later and assumed it was a bruise. When the lump grew rather than disappear, I showed it to my doctor. He immediately ordered an MRI and CT scan which determined that I had a tumor attached to my thigh muscle. A subsequent biopsy determined that the tumor was malignant, and I underwent extensive surgery and seven weeks of radiation treatments. I thank God every day that I am now in remission, and with God’s help, I will remain healthy.

In my case, I don’t attribute the “accidental” kick to my thigh as mere coincidence or luck; rather, I consider it a miracle that saved my life.

In addition to this miracle, I have witnessed other events I consider miraculous. For example, on November 9, 1989, I watched on TV as people on both sides of the Berlin Wall tore down this massive symbol of the global struggle between dictatorship and democracy. At the time, this event was so unbelievable and unexpected that multiple news reporters called it a miracle.

It defies logic that the Jewish people have repeatedly prevailed over their enemies.

Skeptics may argue that these events are mere coincidence. However, I find this difficult to believe. Furthermore, it defies logic that the Jewish people have repeatedly prevailed over their more powerful and numerous enemies. This may be one of the greatest miracles the world has ever witnessed.

The Torah is replete with accounts of miracles that transcend the natural order. Yet, despite Judaism’s belief in miracles, the Torah cautions us about relying on miracles as proof that our beliefs are true. This is because some apparent miracles may have other explanations.

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In this week's Torah portion, *Va'era* (Exodus 6:2–9:35), we see that certain miracles were reproduced by Egyptian sorcerers either by sleight of hand or by employing occult practices.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Torah cautions against following charlatans, magicians, and false prophets who may perform “miracles” in an attempt to lead us away from following God.

“If a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams... gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder comes to pass, saying, ‘Let us worship other gods’ ... you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer because the Lord, your God, is testing you” (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

Jews do not believe in Moses as a true prophet because of the miracles he performed.

In such a situation, God may allow a false prophet to perform a miracle to test our loyalty. This principle is so crucial to proper faith that even young children are made aware of this passage in Deuteronomy. We are also aware, as Maimonides points out, that the Jews do not believe in Moses as a true prophet because of the miracles he performed; rather, they believe in him because he brought them *“to worship God at Mount Sinai”* (Exodus 3:12), and only then did they *“believe in you [Moses] forever”* (Exodus 19:9).

Familiarity with the role of miracles in Judaism and the possibility of false prophets is the best refutation to missionaries who claim Jesus is the messiah because he performed miracles.

The false prophet argument is so powerful that it is incomprehensible that the rabbis would fail to offer this obvious response when the question was asked, *“How can a sinner [Jesus] perform miracles?”* (John 9:16). Some scholars conclude that the blatant omission of the false prophet answer demonstrates that this New Testament story may have been fabricated or censored.

The proof that our spiritual path to God is true is the direction we follow. Will we be led astray, or will we pursue a faithful observance of the Torah with its moral values, timeless commandments, and spiritual insights?

Shabbat Shalom,

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