

**Does HaShem Give His Prophets the Power to do Miracles;  
Or does He do Miracles Through His Prophets?  
Our Answer: NO! And We Offer A *Chiddush* as Evidence Against this *Hashkafah***

**A Position Paper on Miracles and Who it is Proper to Attribute Them To  
by  
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“HaShem will redeem us through the *Mashiach*, right?” And thus the reason, the need, for this *D’var Torah*.

It has been stated to me many times that there is no problem with stressing the role of the *Mashiach* because of this very reason, that HaShem does His miracles through (or by means of) His messengers. Just as HaShem, according to most Jews, took us out of Egypt through Moshe, and preformed miracles – such as the parting of the sea – through Moshe, HaShem will do likewise through the *Mashiach*. Therefore my concerns are unnecessary, as “Everybody knows that it was not Moshe alone, and it will not be the *Mashiach* alone, but rather HaShem through Moshe and the *Mashiach*.” There have been several Torah texts that have been presented to me to prove that not only is it not a problem to credit Moshe with performing miracles (and thus, before the fact, to credit the *Mashiach*), but in fact to do so is warranted by HaShem’s Torah. These texts include:

**Shemos 4:17.** And you [Moshe] shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do signs.

**Shemos 14:16.** And lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the people of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

**Devarim 34:10.** And there has not arisen since in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 11. In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, 12. And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great and awesome deeds which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

It would seem, based upon a plain reading of the above texts, that indeed Moshe did perform miracles, and that HaShem had indeed endowed him with some sort of supernatural ability – or at the very least HaShem preformed His miracles through Moshe. Thus, it might seem, that I am swinging my sword at windmills, and that I have picked a fight where I am on the losing side. But let’s not be so quick to put this issue to rest.

The following Torah teachings seem to agree with my assertion that we should not credit Moshe (and thus the *Mashiach*) with performing miracles – or having miracles preformed through them.

Consider the Ramban on the last *pasukim* of HaShem’s Torah, and whether or not Moshe should be credited with performing miracles:

**Devarim/Deuteronomy 34:10** And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face; 11 in all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land;

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12 and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.

**The Ramban, Devarim 34:11 – IN ALL THE SIGNS.** This is connected with the [preceding] verse, “*And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel – in all the signs*, etc.” Or the verse may be stating that the Eternal knew Moshe face to face through the signs and wonders as they were all done with His Great Name [i.e., the Tetragrammaton], just as he said, “...*and He brought thee out with His Presence, with His great power.*”<sup>1</sup>

**The Ramban, Devarim 34:12 – WHICH MOSHE ‘ASAH’ (WROUGHT) –** for he prepared and displayed it in the sight of all the people. It is similar to the expressions: (*Bereshis* 12:5<sup>2</sup>) “*and the souls that they had (‘asu’) gotten in Haran,*” (*Bereshis* 18:7<sup>3</sup>) “*and he hurried to (‘la’asoth’) prepare it,*” (*Devarim* 5:15<sup>4</sup>) “*(‘la’asoth’) to keep the Sabbath day.*” For Moshe did not make the mighty hand and the great terror, he merely arranged [that they be displayed by G-d], and for His sake they were wrought *in the sight of all Israel*.

One might continue to counter my position by saying, “But there are *passukim* that state that Moshe, with his staff, parted the *Yam Suf*.” (**Shemos 14:16. *And lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the people of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.***) However, consider the “*Handbook of Jewish Thought*” by R’ Aryeh Kaplan, and the TORAH FACT that sheds the correct light on Moshe’s part in this miracle is codified by R’ Aryeh Kaplan.

In the chapter on *The Prophets*, R’ Kaplan writes (8:12):

“A public miracle can only take place in the presence of a prophet.” R’ Kaplan quotes a previous section of his *sefer* where he writes (8:7), “The laws of nature are not violated unless the miracle is announced and interpreted by a prophet.” R’ Kaplan continues (8:12), “**When a prophet stretches forth his hand or makes another sigh, he is not causing the miracle to occur, but is merely giving a sign that he has prophetic knowledge that the miracle is about to take place.**”

I have quoted the above sources in previous writings, and whether or not those previous offerings were read by those who disagree with me on this subject or not, I cannot say, but hopefully the Ramban is a “big” enough source to be taken seriously. But recently I came across a Torah source that I believe takes all speculation about whether HaShem performs miracles through a prophet to rest. Please consider the following Torah texts (as well as a potential *Chiddush* in conjunction with them) and the Rashi which explains them:

**Shemos 39:32.** Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting finished; and the people of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they. 33.

<sup>1</sup> **Devarim 4:37.** And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and [He] brought you out, He himself being present, with His mighty power, out of Egypt

<sup>2</sup> **Bereshis 12:5.** And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan; and to the land of Canaan they came.

<sup>3</sup> **Bereshis 18:7.** And Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to a young man; and he hurried to prepare it.

<sup>4</sup> **Devarim 5:15.** And remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

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**And they brought the tabernacle to Moses**, the tent, and all his furniture, his clasps, his boards, his bars, and his pillars, and his sockets, 34. And the covering of rams' skins dyed red ...

**Shemos 40:17.** And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that **the tabernacle was erected**. 18. And **Moses erected the tabernacle**, and fastened his sockets, and set up its boards, and put in its bars, and erected its pillars. 19. And he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above it ...

**Rashi, Shemos 39:33 – Now they brought the Mishkan to Moses, etc.** Because they could not erect it. Since Moses had done no work in the Mishkan, the Holy One, blessed is He, left for him the task of erecting it [the Mishkan], since no human being could erect it [by himself] because of the heaviness of the planks; and no human was strong enough to put them up, but Moses [was able to] put it up. Moses said before the Holy One, blessed is He, “How is it possible for a human being to erect it [the Mishkan]?” He [God] replied, “You work with your hand.” He [Moses] appeared to be erecting it, and it arose by itself. This is [the meaning of] what it says: “the Mishkan was set up” (Shemos 40:17). It was set up by itself. [This is found in] the Midrash of Rabbi Tanchuma. -[from Midrash Tanchuma 11]

The pertinent elements of the Rashi to Shemos 39:3:

**a) The people who had made the Mishkan and its implements were unable to put it together: “Because they could not erect it.”**

**QUESTION/CHIDDUSH (?)**: Was this inability to erect the Mishkan because they were physically not able to do it because of its weight? There were many of them – as opposed to only one of Moshe; also, the task of putting up, taking down, and transporting the Mishkan was eventually assigned to the Levites – thus it seems that it was physically possible to erect the Mishkan, yet those who constructed it were unable to erect it. Why? We believe that at the time, Moshe was the only Kohain, and because he was the only one (as Aaron and his sons had not yet been initiated into the Kehunah) it was he alone who had to be tasked with erecting the Mishkan. But, since it would be impossible for a single individual to accomplish such a task, and because HaShem wanted it to seem as if Moshe was setting up the Mishkan....

**b) Because Moshe had not helped in the effort to make the Mishkan and its implements, HaShem designated Moshe as the one to put the Mishkan together: “Since Moses had done no work in the Mishkan, the Holy One, blessed is He, left for him the task of erecting it [the Mishkan], since no human being could erect it [by himself] because of the heaviness of the planks; and no human was strong enough to put them up, but Moses [was able to] put it up.”**

**NOTE**: To the casual viewer who might be watching the erection of the Mishkan, it would appear that Moshe was putting it together, when this Rashi, quoting Midrash Tanchuma, teaches us that this would be a false assumption, and in fact would be against the teaching of HaShem's Torah.

**c) But Moshe, realizing the impossibility of him performing the task by himself asked HaShem how this could be possible: “Moses said before the Holy One, blessed is He, ‘How is it possible for a human being to erect it [the Mishkan]?’”**

**Ben Avraham/CHIDDUSH**: Moshe had already asked a similar question when he spoke to HaShem at the Burning Bush: (Shemos 3:11) “And Moses said to God, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the people of Israel out of Egypt?” To which HaShem responded: (Shemos 3:12) “...Certainly I will be with you...” Now, if Having HaShem “with you” means that HaShem would give Moshe supernatural power by which Moshe could erect then *Mishkan*, or that HaShem would erect the Mishkan “through” Moshe, then Moshe certainly would already have experienced these things during the Ten Plagues or at the Parting of the Sea. But since Moshe understood that he was nothing more than the announcer and explainer of HaShem's miracles with the Ten Plagues and at the Parting of the Sea, and that HaShem had

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never either given him the power to perform a miracle, or done a miracle “through” him, he asked HaShem this very pertinent question: “*How can I do something that it is impossible for a mere man to do?*” Again, perhaps belaboring the point: if HaShem had previously done miracle with or through Moshe, then the question makes no sense!

**d) HaShem responded in a way that should give pause to anyone who believes either that:**

- 1) HaShem “gives miraculous powers” to designated individuals to accomplish tasks that are beyond the scope of a human-being [which would, according to my understanding of Torah would be Shittuf (see the end of this article for ArtScroll references to *Shittuf*)]; or:
- 2) HaShem performs miracles “through” designated individuals.

HaShem Torah, as explained by the Midrash Tanchuma, and quoted by Rashi, takes both of these approaches and dismisses them with His answer to Moshe: “*He [God] replied, “You work with your hand.” He [Moses] appeared to be erecting it, and it arose by itself. This is [the meaning of] what it says: “the Mishkan was set up” (Shemos 40:17). It was set up by itself.”*”

Now, if Moshe was not “given the power” to erect a mere building, how much less so would be likely that he would be “given the power” to perform an obvious miracle that alters the course of nature, such as the parting of the sea?

Please consider the following texts regarding *Shittuf*:

**Shemos 32:1.** And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, Arise, make us gods, which shall go before us; and as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what became of him.

**Stone Chumash Commentary:** אשר ילכו – **That will go [before us].** This is not to say that the people denied the omnipotence of HaShem, for the rest of the verse makes clear that they wanted a replacement for Moses, whom they described as the one who had brought them up from Egypt. Since they obviously knew all along that Moses was not an independent redeemer, but the messenger of God, they could not possibly have thought that Moses would be replaced by a pantheon of deities to the exclusion of HaShem. Rather, they **thought** that God assigns powers and responsibilities to subordinate powers, as it were. In their view, Moses was one such power [others were the pillars of smoke and fire that led the nation (Ramban; R' Bachya)]; now they wanted other such surrogates of God. This philosophy, known as (שותף), **Partnership with God, is heretical, but it is not equivalent to idol worship** (Maharsha to Sanhedrin 63a).

**Maharsha, Sanhedrin 63a – N**

**Bamidbar 21:5.** And the people **spoke against God, and against Moses,** Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?

**Rashi, Bamidbar 21:5 – against God and against Moses** **They equated the servant with his Master.** [Midrash Tanchuma Chukkath 19, Bamidbar Rabbah 19:21] **Why have you brought us up** Both of them [were considered] equal.

**Saperstein Rashi Commentary – Tanchuma 19.** This was an example of (Sanhedrin 63a), “Whoever **speaks** of G-d as if He has a partner is eliminated from the world (Nachalas Yaakov).”

**Nachalas Yaakov:** Commentary on the Chumash by R’ Yaakov Loerderbaum (d. 1832 C.E.), Rabbi of Lissa in Prussian Poland. Famous Torah scholar and author of *Nesivos HaMishpat* and *Chavos Daas on Shulchan Aruch*.

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**Bamidbar Rabbah 19:21** – ... AND THE PEOPLE **SPOKE** AGAINST GOD, AND AGAINST MOSES (*Bamidbar* 21:5). **They put the servant on the same level as his Master.**

**Ben Avraham:** Please note the use of the words “said,” “thought,” “spoke,” and “speaks.” It seems that what we “say” can be held against us – especially when we are not clear with our words, and when those words could be misunderstood to suggest that HaShem has or needs a “partner” to accomplish His “*desired*” ends.

I hope this helps to make my concerns clear to all who have had the patience to read this document.

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