

# The Wondrous Jews

Looking at Jewish history, we notice that Jewish existence is obviously not in accordance with nature. We have been persecuted (See Vayikra 26:36) through pogroms, the Spanish Inquisition, Holocaust, blood libels, terrorists, mass murders, and so on. We have been exiled, oppressed, forced to convert, assimilated, intermarried, scattered throughout the world (Vayikra 26:33, Devarim 28:64), and reduced in number (Devarim 4:27, 28:62. During the course of our exile, our peak population was 17 million. Jews are the smallest ethnic group but the longest surviving. Jews are only 0.2% of the world population. Israel is a very small country, yet its frequent appearance on the front page of international newspapers in contrast to other bigger countries. As the saying goes, "Jews are news."). Nevertheless, we continue to exist while those nations who once ruled the world—such as the Babylonians, Romans, and ancient Egyptians—are long gone. (Even those who have survived for thousands of years, such as the Chinese, have done so because they are geographically isolated. This is in contrast to Israel, which is located among three continents—Europe, Asia and Africa!) This is just as it says *המה יאבדו ואתה תעמד*, they will perish but you will endure (Tehillim 102:27). Paul Johnson, a non-Jewish historian and former writer for the New York Times, once wrote, "All peoples pass in and out of existence, but the Jew defies history."

R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch remarked that in truth we should say Hallel every day just for the miracle of Jewish existence (we don't because then it would become rote). Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, once conducted a debate with the French Prince John Bathis de Baya, and asked, "Can you give me proof of the existence of G-d?" The prince answered, "The Jews." It is also related that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century a debate took place between Blaise Pascal (French philosopher, physicist, and mathematician) and Louis XIV, King of France, where Louis XIV asked for proof of the supernatural. Pascal answered, "The Jewish people."

R' Yaakov Emden (1697-1776) writes that the eternity of the Jewish nation with exile and persecutions over the years is a bigger miracle than Yetzias Mitzrayim and Krias Yam Suf (Hakdama to the Siddur of the Yaavetz). This was written close to 300 years ago. What would he say today? In the words of the Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 1:10. See also Devarim 28:37, Rashi): *אין לך אות ומופת גדול מזה*, there is no wonder greater than this.

The following are two examples where we see this idea at the beginning of the Torah:

1) Avraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 when Yitzchak was born. This is in contrast to Yishmael, who was born to Hagar when she was young. Sarah didn't even have a womb but still had a child. The first child of the Jewish people was born in a miraculous fashion.

2) Avraham took Yitzchak to the עקידה, which appeared to be the end of his life (and consequently the end of the Jewish nation). He not only survived, but got married and began the Jewish existence (Yevamos 64. Just as a seed contains the totality, likewise with Yitzchak, from whom we originate). It shouldn't be surprising that the name יצחק consists of the same letters as חץ חס—what seemed like the end was just the beginning. To take this a step further, the numerical value of יצחק is 208. This is the same as 26 (יג-ו-ק) multiplied by eight (supernatural).

On the night of Pesach we have the סדר. Seder means order. Yet the events that took place in Nissan were beyond the natural order, beyond the realm of nature. That is, each of the ten makkos, all waters in the world splitting during krias yam suf (Shemos 14:21 Rashi), the *mann*, well of Miriam, and *ananei ha'kavod*. So, why is the seder in the month of ניסן, when everything that occurred then was *out* of seder?

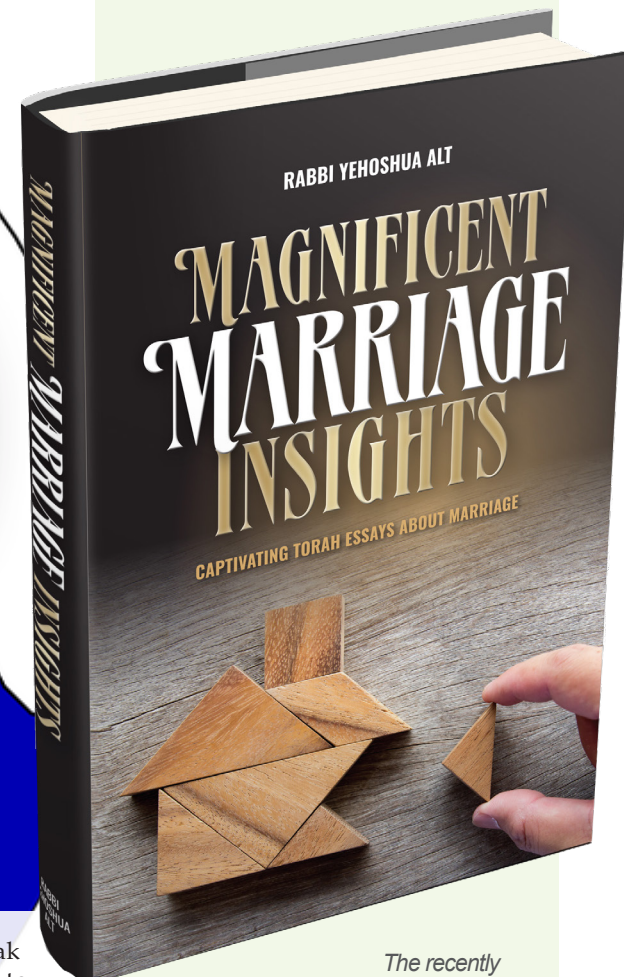
The month of ניסן is when we were formed as a nation, as it says *ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם* (Shemos 6:7). It takes 40 days for a fetus to be formed (Nida 30a. Pregnancy also usually lasts for 40 weeks). The 40 years in the midbar correspond to the 40 days of the formation of a fetus. Just as a child has everything taken care of, likewise it was with us in the midbar, where we had the *מן*, the well of Miriam, and so on. Just as a child learns all of Torah in the womb of its mother, Moshe taught us Torah in the midbar.

The events that occurred in Nissan transcended nature, signifying that we live above nature. In fact, ניסן is derived from the word נס. Furthermore, ניסן shares the same sum as (170) ניסים. Moreover, if we add the numbers 1, 7, 0 (אסניס) has a gematria of 170), we arrive at the number eight—supernatural.

The 12 months correspond to the 12 Shevatim (Tur, Hilchos Rosh Chodesh, 417). Nissan matches up with יהודה. We are referred to as יהודים, named after יהודה, since we live above nature. These events that took place when we were formed as a nation show that our existence is truly supernatural, above nature.

The seder is in the month of Nissan because the seder, order of Jewish existence, is above nature.

RABBI YEHOSHUA ALT



The recently released book "Magnificent Marriage Insights: Captivating Torah Essays about Marriage" is now available (as a paperback and Hardcover) for purchase and delivery on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0BRDH7WG7> or by sending an email to [yalt3285@gmail.com](mailto:yalt3285@gmail.com). This comprehensive book tackles many questions, with life-altering insights and practical approaches. The more than 60 essays found within can facilitate bringing your dating journey to a happy ending and enrich any marriage. It makes a great gift for friends, relatives, business associates and learning partners.

Purchase it at <https://amzn.to/3eyh5xP>. Some of the questions discussed in this book are the following.

- Why do some people have a quick and smooth dating journey while others must travel along a lengthy and arduous path?
- What is the Torah prescription for working on a marriage?
- How are miscarriages viewed through the prism of Torah?
- What is the Torah perspective on changing diapers and taking out the garbage?
- Does marriage terminate with the death of a spouse?

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