

**Not Ten Plagues, Ten Miracles!**  
Sermon for Shabbat Bo 5769 by Rabbi Hayyim Kassorla

Parashat Bo is not about plagues. Parashat Bo is about miracles. Every plague brought upon Pharaoh and the Egyptian people is a result of God's pledge to free the Jewish people from slavery and protect them from harm. The last of the ten plagues, culminating in the death of the Egyptian 1st born, represents the miraculous deliverance of the Jews from our enemies.

It wasn't an easy deliverance, and we read how countless Egyptians lost their lives during those plagues. They were probably good people, innocent citizens, who had to suffer for the stubborn arrogance of Pharaoh and his refusal to free the Jewish people from their servitude.

Can you imagine, for a moment, if there had been a UN at the time? Can you fathom the horrible headline stories that would have been featured on CNN or the New York Times had those publications existed? Moses would have been accused of war crimes, and nation of Israel would have faced international condemnation for the use of "disproportionate response" against "innocent Egyptian civilians."

Of course, UN and the news agencies would have never have brought up the fact that we labored as slaves for 210 years. They would never have mentioned the destruction of our culture, our lives, and our people. They would have been silent about the miracles of our redemption and the strength and mercy of G-d.

Fortunately, we were blessed with the Torah rather than the New York Times, and we are witnesses to miracles from the perspective of God, rather than the CNN or the UN. If that had not been so, the story might have been hijacked by our enemies and retold through the lens of baseless hatred. How do I know this?

I know this because, even in our time, the miracles of our redemption are continuing, and God's pledge to protect us is still in effect, despite the headlines about our "disproportionate response," against "innocent civilians," and the UN's international condemnation. I know this because I can read between the headlines and see that we are blessed, and we are living in a time of miracles.

How else can we explain the fact that only 10 Israeli soldiers were killed in door-to-door combat in Gaza, and most of those were killed in accidents, not by our enemies?

We have lived under an almost constant barrage of missiles, but no one seemed to care about that. In a speech at the World Jewish Congress, Shimon Peres said:

*During the period 2000-2009 there had been 5,792 Qassam rockets and 4,411 mortars launched from Gaza against Israel, the overwhelming majority in the last 2 years: 842 civilians and 325 soldiers had been killed—a total of 1,167 fatalities. I don't know of any country that went through such an experience. So where is the disproportion?*

On the ceasefire Peres said: *“Now they want a cease-fire for 1 year. They want our agreement that after 1 year they can shoot again, and they want the right to bring in arms.”*

Peres lambasted those who would judge Israel without knowing all the facts, and asked: *“Where were they when Israelis were being killed in bus explosions? Did they ever demonstrate? Did they say a word? Is our blood less meaningful?”* (Jerusalem Post 1/27/09)

Since the end of the Gaza War, reports have surfaced that show that Hamas cynically used civilians as human shields; fired weapons from mosques, schools, and private homes; used ambulances to move from one position to another; and even hid in hospitals, disguising themselves as doctors. Italian newspaper *Corriere Della Sera* reported that a doctor working in Gaza’s Shifa Hospital claimed that Hamas has intentionally inflated the number of casualties resulting from Israel’s Operation Cast Lead. He said: *“The number of deceased stands at no more than 500 to 600. Most of them are youths between the ages of 17 to 23 who were recruited to the ranks of Hamas, who sent them to the slaughter.”*

The world media focuses only upon Hamas propaganda that maligns Israel and makes it look like a nation of bloodthirsty killers—ignoring how Hamas operates in populated areas to maximize their own casualties, and it certainly has ignored the incredible miracles that occurred daily.

Dena Gewanter, M.D., in an article on [israpundit.com](http://israpundit.com), titled, “Miracles are Happening in Israel!” gives us a taste of this. She writes:

*What is so astonishing, for those who know Jews and particularly Israelis, is that a whopping 92% of Jewish Israelis actually AGREE that the war is necessary and just. The adage of “2 Jews, 3 opinions and 4 political parties” has vaporized in the face of the national crisis we are in... Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Reform and Conservative, Zionists and anti-Zionist Jews are all joining together in prayer and supplication to the Almighty for salvation, protection and victory over our enemies...everyone is united in looking towards the God of Israel to keep our soldiers safe and help us win against an evil enemy who has sworn never to stop until Israel as a nation is destroyed.*

*The soldiers themselves seem to have a huge spiritual hunger, and are unified in not only asking for prayer but also praying themselves, wearing tzitzit into battle and carrying the book of Psalms with them. The Rabbis are calling the tzitzit “heavenly flak jackets!” Tent synagogues on the battlefield have no less than 10 sessions every morning, and it is reported that soldiers who never attended synagogue are now praying with tefillin. They have reason to cry out to God, since everyone is aware of the years of preparation of the bloodthirsty Hamas militants, their desire to kill, maim or kidnap Israeli soldiers is greater than their desire to live...*

*The following are just a few examples: A Hamas map was found, with booby-*

*traps, landmines and sniper positions clearly spelled out. The IDF was able to counter each installation due to the information given. A large platoon of soldiers not realizing they were resting in a school that was booby-trapped, (discovered by a soldier relieving himself in the night), disarmed the bombs with no one hurt. A single soldier successfully fought off several Hamas terrorists trying to drag him into a tunnel, and all were captured. Hundreds of tunnels, hidden in homes under beds and kitchen cabinets, all full of live explosives and ammunition, yet none have exploded with IDF soldiers inside.*

*While there have been soldiers wounded, there are miracles there as well. A young man who moved here alone from England less than 2 years ago to serve in the army was in an explosion, and thrown into the air. After being carried off the field by other soldiers and transported on a tractor to helicopter and then to hospital, the doctors were utterly stunned when they saw that a piece of shrapnel that went completely through his neck, missed the carotid artery, the jugular vein and the spinal cord by millimeters. After they removed it, he needed only stitches. Another soldier was shot through the back but the bullet missed his spinal cord and exited from the front. A young newlywed, in grave condition, inexplicably turned for the better and will recover to go home to his wife...*

*[On the other side of the border in Israel] A bomb heading toward 4 apartment buildings goes into a sewer pipe and explodes underground, damaging nothing above ground. An elderly woman caught in an apartment completely demolished by a bomb, walks out with scratches on her ankle. The mayor of Beersheva felt he should cancel school one day, and a rocket completely destroys an empty kindergarten. The elder housing complex that was hit in Nahariya had the sleeping quarters destroyed, but everyone had just gone to breakfast, so no one injured. A man leaves his car with his young daughter, and the car is blown up seconds later after they entered a bomb shelter...*

In the newspaper Arutz Sheva (Israel National News), it was reported that an arab stone-thrower who was targeting Israelis driving by was killed by his own stone:

*A Palestinian Authority Arab who stoned cars in Samaria was killed by one of his own rocks. The Arab teenager hurled heavy stones at Israeli-owned vehicles along a Samaria highway last Tuesday evening. He managed to hit one car, which was driven by a resident of the nearby town of Emmanuel.*

*Fearing further attacks, the driver fired a single shot in the air to frighten away the stone-thrower. He then contacted local security officers to report both the attack and his own response...*

*A short time later, Israeli paramedics received a report of an Arab teen found unconscious and badly wounded next to a highway. The teen suffered a serious head injury that appeared to be a bullet wound. A final forensic report showed that the attacker was killed when a stone he threw hit the car driven by the man from Emmanuel. The stone hit the car's tire and bounced back at high speed,*

*hitting the attacker and leaving him with a fatal head injury.(Thanks to Rabbi Kunis for these examples)*

Today's miracles are not as flamboyant and overwhelming as the miracles that occurred during the time of The Exodus, but they are miracles nonetheless. We are not witnessing today's miracles from the perspective of God, and we are not reading them in our Holy Torah, but the miracles and promises of God are there as much today as they were yesterday and, God willing, tomorrow as well.

It may take a little more time to read through the headlines and find today's miracles, and it might take a bit more faith to believe that we are still under the protection of God. So, please take a few minutes to look for a miracle in your life today and, when you find it, have the faith to believe in what you see.Amen!