



## Fabulous Fires

*“Esh tamid tukad al hamizbeach lo tivkeh* – Thus, there shall be a constant fire kept burning on the altar, without being extinguished.” (*Vayikra 6:6*) In addition, a fire descended from Heaven onto the altar. Let us see how these two concepts are still relevant today even though we have no Mikdash and no altar.

*Sefer HaChinuch* explains that Hashem shrouds His presence in the natural phenomena of earthly realities. Thus, there must be a natural fire burning continuously on the altar to conceal the flow of supernatural energy from a Heavenly fire. We find this idea as well before *Keriyat Yam Suf*; an easterly wind blew all night before the sea split, allowing one to believe that natural forces such as the weather conditions caused the Splitting of the Sea.

Rav Naiman in *Darchei Mussar* notes that once *Am Yisrael* crossed the sea, the Egyptians were able to perceive the event as miraculous. So much so that they said, *“Anusa me’penei Yisrael ki Hashem nilcham lahem be’Mitzrayim* – Let us flee from Israel! G-d is fighting for them against Egypt!” (*Shemot 14:25*) At this point the Egyptians even were able to recognize in retrospect that everything that had transpired in Egypt was the Hand of Hashem. The plagues, as tremendous as they were, still had an element of natural to them and the Egyptians could

have thought that they were a result of shifts in nature or possibly a fluke of nature.

Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* explains that we too fall prey to the failure of recognizing Hashem’s greatness in His daily interactions. Chazal instituted in the *“Modim”* tefillah to thank Hashem for “the miracles that are with us daily, and the wonders and goodness that He performs at all times.” We, with our physical eyes, see only the natural in front of us, however, it is our duty to pierce through the veil and discover the supernatural.

This idea is also expressed in the bracha of *“Geulah.”* *Ye’arot Devash* explains that we refer to Hashem as a *“go’el chazak,”* meaning that Hashem performs things outside of the natural order to save the Jewish people. We conclude the bracha in the present tense, *“Go’el Yisrael,”* since Hashem is continuously redeeming us, saving us in unusual ways. While we notice the “fire down below” we must open our eyes and simultaneously be aware of the “fire from Above.”

This verse can also be understood on an allegorical level. The *Shelah Hakadosh* quotes Rav Cordevero who teaches that saying this verse affords one protection from sinful thoughts. The *Ketav Sofer* further explains that one whose heart is on fire to do Hashem’s Will, will find a Divine shield against impure thoughts. The *mizbe’ach* can be viewed as a metaphor to such a person, created from the ground. When one has the passion of dedication continuously in his thoughts, then Hashem will provide assistance and purify him with a fire of protection from Above. ■