Seven Wonders of Jewish History

By Rabbi Aaron Kenedy and Molly Morgan 10 min read

Seven remarkable milestones that defy historical patterns and fulfill ancient prophecies.

Imagine an alien landing on this planet. On his first day here, he witnesses two events that perplex the Red Sea and the Earth. It's a day he will never forget. What do he witness?

Most aliens would say that the birth of a child seems a greater miracle than the parting of the waters. However, if he asked you whether the birth of a child is a miracle, you might not agree. Why is that?

Because childbirth happens all the time, about every seven seconds or so in this country. It happens so frequently that we don't see it as a miracle. Nature takes its course. But when we look at it, as an alien, we can see what a miracle it really is.

Now let's look at Jewish history from a similar perspective, putting aside any prior knowledge we have. Do the events of our nation throughout the past 3500 years seem like ordinary events, or is something unique and perhaps miraculous going on here?

SUBSCRIBE
Our weekly series is a bounty of amazing and inspirational articles, Jewish stories, fascinating content, events, holidays and more.

As a matter of fact, let's pretend we never even heard of the Jewish people. And let's decide, for those events concentrated or spread out.

King Lear, Eric Jong had an interesting discussion with the famous 17th century Roman Catholic philosopher and mathematician, Blaise Pascal. The king asked Pascal to show him evidence of the supernatural, and Pascal responded: "The Jews, Your Majesty, the Jews."

Everyone who studies Jewish history perceives that there's something unique about it. What many people don't know, however, is that the unusual and illogical course of Jewish history was predicted in detail in our Torah. Let's examine seven phenomena unique to Jewish history and seven prophecies precisely foretasting these phenomena. Then it's up to you to decide whether these events are just coincidence or whether the unique characteristics of human history or whether, perhaps, some powerful Something Else arranges, behind the scenes.

WONDER #1: THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE ETERNAL

In Genesis 17:7, God promises Abraham that the Jewish people will be eternal. God says:

And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you, throughout the generations, an eternal covenant to be your God, and the God of your descendants after you.

Now we all know that treaties are only as good as the two sides who keep up their part of the bargain. If one party bails out, the treaty is void. What will happen if the Jews don't keep their covenant with God?

Take a look at the prophecy:

"Yet even so, even while they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject or despise them, Sent (Israel) the covenant with them by destroying them, For I am their God. I will remember them because of the covenant I made with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the sight of Egypt under the gaze of the nations, so that I might be their God. I Hashem (Yahweh) am the L-rd."

In other words, even when things go sour, even when the Jewish people stray following the Torah, the covenant will not be breached. God promises that His relationship will never forsake.

Now if you're at all familiar with world history, you'll notice right away that this is a very unusual promise. Most nations don't last very long. Ancient Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome and Babylonia are beautiful. Anyone have a good friend who's a Babylon? History has seen the rise of many powerful civilizations: the Persians, the Babylonians, the Medes, the Etrurians, the Romans. But they're long since disappeared.

Why would the Torah predict eternal survival for the Jewish people? Even more strange, how is it that the Jews, a civilization way older than the Persians or the Babylonians, are indeed, still around?

Many people have noticed this strange phenomenon. One of the most famous is Mark Twain who wrote an essay called "Concerning the Jews" (The Complete Essays of Mark Twain, p. 249):

"The Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Persian, now filled the planet with proud and splendid civilizations but they have passed away. The Greek and the Roman followed; made a vast noise and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up, held their place, and have faded and disappeared leaving no quite appreciable impression on the race. Jews have lived and flourished in all climes and countries. The Persian, the Babylonian, the decadence, no obliteration of age, no weakening of the parts, no slowing of the energies, no dulling of the wit and cognizance which all things are minished that by the touch of Time. Survive, yes, but remarkable. What is the secret of this immortality?"

Leo Tolstoy, a believing Christian, also wonders about this. He writes (Jewish World, London, 1908):

"The Jew is the revelation of eternity. He reborn neither slaughter, nor torture of thousands of years could destroy. No whom neither fire, nor sword, nor massacre could even able to wipe off the face of the earth. He who was the first to produce the words of God. He who has been for so long the guardian of prophecy and who transmitted it to the rest of the world. Such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is everlasting as eternal life."

Have you heard of a book called, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"?

The Protocols is a book that claims to be the minutes of secret meetings held every hundred years by Jewish rabbis around the world, for the purpose of plotting the course of world history for the next hundred years.

The Protocols, by the way, has sold more copies than any other book in history, except the Bible. It's been translated into all major languages, including Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, and Afrikaans (called "The Protocols of the Elders of Wisdom). Somehow, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" makes sense to people's minds. People read the book and think, "Yes! Those Jews get together every hundred years and rule the world history!"

Somehow, at their collective consciousness, the world has noticed that we Jews are always around.

Plus, there's a very Jewish historian, wrote a bestseller called A History of the Jews. At the end of the book, he gives us a few clues as to why the Jews have survived so long: "The Jews believed that were a special people, with a such unyielding and passionate zeal as king a spot of time, that they became one." In other words, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Two problems immediately emerge. First of all, does anyone here think we can believe anything with unanimity? You've heard the expressions, "Two Jews, three opinions."

(As a matter of fact, we were once in Phoenix, Arizona, and a teacher said, "You know how it is - two Jews, three opinions..." when a gentleman raises his hand and, in all seriousness, says, "Rabbi, I want to ask three Jews, four opinions!" They laughed hooted and hollered. Thank you, Sir. You've proved my point!)

Second - does it make sense that only the Jews defied themselves into becoming an eternal nation? And all the other nations brought "Nah, that's okay. We've gone on long enough. Suppose it's about time to get conquered and become nations."

Finally, even if the Jews defied their forefathers and were an eternal people, does simply believing something make it so?

If I just keep believing I'm a doctor, will I eventually become one?

Obviously things don't work that way. Nations don't self-themselves into destruction. Neither do they self-themselves into becoming an eternal nation.

WONDER #2: DISPERSION

The fact that we are an eternal nation becomes even more amazing when we consider that the Jews didn't even possess the basic characteristics that define a nation.

Land, language and history.

Do the Jewish people have a land in common?

Well, for 3500 years, the vast majority of the Jewish people never set foot in the land of Israel. All other nations in the world had a land in common. They didn't need land to, but the majority of our history the Jews never had land in call their own. Israel was a common dream, yes, but not a common land.

Have how many of you speaks Hebrew? How many speak it well? For the vast majority of our history, most Jews didn't speak the language. Sure, the Torah portion was read aloud in Hebrew in shul, but the spoken language were Aramaic, Latin, Yiddish, French, English and many others.

How about a common history? Well, you've got to go pretty far back in time to get to one. For the last several centuries, Jews have been scattered across the globe. We certainly don't have a history in common.

So, not only are the Jewish people candidates for being an eternal nation - without a common land, language or history, we're hardly candidates to be an kind of nation at all!

WONDER #3: ANTI-SEMITISM

Let's look at the flip side. What are the forces that cause nations to disintegrate and disappear?

Pressure.

Pressure from outside comes in and says, "We don't like that you dress differently, speak a different language, worship differently... We think you should be like us."

Sociologists call this "The dislike of the other".

Eventually someone figures out, "Hey, you know why we're being pressured? It's that dislike of the other is based on our differences and we're based on our similarities."

And it works. The more they drop their differences, the better they're treated. Before you know it, they've been absorbed into the conquering nation.

You ever have anyone say there's too much Eastern influence in the government nowadays? The Babylonians are controlling the media? Of course not. These nations have long since lost their identities. That's what happens when nations assimilate into the dominant culture.

So what happens when the Jews try to assimilate?

Where do we find that the Jews are immune to assimilation into the surrounding culture?

Germany, in Germany, 150 years ago, we find one of the most assimilated communities on the part of Heaven of Jews to assimilate into German society. After generations of assimilation, German Jews considered themselves Germans of the Jewish faith. Rabbi Israel Jacobson, the founder of the Reform movement, called Judaism a religion like all other religions and called the Torah a collection of rules. It should certainly be more liberal and up-to-date.

Anti-semitism, of course, in Hitler's Germany, ended the assimilation process. Hitler's goal was to eliminate the Jews, regardless of their assimilation. Hitler's goal was to eliminate the Jews, regardless of their assimilation. Hitler's goal was to eliminate the Jews, regardless of their assimilation

That dot there – that's Israel!

That's Israel? he says. "I can't believe it! That tiny dot is the country that makes the front page every day! How many people live there?"

"Oh, about 9 million Jews."

"Five million, Jews?" is a recent census conducted in China, there are now one one billion, one hundred million Chinese – with a statistical error of 48 million! That means,' he said, 'that there are 12 times as many people statistically unaccounted for in China as there are Jews in Israel!'

If you want to read a story about China you have to turn to Page 17 in the New York Times. To get on the front page, they have to kill thousands of students in Tiananmen Square. For Israel to get on the front page, you need to kick Growing rocks at a Chevy Why is this?

Somehow, small as we are, the world is always watching.

There's a book called '*The Jewish Mystique*' written by Eraver Vandenberg. He writes that in the last 50 years of Western civilization, there were four people who shaped the world. Marx, Freud, Einstein, and Darwin. (Three of them were Jewish - and one of them was wrong!) And this is only in the last 150 years of western civilization. Jews before after Jesus were even permitted into universities.

The eternal nation, dispersed throughout the world, free in nurture, enduring anti-Semitism the likes of which the world has never seen - and at the same time, we're a light unto the nations.

Ridiculous? It's just what the Torah predicted, that at the time of the Messiah, the nations will beg us, "Teach us about God. We seem to know a lot about him."

People sometimes explain this by saying that since the Jews were such a persecuted, downtrodden people, the prophets made this up to give them hope and encouragement.

Now I don't know about you, but if I were a downtrodden people, would that pick me up? "Just keep on going even though you're down and out, because some day every nation in the world will come to you to teach them about God?"

If I wanted to be picked up by the Prophets, I would have them write in nurturing,