

דברי מנחם

Diarei Menachem

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The plague of locusts offers a new twist to our understanding of the plagues that afflicted Mitzrayim. For Hashem indicates that Par'o's heart has been hardened, not only so that He can put "these signs in his midst", but also, "so that you may relate in the ears of your child, and your child's child, that I made a mockery of Egypt... [and] that you may know that I am Hashem" (Sh'mot 10:13).

Yes, the plagues had an additional purpose, namely, to convey to Bnei Yisrael G-d's essence. For the slaves, beholden to their Egyptian masters for so many years, appeared to have become insensitive to the wider questions of who controls the world. They had, perhaps, also despaired of ever leaving Mitzrayim and entering the Promised Land. Indeed, the last we heard was that the people did not listen to Moshe's exhortations because of their "shortness of breath and hard work" (6:9).

The text tells us that G-d warned Par'o about his repeated refusal (MA'EN) to be humbled before Hashem and that he (also) refused to send the people out of Egypt. As for the Jewish slaves, they also had to heed to their reticence to believe in Hashem's powers to intervene in Nature, in world affairs, and in their own destiny. They had to turn their refusal of sorts (MA'EN) into EMuNAh (Faith). It was just a "twist of letters", but yet a long, drawn out process - eventually to reach the point of "VAYA'AMINU BASHEM UVMOSHE AVDO". However, just think that thousands of years later, Baruch Hashem, we, and our children, are still declaring that very faith in Hashem.