

What did my teachers mean when they said, "G-d works through nature?" I have always been taught that G-d works through nature, and one of my teachers' favorite examples was the 10 plagues. I thought about the first plague. What was it? What significance did it have to the Ancient Egyptians?

The first plague was, as we all know, the plague of blood. Scientists have many different explanations for this. One may say it was caused by a volcanic eruption in the Mediterranean Sea, which stirred up the reddish mud at the bottom of the Nile. Another may believe that the plague was the result of an exceptionally heavy rainfall which washed a species of red algae into the Nile. Apparently, this was also an attack upon Hapi, the Egyptian god of the Nile. The Nile also happened to be the center of the Ancient Egyptian civilization. This plague showed that our G-d, *Hashem*, was the master of the Nile, and therefore in control of the fertility and sea trade of Egypt, two major components of the Ancient Egyptian economy.

The second plague was the well-known plague of frogs. One explanation may be that since the first plague killed all of the fish, no fish were left to eat the frog eggs. The frogs kept multiplying until there was no room left in the Nile so they spread onto the land. Once on land, they were exposed to a bacteria what killed them all. I believe that, although we have no way of proving if this is true or not, the second plague was the second link in a chain reaction that includes the first six plagues. The plague of frogs was also G-d's way of showing dominance over the Egyptian goddess of fertility and growth, Heket. This showed everyone that *Hashem* could keep them from growing and giving birth or He could make the Hebrews greatly outnumber the Egyptians.

The third plague, the plague of lice, may not have even been a plague of lice. In the time of the Ancient

Egyptians, the word 'Lice' meant any sort of itchy, blood-sucking creepy-crawly. This translation makes it much more likely that it was another sort of bug, most probably the Stable Fly, an annoying yet common pest in Egypt. These flies came in when there were not enough frogs to eat all of the bugs, similar to the cause of the second plague. As you can see, this was the third stage of G-d's six-stage plan. This was also an attack on Kheper, the embodiment of the solar disc and the god of rebirth. After this plague, the Egyptians came to realize that *Hashem* could stop the sun if he wanted to, thereby suspending nature, as opposed to manipulating it as previously seen.

The fourth plague is widely interpreted as the plague of insects rather than wild animals, because looking at it from a scientific point of view, it makes more sense. Why would a hungry lion chase an Egyptian rather than a Hebrew? It would be better understood if these wild beasts were instead swarms of angry bugs, coming in from all directions for the same reason as the Stable fly did, while avoiding Goshen, where the Israelites lived, because of the different climate. This was again an attack on Kheper, who also happened to be the god of bugs, showing that no matter how big or small, all creatures are *Hashem's* servants.

Next up, we have the plague of pestilence. In this plague all of the Egyptians' livestock died. The simplest and most believable explanation is that this plague was caused by diseases spread by the insects in the previous plague. This is link number five out of six in the great chain reaction. G-d also showed dominance over the Egyptians' sacred bull, Apis and the god of the livestock's fertility, Khonsu. This showed that *Hashem* could easily cut off the life of any animal, dooming the cattle trade of Ancient Egypt, another important Egyptian economic component.

Plague number six was the plague of boils. This was probably caused by a disease spread in the fourth plague. This was G-d's last domino to fall. The next three plagues will be all about His might and how He can manipulate nature to his will. This plague was also probably the origin of the phrase, "two birds with one stone." G-d showed that he was mightier than Imhotep, the god of healing, and Thoth, the god of magic. When the Pharaoh's magicians could not stand, they realized that they had no true power and that *Hashem* is the one and only G-d.

The seventh plague was the plague of hail. This has always been my favorite plague because it showed that *Hashem* can bend nature to His will. In my Parsha, chapter nine, verse 24 we are told that there was fire within the ice. That statement would have normally been contradictory, seeing as water puts out fire. But remember, this is G-d we are talking about. This was a show of *Hashem's* power over the sky goddess, Nut. At this point the Egyptians were thinking, "What can the Israelites' G-d not do?" So, G-d answered, "That is a trick question," with his last three plagues.

The plague of locusts was the beginning of the end. It marks the beginning of *Parshat Bo* and the end of *Hashem's* dethroning the more minor gods. That plague can be explained as a sudden explosion in the locust population. I, however, think this is G-d simply saying "Oh yes I can." This was a direct attack on Osiris, the Egyptian god of agriculture, nature, and the king of the Ancient Egyptian underworld. This guy was not supposed to be messed with, but *Hashem* knocked him out and showed how He was ruler of nature and it would be foolish to mess with Him.

The ninth plague, the plague of darkness, would most likely be explained as a massive but localized sandstorm. I see no way how this would make sense except it

would explain how the darkness was tangible. If this were true, then it would be G-d's last display of raw power. This plague threw out the Egyptian belief that Ra, the sun god, was the ruler of everything. Since the first plague, G-d has been working his way up the ladder of Egyptian gods, starting with the lesser gods and ending with the big cheese, Ra. The only god *Hashem* has not hit yet would be the Pharaoh himself, a self-proclaimed god.

The infamous tenth plague, the plague of the firstborn, was personal. It struck fear into the Pharaoh's heart. It was the only thing G-d would let break through to Pharaoh's cold, hard soul. Some people may say that it was a bacteria in the jars where the best grain was kept and given to the firstborns or masters of the house. I say that G-d has already shown His power, now he would show what His Servants, the angels, could do. I mean, if only one angel can wipe out the firstborns of an entire nation easily, imagine what more could do, or what *Hashem* Himself could do. This dwarfed the Pharaoh, made him feel tiny and inconsequential. He was so used to feeling mighty and superior, this new notion frightened him more than the collapse of his civilization, and so he let the Hebrews parade out of Egypt.

This was only one of the many times G-d manipulated and suspended nature in the Torah. Others are when He made the famine in Canaan that drove Jacob and his family south, and when He split the Red Sea for the Hebrews on their way out of Egypt. An important lesson we can take away from this is that things that may seem small and coincidental to us are actually miracles and part of *Hashem's* plan to make a Utopian society for us.