

Hashem's Hand

In response to Paroh's plea to end the plague of hail, Moshe Rabbeinu reports that he will pray to Hashem to remove the hail (*Shemot* 9:29). The narrative continues and we are told that the flax and barley were stricken and broken by the icy fireballs, yet the wheat and spelt were left unharmed. The *Ramban* and others maintain that Moshe added these particulars in his conversation with Paroh. Why? Further, the Torah explains the reason the wheat and spelt were spared was because they were *afeilot*. Rashi understands this to mean not yet ripened and quotes the *midrash* saying that it was '*pilei plaot*,' wonderful things happened with these crops. What is Rashi adding by quoting this *midrash*?

Rabbi Yosef Sorotzkin in *Meged Yosef* explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was telling Paroh the reason he still did not believe in Hashem even after all these plagues. Every natural phenomenon can be explained by some scientific understanding. The fact that the wheat and spelt were not affected could be explained by their late ripening; they were not yet fully grown and strong.

However, one with the eyes of *emunah* can see the great miracle here and will take pause to consider the source. Paroh chose to see the crops' survival as nature, not as a wonderous thing.

To be amenable is not a weakness rather it is a sign of strength and resilience

The *Maharal* explains the *passuk*, "How great are your ways Hashem... a simpleton will not know, and a fool will not understand" (*Tehillim* 92:6-7) as reflecting this idea. What are the wondrous ways of Hashem? That a commonplace event which is a miracle from Above can be viewed by some as simply nature, devoid of Hashem's Hand. Rabbi Tatz in *Worldmask* comments that the word for nature, *teva*, is related to the word, *matbeah*, an embossed coin, and *tovea*, to drown. The choice is in the observer, one can see something as bearing the stamp of the Divine or can drown in the ignorance of truth.

Rav Ezrachi in *Birkat Mordechai* sees an even deeper message being conveyed to Paroh. Paroh's intransigence was his hallmark. Moshe Rabbeinu was highlighting the limitation of this *middah*.

The flax and barley which stood strong and upright were decimated. The wheat and spelt were more pliable since they had not fully ripened hence, were able to withstand the strong winds and storm. The message is clear. When one is flexible and adaptable, one can more easily withstand onslaughts in life. To be amenable is not a weakness rather it is a sign of strength and resilience. This was the 'wonderous' thing Hashem did, He allowed these two plants to survive the hail to teach Paroh and us this lesson.

Indeed, this is Chazal's advice, one should be soft as a reed, and not hard as a cedar tree. To withstand life's myriad challenges, we can develop our flexibility, be open to the views of others and adaptable to the changes we encounter. ■

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