Moshe travels to Pharaoh and again predicts doom for the Land of Mitzrayim.

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כִּי אִם־מָאֵן אַתָּה לְשַׁלֵּחַ אֶת־עַמִּי הִנְנִי מֵבִיא מָחָר אַרְבֶּה בִּגְבֻלֶךָ:

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"Because if you refuse to send out My nation, behold! I will bring locust swarms tomorrow to your borders." (Shmos 10:4).

The mako of locust swarm presents the biggest paradox of all the makos. On one hand, locust swarms—while devastating—have nothing supernatural to it. On the other hand, Moshe gives the stringiest warnings to Pharaoh. It is also by this mako that Hashem starts to teach Moshe about the ultimate *geula* and the laws of the Pesach Seder. Why?

Locust swarms have occurred naturally in Africa and the Middle East for millennium. This one, while being the most severe, "something your [Pharaoh's] fathers and your ancestors have never seen appear on this earth to this day," (Ibid 10:7), was just like any other. It is a locus swarm like all other locust plagues that appear in any land. (Ibid 10:5). While never had so many invaded Mitzrayim at once (ibid 10:14) there were no other predators mixed in, no fire shooting from their mouths, and each locust was normal sized. Hashem does not even say it is the largest swarm in history. There are historical records of locus swarms that number in the billions of locusts and they darken the skies, and completely devour all vegetation, too. On the surface, nothing about a locust swarm points to an omnipresent Lord controlling nature and causing it. If the purpose was to get rid of all remaining vegetation from the agricultural Egyptian society, then another mako could have done that, easily. *Tomorrow all the trees and vegetation still standing will wither. There shall be a frost like never seen in Mitzrayim previously.* What is so special about this mako?

Further, this mako is tied into promises and themes of *geula* like none before it. "In order וּלְמַעַן תְּסַפֵּר בְּאָזְנֵי בִנְךָ וּבֶן־בִּנְךָ אֵת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלַּלְתִּי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־אֹתֹתַי אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בָם וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי ה: that you shall tell over in the ears of your children and grandchildren all that I have done to make a mockery of Mitzrayim, and the signs that I placed in it, and you shall know I am Hashem." (Ibid 10:2). These are powerful words, used here, but not by the blood, lice, boils, or dead animals. It is after its warning, before they even saw the locusts, that Pharaoh's servants begged him to let the people go, using the words "Mitzrayim is lost." (Ibid 10:7). What is so special about this mako?

As with other makos, Hashem promised that the locust will "fill your palaces and the houses of all your servants." (Ibid 10:6). It was more than the invasion of the personal space prevented Pharaoh from escaping the plague by going indoors, like he did with the mako of blood. (Ibid 7:23). This mako is also tied to the mako of mixed hail, *barad*. Three

times the Torah mentions the connection. "They will devour whatever was left over by the hail." (Ibid 10:5, 12). And they devoured what was left over by the hail. (Ibid 10:15).

The enslavement of the Bnei Yisroel began with their multiplying in mass numbers. (Ibid 1:7). The King of Mitzrayim was afraid of this and pleaded for Pharaoh's help. "Behold, the nation of Bnei Yisroel is numerous." (Ibid 1:9). He was afraid "lest they join an enemy and wage war from within us." (Ibid 1:10). The main fear was that the numerous foreigners would join an enemy and they would wage war from within Mitzrayim's borders. This xenophobic feeling led to measures that ultimately enslaved Bnei Yisroel. The locust harkens back to these fears. Moshe tells Pharaoh that the locust will be within his borders. (Ibid 10:4). He also tells him they will be more numerous than ever seen before. (Ibid 10:6,14). Pharaoh was afraid of the Bnei Yisroel's numbers and that they sat inside Mitzrayim's borders. Now the locust attacked with numbers and invaded inside the borders of the Land of Mitzrayim. Also, this took place after the memory of Yoseph—and all he did for Mitzrayim during famine—was no longer known (taught). (Ibid 1:8).

Until now, Hashem took supernatural measures to bring the Land of Mitzrayim to its knees. However, now, Hashem pulled out another stop upon Mitzrayim. It was not supernatural, but nature, and that did the job. In dealing with bullies or more powerful enemies, human nature is just to give in to the pain and suffering, and await its passing. Pharaoh was like an abused victim. Hashem was clearly much more powerful than his gods. The bending of nature was something that even his necromancers and gods could not compete with. However, Pharaoh was ready to wait it out. How many tricks, after all, can Hashem have? There was no shame in losing to a much more powerful deity. Once Hashem did His worst, Mitzrayim would still be there and flourish. Then came the locust swarm. This was an event that occurred every so often in Mitzrayim. It is something they had seen before and expected. Even if this was more numerous than usual, it is something Pharaoh and his servants recognized. And that is exactly why it was so harmful.

This Hashem, Lord of the Hebrews, was not just a powerful magician. Nature itself turned at His whim. The hail—the supernatural plague—started the job. However, now the natural phenomenon finished off the vegetation and produce of Mitzrayim. The great power of Mitzrayim was in its ability to survive famines—ala Yoseph. Now, despite their hording and storing a natural occurrence wiped them out. The swarms came into the houses and palaces. They came and ate all the stored foodstuff, too. Mitzrayim was completely wiped out. Not by some supernatural trick, but by a regular and natural locust swarm. Hashem was not only the best magician but also the ruler of nature. This put the fear in Pharaoh's servants and now they realized Mitzrayim was lost. Further, it is Hashem's control of natural events that is so important to tell over to the children. Great miracles that happen once in history is nice to relate. However, the real story is how Hashem controls nature every day.