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So the LORD Rained Down Hail on the Land of Egypt
9: 13-35

So the LORD rained down hail on the land of Egypt DIG: How has Moses' tough talk gotten tougher? What does the full force of this plague do? Sparing whom? Why? After the hailstorm, what new tactic does Pharaoh use in his battle of wills? What does Moses see behind this façade? Read Ezeki'el 29:19-20 and Isaiah 43:3. As a world empire, Egypt oppressed Isra'el. Later, Egypt gave false comfort to Isra'el against Babylon. Explain the reason why God exacts from Egypt, wages for Babylon and ransom for Isra'el.

REFLECT: Do you think God could have achieved His goals without the plagues? If so, how? If not, why? What do you see as the Lord's main purpose in causing Egypt to suffer the plagues? Were they primarily for the benefit of Egypt or for the Israelites (see 6:1-8)? Do you believe that judgment is coming? How are you preparing for it?

This seventh **plague** starts the third cycle of three judgments, and once again the first in the triad (the blood, the flies, and **the hail**) came with an extended warning from **Moses** to **Pharaoh.** The contest was heating up. **Then ADONAI said to Moses His** servant: **Get up early in the morning** and *literally, take your stand before **Pharaoh,*** as **he** goes to the water **and say to him, "This is what ADONAI, the God of the Hebrews** says: **Let My people go, so that they may worship Me" (9:13).**

The seventh **plague** had two purposes. The first purpose was to show the uniqueness of **God**. **Moses** went on to warn the king: **Let My people go, or this time I will send the full force of My plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth (9:14).** The heavens themselves were to be unleashed against **Egypt**. **The Egyptians** believed that **Pharaoh's heart** was the all-controlling factor in both history and society. Now **the King of Egypt's heart** was **hardened**

against **the Hebrews**. **ADONAI** assaults his **heart** to demonstrate that only the **God** of **the Hebrews** is sovereign in the universe.[158] Secondly, the seventh **plague** demonstrated the power of **God**. **For by now I could have stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth (9:15).**

What is unique about this **plague** is that now **Moses** lets **Pharaoh** in on a secret, one the readers have been privy to from the beginning.[159] **Pharaoh** was allowed to remain alive, so that **God** might show **Pharaoh His power** and so that **His name might be proclaimed** everywhere. Therefore, **God** said through **His** prophets: **But** instead of destroying **you**, **I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you My power and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth (9:16).** Paul quoted this verse almost verbatim as an outstanding illustration of **God's** sovereignty in **Romans 9:17.**[160] **Pharaoh** needed to understand that **he** was serving **God's** purpose, not the other way around.

Then **God** gets right to the heart of the matter. **You still set yourself against My people and will not let them go (9:17). Pharaoh** was playing god, lifting **himself** up against **the Holy One of Isra'el.** A line in the sand of **Egypt** had been clearly drawn. **Moses** continued as **God's** mouthpiece: **Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now (9:18). The last three plagues were phenomena that produced increasing degrees of darkness.** Literally, *I will cause a very heavy hail to rain down.* Again, *heavy* is descriptive of the state of **Pharaoh's heart** throughout the **Exodus** account. The harshness of **the hailstorm** mirrors the degree of hardness of **Pharaoh's heart**.[161] The fact that **Moses** predicted the time and day of the arrival and departure **(9:29)** of the **plague** sets it apart from a purely natural occurrence.[162]

Then **God** gave **Pharaoh** and **the Egyptians** a test to see if **they** would take steps to comply with **His** warning and thus acknowledge **Moses'** advice. **Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die (9:19). Pharaoh** had huge amounts of **livestock** and **he**, more than anyone else in **Egypt**, needed to listen to **Moses**. There is no record of ***the king's*** obedience, but for the first time, *some* ***Egyptians*** started to listen to **Moses**.

Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of ADONAI hurried to bring

their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored His word left their slaves and livestock in the field (9:20-21). It is assumed that **the livestock** mentioned here are those not stricken by previous plagues.[163] **Those** who did not believe **God** made no provision for protection. The message **God** gave **the Egyptians** is the same one **He** gives to the world today. Judgment is coming. Mankind is not wise to go on as if nothing is going to happen. It was that way in the days of Noah, and it will be that way when **Christ** comes again in judgment. Many people in **Egypt** did not believe **God** and **they** paid the price for **their** unbelief. All **God** asks is that you believe and trust in **Him**.[164]

The next day **God** commanded **Moses** to bring the **plague** on the land as **He** had said. **Then ADONAI said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt – on men and animals and on everything growing in the field of Egypt" (9:22).**

When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, ADONAI sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So He rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. The severity of the seventh **plague** was quite striking. The appearance of **lightning and thunder** in the TaNaKh, often pointed to the presence of **God (19:16** and **20:18). It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation**, spanning eighteen centuries **(9:23-24).**

Even though **hailstorms** were rare in the land, **throughout Egypt hail struck** down and killed **everything in the fields – both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped away** most **every tree (9:25).** The psalmist Asaph described the scene this way: **He destroyed their**

vines with hail and their sycamore-figs with sleet. He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning (Psalm 78:47-48). Although the damage done by **the hailstorm** was widespread and devastating, a few trees remained for the locusts of the next **plague** to devour **(10:5).**[165]

One cannot help but be touched by the sorrow that must have existed in the homes throughout **Egypt**. Those who had labored long and hard in the hot sun witnessed in a few moments the total destruction of their crops. Their desperate cries to their gods brought no relief. We know from Egyptian documents that the loss of crops was one of the greatest disasters in the country. The economy and the life of **the people** were very much intertwined with agricultural success. Crop failure not only brought economic desperation, but also led to great sorrow and social chaos.

It is crucial to remember that **the Egyptians** believed their gods to be personified in the elements of nature. The catastrophe of the **hailstorm** was therefore a mockery of **the Egyptian** gods. What would the worshipers of Nut, the female goddess of the sky, think when they looked up to see the tragedy of storm and violence and not the blessings of the sun? It was from her domain that tragedy came. Shu, the supporter of the heavens who held up the sky and Tefnut, the goddess of moisture, seemed not to hear.[166] They must have felt confused when both Isis and Seth, who had responsibilities relating to agricultural crops, were powerless. The black and burned fields of **flax** were a silent testimony to the impotence and incapacity of their wooden and stone gods. They indeed had ears, but did not hear **(Jeremiah 5:21, Romans 11:8)**. The destruction of **flax** was also significant since it was **flax** that provided the linen for the garments of the priests throughout the land of **Egypt**.[167]

The only place the plague did not fall was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were (9:26). Goshen remained untouched, safe, secure and tranquil. This time **Pharaoh** didn't even send anyone to see the results of the seventh plague. **He** already knew in **his** heavy heart.

*There is a striking introversion between the seventh and fourth **plagues**. Here in the seventh **plague** we read: **The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites** lived; so also in the fourth **plague** we are specifically told that **God** exempted **the Israelites** in **the land of Goshen**. **No swarms of flies** were found **there**.*[168]

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. No mention was made of the

magicians or priests. For the first time **Amenhotep II** admitted that **he** had **sinned** when he said: **ADONAI is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.** It would be a mistake to think that **Pharaoh** had seen the light and was truly repentant. **The** ancient **Egyptians** believed **he** could do no wrong and was perfect. Therefore, **God** attacked **Pharaoh's** character to show that **He** was the only **One** who was good and perfect. Nevertheless, **Pharaoh** continued and said: **Pray to ADONAI, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't have to stay any longer (9:27-28).** This is the third time **Pharaoh** has asked **Moses to pray** for him. But **he** continued to lie. Like a snake in the grass, **he** waited for **his** opportunity to strike.

Moses replied: **When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to ADONAI.** Statues of men praying with **hands** upraised have been unearthed at several ancient cites (also see **First Kings 8:22, 38** and **54, Second Chronicles 6:12-13** and **29, Ezra 9:5, Psalms 44:20, 88:9, 143:6, Isaiah 1:15). The thunder will stop and there will be no more hail, so you may know that the earth is ADONAI's (9:29).** It was **God** who ruled over **the earth**, not **Pharaoh** or the gods **of Egypt**. So **Moses** was very blunt with **Pharaoh**, saying: **But I know that you and your officials still do not fear God (9:30). He** knew the confession and asking for prayer were empty words, **having a form of godliness but denying** its **power (Second Timothy 3:5a).**

The flax and barley were destroyed, since in January or February **the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom. The wheat**, which comes up in March or April, **and spelt, however, were not destroyed because they ripen later (9:31-32).** This showed **God's** grace in the midst of judgment. **Spelt** is a grass related to **wheat**, and has been found in ancient **Egyptian** tombs. Therefore, about eight weeks passed between the seventh and eighth **plagues**.

Then Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. He spread out his hands toward God; the thunder and hail stopped, and the rain no longer poured down on the land (9:33). That was no natural phenomenon.

When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again. He and his officials hardened their hearts (9:34). Again **he** refused to fulfill **his** word once the danger had passed. The text literally says: ***He*** *added to or increased* ***his*** *sin.* For the first time we see that **his officials** also **hardened their hearts**. **Moses,** in a strong show of force that, under normal circumstances, would have sealed his own fate, called **Pharaoh** a liar when he said

to him: **I know that you and your officials still do not fear God (9:30).**[169]

So Pharaoh's heart was hard to the lesson **he** should have learned long ago. **He** could not compete with **Israel's God**. **And** because **his heart was hard, he would not let the Israelites go, just as ADONAI had said through Moses (9:35).** This **plague** ends with the formula, found in one variation or another, at the end of every **plague** so far **(7:22, 8:15, 19, 32, 9:7 and 12). Pharaoh** remained adamant about preventing **the Hebrews** from leaving on a three-day journey to sacrifice to **ADONAI**. Therefore, **the heart** of **Pharaoh** was anesthetized from the pain that **his** people were experiencing. The end of the confrontation was drawing near.[170]

Haftarah Va'era: Yechezk'el (Ezeki'el) 28:25-29:21

(See the commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click Af – Parashah)

In this reading, **ADONAI** reacts even more strongly against the self-dedication of **Pharaoh**, who claimed to have formed **the Nile (Ezeki'el 29:3)**. Now, **YHVH** will execute judgments upon **Egypt**, and **then all who live in Egypt will know that I am ADONAI (Ezeki'el 29:6).** In fact, **Egypt's** punishment will teach both **Egypt** and **Isra'el** that **the LORD is God (Ezeki'el 29:9** and **21)**. The Babylonian king **Nebuchadnezzar** will bring ruin upon **Egypt**. Never again will **she** be a dominant world power **(Ezeki'el 29:15, 17-20)**. History proves **Ezeki'el's** prophecy. After a tidal wave robbed **Nebuchadnezzar** of all the booty **he** seized from **Tyre, the king** turned **his** rage upon **Egypt**. Never again has **Egypt** recovered **her** former glory as a world empire. Curiously, **the Israelites** found voice, as exiles and guests, in **Egypt**. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the TaNaKh, was written there and later read by all the nations of the world.

B'rit Chadashah suggested readings for Parashah Va'era: Romans 9:14-17; Second Corinthians 6:14-7

We read in the Book of **Revelation** the following description of the seventh bowl of wrath that will be poured out on unbelievers: **The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" Then came flashes of lightning, rumbling, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on the earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great**

city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of His wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky, huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so horrible (Revelation 16:17-21).

The similarities between the first trumpet judgment in **Revelation** and the seventh **plague** in **Egypt** are remarkable (see the commentary on **Revelation Cw – The First Trumpet: Hail and Fire Mixed With Blood Were Hurled Down Upon the Earth**). First, it should be noted that both **plagues** are accompanied by **thunder and lightning**. Secondly, the extent of the two **plagues** is underscored: in **Egypt** nothing like it had been seen **in all the land of Egypt since** the day it was founded as **a nation (9:24)**; in **Revelation** nothing like it had **occurred since man** came to be **on the earth**. Both **plagues** were extremely severe, and in both instances mankind's response to them was hardness **of heart** or blasphemy.

The size of **the hailstones** in **Revelation** underscores how severe the **plague** in the end times will be – it will be so much greater than the **plague** in **Egypt**. The disaster that befell **the Egyptians** was simply a foretaste of the final judgment. That ought to give *us* pause, and drive *us* to share the good news of **the Messiah** that delivers people from such an end.[171]