

Exodus 9:13-35

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The seventh plague (verses 13 – 35) is the first one in the third cycle of the first nine plagues. The plagues in this cycle are more severe than the previous ones. Similar to plagues 1 and 4, Moses was commanded to confront Pharaoh in the morning. In this plague, however, the message Moses was to convey to Pharaoh was longer and provided more detail as to the LORD's dealings with him. The LORD told Pharaoh that the plagues were designed to show him and his people that the God of the Hebrews was unique, that He was incomparable, and that disobeying Him would have terrible consequences.

This plague included something that was extremely rare in Egypt – hail. In fact, rain is almost nonexistent. Because of this, the Egyptians looked upon rain storms, with their thunder and lightning, as troubling signs of what would happen in the future. This plague, which would be very devastating and potentially life-threatening to both humans and animals. The plague did not affect Goshen, where the Israelites lived.

As in the first and fourth plagues, *the Lord said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him.* What Moses said to him was a long message from the LORD. It is found in verses 13-21. In verses 13 – 17, the LORD states His demand for Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to go and serve Him, and details His complaint against him. Verses 18-21 describe nature of the plague.

The LORD's message to Pharaoh began with a familiar statement – *Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews.* Once again, the LORD was trying to impress upon Pharaoh's mind that the He, the "God of the Hebrews", was the One saying *let My people go, that they may serve Me.* The warning for disobedience that follows is longer than in the previous plague accounts. The LORD said that *this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people.* The word "I" is emphatic in the Hebrew text. The phrase "all my plagues" probably refers to the rest of the plagues. The phrase "on you" is literally "to your heart" in Hebrew, and it might be a reference to Pharaoh's hard heart. So, the LORD said that the rest of the plagues would be sent to Pharaoh's stubborn and unresponsive heart, his own government official

("servants"), and all of the Egyptian people. No Egyptian would be exempt from feeling the effects of the plagues that were still to come.

The purpose of these plagues was *so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth*. For the LORD to send the plagues spoke of His sovereignty – the purpose of the plagues was to demonstrate His incomparability. Egyptians and Israelites alike needed to know that there is no god that can come close to being compared to the God of the Hebrews.

In verses 15-16, the LORD further declared His sovereignty not just over nature but over the affairs of humans. Things could have been different for Egypt if the LORD had willed it. He could *have by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth*. In other words, the Egyptian people still existed because the LORD willed it. He could have sent some disease and wiped out every Egyptian at any time, but He sovereignly has chosen not to. On the contrary, *indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth*. The LORD was allowing Pharaoh to remain on the throne to show that He is absolutely sovereign over all things, including nature, humanity, and even government ([Daniel 2:21](#)). Pharaoh was on the throne because the LORD wanted him there.

In verse 17, the LORD told Pharaoh the reason for these plagues. Instead of acknowledging the LORD and releasing the Hebrews, *still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go*. Pharaoh's problem was excessive pride and conceit, which kept him from obeying the command of the sovereign God of the Hebrews to let Israel go.

In verses 18-21, the LORD described what the plague involved. The first word, *Behold*, shows how ominous this plague was. This plague was to start, as previous plagues, *about this time tomorrow*. Then the LORD describes what was to happen – *I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been seen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now*. The LORD Himself promised (the word "I" is emphasized in the Hebrew text) to cause a hail storm that had not ever been seen in Egypt. Rain storms were extremely rare in Egypt, and hail was even more so. To the pagan Egyptian, this was especially ominous. The word "hail" is used throughout the Old Testament to picture God's punishment (for examples, see [Isaiah 28:18](#) and [Revelation 8:7](#), where hail is used in the sounding of the first trumpet).

But in the midst of this severe judgment, there is also grace. The LORD tells the Egyptians that, in light of the hail storm, *send, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety*. In other words, Pharaoh was to warn his people that any livestock that normally live outside in the fields should be brought in for shelter. The reason for this is that *Every man and beast that is found in the field and is not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die*. Therefore, those persons and livestock that listened to the warning and went to shelters would live, but those that stayed out in the open field would die. The result would be that *the one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses; but he who paid no regard to the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field*. Those Egyptians (it mentions “servants” here, who were possibly government officials) who learned through earlier plagues or other means that the LORD of the Hebrews should be taken at His word and obeyed were preserved, but those who disregarded His word suffered the consequences.

The plague itself is described in verses 22-26. After the plague’s announcement, it was now time to implement it. To do that, *the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt, on man and on beast and on every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt”*. In obedience, *Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt*. Notice that along with the hail, the LORD sent “thunder” and “fire” to plague Egypt. The thunder would have struck fear in the hearts of the Egyptians. The fire might be a reference to intense lightning and would have intensified the dread among the Egyptians.

The result of Moses’ and the LORD’s actions was that *there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very severe, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation*. Though thunder is not mentioned in this verse, it most assuredly occurred. Just like the LORD stated, the hail storm was unprecedented. And as the LORD had said, *the hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast*. In addition to affecting animals and humans, *the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field*. Hail storms can be very devastating, especially when the hailstones are large. They can defoliate trees and pound crops to the point of complete destruction. Also, as in previous plagues (8:22, 9:4), the Israelites were exempt from the plague because *only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, there was no hail*.

Pharaoh's response to the plague is in verses 27-35. In order to get rid of the plague from Egypt, *Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron*. He once again acknowledged that they were the LORD's representatives. He *said to them, "I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones."* If sincere, this was an amazing statement by Pharaoh. He confessed that he personally had "sinned," even though he thought of himself as a god. The Hebrew word for "sinned" here is the primary word for sin in the Old Testament and has a basic meaning of failure, such as missing a mark or losing one's way. He also admitted that "the Lord is the righteous one," implying that Pharaoh considered the LORD to be the absolute standard for righteousness. He also stated that his subjects ("people") were "wicked." The Hebrew word for "wicked" here is in direct contrast to "righteous." So, Pharaoh at least used the correct language to admit his guilt when he spoke to Moses. Whether Pharaoh was sincere or not is unclear at this point. It could be yet another attempt to manipulate the LORD into making the plague go away.

Pharaoh's request to Moses is in verse 29. This is the third time Pharaoh asked Moses to pray for him. He asked Moses *to make supplication to the Lord*. The Hebrew word for "make supplication" often includes the idea of presenting a sacrifice ([2 Samuel 24:15](#)), and Pharaoh might have thought that Moses and Aaron would need to present a sacrifice to the LORD to persuade him to remove the plague of hail. In any case, Pharaoh must have thought that the point was made and he had responded correctly and that there was no need to continue the plague, *for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail*. He then told Moses and Aaron *I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer*. When Pharaoh said "I will let you go," he probably was attempting to maintain a measure of sovereignty over the situation.

In response, *Moses said to him, As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer.*" Moses, having seen through Pharaoh's arrogance, told him how the plague would cease. It would be the LORD who made it cease, not Pharaoh. The lesson that Pharaoh still needed to learn was that he was not sovereign but that Pharaoh *may know that the earth is the Lord's*. Moses also states that Pharaoh's contrition in verse 27 was insincere. He told him *but as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God*. To fear the LORD God requires acknowledging Him as the Creator and sustainer over all. The Egyptians might have seen the LORD as a god to be appeased, like their gods, so they could get their way. But they did not see Him as a god to be served, a god who knows what is best for them that is to be obeyed.

Verses 31 – 32 seem to be a parenthetical statement about the effects of the hail on the Egyptian crops. Two crops, *the flax and the barley were ruined*, the reason being that *the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud*. These two crops were this way in late January and early February in Egypt, so this gives us an idea about what time of year this plague occurred. The Egyptians used flax to make linen cloth, which was worn by the priests of Egypt (among others). Barley was used to make food and feed livestock. But, in another act of grace, *the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they ripen late*. Wheat and spelt did not produce fruit until June. So, not all food sources were destroyed by the hail.

As he had told Pharaoh, *Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to the Lord*. The result of Moses' prayer was that *the thunder and the hail ceased, and rain no longer poured on the earth*.

Verses 34-35 state that the cessation of the hail did not have its desired result. On the contrary, *when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants*. Because *Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go*. But this was not a surprising result – Pharaoh behaved *just as the Lord had spoken through Moses*.

This plague shows the LORD's sovereignty over all of nature. It specifically targets Nut, the Egyptian sky goddess. She could do nothing to prevent the hail storm, lessen its intensity, or get rid of the storm. Also targeted was Isis and Set, both of which were associated with agricultural crops. Neither could guard against the crops being destroyed. These Egyptian deities could not come close to the incomparable power and rulership of the God of the Hebrews, the LORD.

Biblical Text:

¹³ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ¹⁴ For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. ¹⁶ But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. ¹⁷ Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.

¹⁸ Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been *seen* in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. ¹⁹ Now therefore send, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. Every man and beast that is found in the field and is not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die.”””” ²⁰ The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses; ²¹ but he who paid no regard to the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field.

²² Now the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt, on man and on beast and on every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.” ²³ Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt. ²⁴ So there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very severe, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵ The hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field. ²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel *were*, there was no hail.

²⁷ Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones. ²⁸ Make supplication to the Lord, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” ²⁹ Moses said to him, “As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer, that you may know that the earth is the Lord’s. ³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God.” ³¹ (Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. ³² But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they *ripen* late.) ³³ So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to the Lord; and the thunder and the hail ceased, and rain no longer poured on the earth. ³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. ³⁵ Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.