

Exodus 9

This chapter records the next three “battles” of the war between Jehovah God and the gods of Egypt, embodied in Pharaoh. God told Moses at 4:22-23 that if Pharaoh did not allow Israel, God’s “firstborn son,” to leave, He would kill Pharaoh’s firstborn son. God did not tell Pharaoh when He would do this, nor did He tell Moses.

The first plague on Egypt turned the waters of the Nile to blood (7:14-25). The second plague produced frogs all over Egypt (8:1-15). The third plague brought gnats all over Egypt (8:16-19). The fourth plague brought swarms of insects all over Egypt, except in Goshen where Israel lived (8:20-32). After each plague, Pharaoh hardened his heart: 7:22; 8:15; 8:19; 8:32. He did soften some at 8:8 and again at 8:25-29, but he quickly hardened his heart again.

In this chapter, we will see God strike Egypt again (9:1-7), and again (9:8-12), and again (9:13-35).

TRANSLATION - 9:1-5:

1 And Jehovah said to Moses, “Come to Pharaoh and speak to him, ‘Thus says Jehovah the God of the Hebrews, ‘Send out My people and let them serve Me.’ **2** Because if you are still refusing to send and are still hardening against them... **3** Behold the hand of Jehovah will be against your livestock which [are] in the field, horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks a very heavy plague. **4** And Jehovah will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and between the livestock of the Egyptians. There will not die from all the sons of Israel a thing.”

5 And Jehovah set a time, saying, “Tomorrow Jehovah will do this thing in the land.”

HEBREW WORDS:

“To refuse” (ver. 2) was used earlier at 4:23; 7:14; 8:2. “To harden” (ver. 2) was used earlier regarding Pharaoh’s heart; see comments at 4:4, 21; 7:13, 22; 8:15. “Livestock” (ver. 3) is used in this chapter (9:3-4, 6-7, 19-21) as well as 10:26; 12:38; 17:3; 34:19. The word is used 76 times in the OT. “Horses” is used 138 times in the OT; in Exodus, at 9:3; 14:9, 23; 15:1, 19, 21. “Donkey” was used earlier at 4:20. This is the only use of camel in Exodus. It is used 54 times in the OT. “Herds” is used 183 times in the OT; 9 times in Exodus. “Flocks” was used earlier at 2:16-17, 19. “Plague” was used earlier at 5:3. It is used again in Exodus only in this context: 9:3, 15. “To make a distinction” (ver. 4) is found earlier at 8:22; it will be used at 9:4; 11:7; 33:16 and Psalm 4:3.

“Time” (ver. 5) can also refer to a set “meeting” and is used 223 times in the OT. This is its first use in Exodus, out of 38 times. It will form part of the expression “tent of meeting,” used 34 times in Exodus.

ARCHEOLOGY:

Some scholars want to suggest that the use of “camel” (ver. 3) is used incorrectly, out of its normal timeframe. That is, they say the camel was not domesticated until much later and that camels do not appear in Egyptian texts until the Persian period (400s B. C.). However, evidence has been found of people drinking camel’s milk, a cord braided from camel’s hair (in Egypt), a bronze figurine of a camel before the time of Abraham, and a few other examples of their use during the patriarchal period. It is clear that camels, while not being used extensively, were used nevertheless during that time period. Camels were mentioned 25 times in Genesis.

COMMENTARY:

The plagues are the battlefields between Jehovah God and the gods of the Egyptians (12:12; Num. 33:4). This is plague #5. Bulls and cows were both worshipped in Egyptian religion, representing various gods, goddesses, and their ideas. Hundreds of funeral niches have been discovered in Memphis for bulls. There were Apis (the most significant) and Mnevis

(of Heliopolis), Hathor (who was to protect the Pharaoh), and Khnum. The queen of the gods, Isis, had cows' horns on her head.

God identifies Himself once again as the "God of the Hebrews," in contrast with the gods of the Egyptians (see 3:18). Once again, He commands Pharaoh to "send out" His people so they could serve Him. This has been God's command to Pharaoh since the beginning: 5:1; 6:11; 7:2, 16; 8:1, 20; see also 9:1, 13; 10:3.

God threatens punishment on Pharaoh if he continues to refuse (9:2-3). God used the contingent "if" earlier, at 8:2, 21. Verse 2 shows that God held Pharaoh accountable for his hard heart; which shows that Pharaoh could have changed his heart. God does not hold rocks morally accountable for their unchangeable nature. The "your" in verse 3 is singular, that God was punishing Pharaoh personally. In verse 3, God simply states that His hand is against Pharaoh, his livestock and everything that is in the field: horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks. This will be a "very heavy" plague which He will send.

Yet, as God did earlier (8:23), here He makes a distinction between the livestock of the Egyptians and the livestock of the Israelites. In this way, God will show Pharaoh that He is the God of the Hebrews and He is there in Egypt to "redeem" them from Pharaoh's hand (6:6). God threatens the use of His hand in power against Egypt several times (the word "hand" often does not appear in translations): 3:19; 4:21; 6:1; 7:5. Many Egyptian texts describe Pharaoh's power as a "strong hand." The last phrase of verse 4 is emphatic: there will not die a single head of livestock from Israel's cattle.

To reemphasize His power, God tells Pharaoh He will perform this plague "tomorrow" (ver. 5).

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - God promised that He would bring plagues against Israel, as He had done with Egypt, if they did not trust Him and obey Him (Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:15, 21, 35).

TRANSLATION - 9:6-7:

6 And Jehovah did this thing the next day and there died all the livestock of the Egyptians and the livestock of the sons of Israel did not die one.

7 And Pharaoh sent and behold there had not died from the livestock of Israel, not one, and Pharaoh hardened his heart and did not send out the people.

HEBREW WORDS:

"The next day" (ver. 6) is the same word as "tomorrow" from verse 5, showing a close connection between God's promise (ver. 5) and His fulfillment (ver. 6).

COMMENTARY:

Verse 6 records that God did exactly as He had promised in verse 5; the very day He said He would strike, He struck. Subsequently "all the livestock" of the Egyptians died. In contrast, not one of the livestock of the Israelites died.

Some skeptics have a problem with verse 6 and its comprehensive statement when subsequent plagues show there were still livestock alive: 9:9, 19. It seems that we have a hyperbole in verse 6 to the effect that the destruction was near universal so that it could be said it was universal although God did allow some livestock to continue alive, so as to experience further effects from other plagues. Some scholars suggest all *kinds* of livestock were struck dead by the plague, which is illustrated in the list of animals in verse 3. The distinction might also be that the livestock in the field were killed (verse 3), but the livestock in the barns or stalls were spared, to be struck by the latter plagues. Either way, there is no contradiction.

Verse 7 records that Pharaoh decided to verify if, in fact, the land of Goshen with the Israelites had been spared of the plague. He found it was true. The "God of the Hebrews" was

in the land of Egypt and could distinguish through His plague between the livestock of Egypt and the livestock of Israel. But then, as he had done previously, he hardened his heart and refused to send out the Israelites.

The score: Jehovah God - 5; gods of Egypt - 0.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - Since God has directly shown Himself to be superior to the gods of Egypt represented by the bulls and cows, it is puzzling (from a theological perspective) why Israel would decide to represent Jehovah God in the form of a calf (Exodus 32). This act would bring severe punishment from God on Israel.

Later Jewish writers - The Jews would have trouble refraining from worshiping the god Baal, portrayed by the bull: Judges 10:6; 1 Kings 18:18, 21, 40; 19:18; 2 Kings 1:6, 16; 3:2; 10:19, 21; 2 Chronicles 17:3; Jeremiah 2:8, 23; 7:9; 32:35; Hosea 2:8.

TRANSLATION - 9:8-12:

8 And Jehovah said to Moses and to Aaron, "Take for yourself full of handfuls of the ashes from the furnace and Moses will sprinkle toward heaven before the eyes of Pharaoh. **9** And it will be for dust in all the land of Egypt and it will be on man and on beast for boils growing ulcers in all the land of Egypt."

10 So he took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh and scattered it, Moses [did] toward heaven and it became boils of ulcers growing on man and on beast. **11** And the soothsayers were not able to stand before Moses, before the boils because the boils were on the soothsayers and on all Egypt. **12** And Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he did not listen to them just as Jehovah had spoken to Moses.

HEBREW WORDS:

"Ashes" (ver. 8) is found only in this context, in verses 8, 10. "Furnace" was seen at Gen. 19:28; otherwise, it is only used in this context, in verses 8, 10; and 19:18. "To sprinkle" is used 34 times in the OT; in Exodus, at 9:8, 10; 24:6, 8; 29:16, 20. This word for "dust" (ver. 9) is used 6 times in the OT: Exo. 9:9; Deut. 28:24; Isa. 5:24; 29:5; Ezek. 26:10; Nah. 1:3. The word for "boil" is used 13 times in the OT; in Exodus, only in this context: 9:9-11. It can refer to a blister or a skin ulcer. There is no way to know what type of skin condition it was. "Ulcers" is only used here in this context: 9:9-10. For more on the "soothsayers" (ver. 11), see at 8:3, 14, 15.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

There is no way to know what type of skin condition these boils or ulcers were, despite much speculation. Scattering ashes was a ritual performed by the Egyptians as a part of curing diseases.

COMMENTARY:

The plagues are the battlefields between Jehovah God and the gods of the Egyptians (12:12; Num. 33:4). This is plague #6. The Egyptians were well-known for their interest in healing and medicine (albeit far from being legitimate practices). Amon Re was the creator who was supposed to heal illnesses. Thoth was the god of healing; Imhotep was the god of medicine. The god who was most well-known for healing diseases was Sekhmet.

Each plague has its unique characteristics which illustrate the pervasive power God has over all of nature. In this plague, Jehovah tells Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of ashes from the furnace and cast them into the air, before the eyes of Pharaoh. The "furnace" could have been used for baking the bricks which the Israelites had to make as slaves in 1:13-14, although the bricks were generally baked in the sun. When God's spokesmen cast the ashes into the air, it would scatter in the wind and land on both man and beast and break out into boils, growing into ulcers all over the land of Egypt. This is the first plague God has sent that strikes the

Egyptians themselves. We wonder if Pharaoh is yet asking if and when God will kill his firstborn son.

Beginning in verse 12, we have record of Moses' and Aaron's obedience (which is a stark contrast to Pharaoh's disobedience). When Moses did just as Jehovah God commanded him, the ashes became dust, just as God had promised, and the dust landed on both man and beast, creating boils growing into ulcers. There is no way to know what type of disease this was, despite the speculation that it was anthrax. There is no reason to believe that these plagues were connected to each other so that one led into or caused the next.

In verse 11, we have the soothsayers of Egypt mentioned again. The last time they were mentioned, in 8:19, they were acknowledging the power of God. Here, we see the boils came up on the soothsayers so that they were not able to "stand" before Moses. The meaning, likely, is that the soothsayers would no longer confront Moses and Aaron with their magic. These men will not be mentioned again in Exodus, the Pentateuch, nor the OT.

Yet, Jehovah God hardened Pharaoh's heart, not to the extent that He removed Pharaoh's free will, but to the extent that He could work within Pharaoh's choices to bring about His desired end. The purpose was to make Himself known to the Egyptians and Israelites and to bring Israel out of Egypt to become His chosen nation through whom to bring His Son into the world. When Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart, the king chose again not to listen to God's spokesmen.

The score: Jehovah God - 6; gods of Egypt - 0.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - God will punish Israel, in Deuteronomy 28:27, with boils as He did Egypt if they do not remain faithful to Him.

NT writers - Jesus will show John "sores" as a symbol of His wrath on the Roman Empire in Revelation 16:2. When Jesus resisted the devil, he left Him for a time (Luke 4:13). Peter encourages Christians in James 4:7 to resist the devil and he will flee from us.

TRANSLATION - 9:13-19:

13 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Arise early in the morning and stand before the face of Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says Jehovah the God of the Hebrews, 'Send out My people, and let them serve Me. **14** Because this time, I Myself am sending all My plagues on your heart and on your servants and on your people so that you will know that there is not like Me in all the land. **15** Because now I have sent My hand and struck you and your people by a plague and you will be cut off from the land. **16** But indeed, for this sake I have caused you to stand, for the sake that I have caused you to see My strength and for the sake to recount My name in all the land. **17** Still you exalt yourself against My people, to not send them out.

18 "Behold I am causing to rain this time tomorrow very great hail which there has not been like it in Egypt, from the day of its founding until now. **19** But now, send out and protect your livestock and all which [belongs] to you in the field, every man and beast which is found in the field and there will not be brought to the house and there will fall on them the hail and they will die."

HEBREW WORDS:

"Plagues" (ver. 14) is only used here in Exodus. It is used 26 times in the OT. "To cut off" (ver. 15) is used only here and 23:23 in Exodus. It was used first at Genesis 47:18. It will be used 29 times in the OT. "Strength" (ver. 16) is used at 9:16; 15:6; 32:11 in Exodus. It is used 126 times in the OT. "To recount" means to "make known, report, tell." It is used 107 times in the OT; it is a word which could be used in worship. It is related to the word for "book, scroll," used 191 times. In Exodus, the verb is used four times: Exo. 9:16; 10:2; 18:8; 24:3. "To exalt" (ver. 17) is only used 9 times in the OT; this is its only use in Exodus. It is used in Isaiah 57:14; 62:10; Jer. 50:26; Psalm 68:5; Job 19:12; 30:12.

“To rain” (ver. 18) was used earlier at Genesis 2:5; 7:4; 19:24. It will be used in this context at 9:18, 23 and again at 16:4. The verb is used 17 times in the OT. The noun is used 38 times. “Hail” is used 29 times in the OT; it is used throughout this chapter: 9:18-19, 22-26, 28-29, 33-34; 10:5, 12, 15. “Founding” is used 41 times in the OT; this is its only use in Exodus. “Protect” (ver. 19) is only used five times: Exo. 9:19; Isa. 10:31; 30:2; Jer. 4:6; 6:1.

HEBREW GRAMMAR:

“To cause to stand” (ver. 16) is a *hiphil*, which is the causative stem of the Hebrew verb “to stand.” It can mean “to remain.” The verb was used earlier at 3:5; 8:20. “To cause to see” is also a *hiphil*. “To exalt oneself” (ver. 17) is a *hithpael*, which is a reflexive verb, showing that Pharaoh is doing this to himself.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Hailstones can be as large as 2 pounds and can fall as fast as 110 mph. Egypt became a nation around 3,200 B. C., about 1500 years before Moses writes. The references to its “founding” (9:18, 24) here is surely hyperbole to emphasize the unique nature of the hailstorm. It was a proverb in Egyptian literature that something was more than it had been since the country was founded. Hailstorms are not common in Egypt.

COMMENTARY:

Jehovah God tells Moses to arise early and meet Pharaoh, confront him face to face, and give Him God’s command to let the Israelites leave so they can serve Him. In verse 14, God states that He is sending (present tense) “My plagues” against the heart of Pharaoh, and against his servants’ hearts, and against their people. God is attacking the very aspect of Pharaoh which continues to refuse God’s command: his heart. God is doing this, as was true with all the plagues, so that they will know that there is no God like Jehovah God in all the land (ver. 14; cf. 8:10). “Land” could be translated “earth,” which would suggest a more universal aspect to God’s sovereignty; however, in this context, we believe God means to say “Egypt.”

In verse 15, God states that He has “sent out” His hand (Pharaoh was refusing to “send out” God’s people) and He has struck Pharaoh and his people by a plague and God was going to “cut them off” from the land. Could God be alluding to the coming plague on the firstborn? In the middle of this discussion, God tells Pharaoh that He was allowing Pharaoh to “stand” (that is, to remain on the throne of Egypt) so that he and Egypt and the whole world could see God’s “strength” through the plagues. God was also doing this so that His name and its power could be recounted in all the land, so that the land (perhaps “earth”) could be full of the knowledge of God (ver. 16). Yet, Pharaoh was still exalting himself against God’s people and refusing to send them out (ver. 17). Again, this illustrates that Pharaoh had control of his own will, if he would simply submit to God’s commands.

The threat of the next plague is in verses 18-19. God says, “Behold Me!” He is causing rain on the next day, “tomorrow.” It would rain mixed with “very great hail” (cf. the description in verse 3), which had not been seen since the founding of the Egyptian nation around 1500 years before!

Yet in God’s grace, in verse 19, God warns the Egyptians to send out their servants and protect their livestock (which had survived the plague of 9:1-7). If they are not brought under protection, including the servants, they will die in the plague of hail. This is the first time that God has threatened to take human life and it is the first time that God has given the Egyptians an opportunity to avoid the impact of His plague.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - God did not want Israel to ever forget what He had done for them in Egypt: Deut. 6:21-22. Word of the plagues spread to other nations: Exodus 15:14-15.

Later Jewish writers - The Israelites sang of the plagues in their songs: Psalm 78. A generation later, pagans were still talking about what God had done for Israel in Egypt: Joshua 2:9-10; 9:9; 1 Sam. 4:7-8.

NT writers - The apostle Paul will quote Exodus 9:16 in his discussion in Romans 9 about the sovereignty of God. Paul's point is that God can choose to save through Jesus, rather than through the nation of Israel, because He is sovereign. God can work through the stubbornness of the Israelite nation - which crucified Jesus - just as He worked through the stubbornness of Pharaoh to get His children in Egypt released from slavery. Observe in Romans 9:17 that Paul writes: "Scripture says to Pharaoh" when Exodus 9 says it is God speaking through Moses. That illustrates that in the minds of the NT writers, "Scripture" is equivalent to "God," Who is equivalent to His spokesmen (in this case, Moses).

TRANSLATION - 9:20-26:

20 The one who feared the word of Jehovah, the servants of Pharaoh, he made to flee the servants and their livestock to the houses. **21** And who did not put to his heart the word of Jehovah and he left his servants and his livestock in the field.

22 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Extend your hand to the heavens and there will be hail in all the land of Egypt, against the man and against the beast and against all the grass of the field in all the land of Egypt."

23 And Moses extended his staff toward the heavens and Jehovah gave thunder and hail came down, fire, toward the land and Jehovah rained hail on the land of Egypt. **24** And there was hail and fire flashing from within the very heavy hail which there was not like it in all the land of Egypt from then it was a nation. **25** And the hail struck against all the land of Egypt, all which [was] in the field, from man and against beast and all the grass of the field, the hail struck and all the trees of the field, it smashed.

26 Only in the land of Goshen which there [were] the sons of Israel there was not hail.

HEBREW WORDS:

The verb "to fear" (ver. 20) was used earlier at 1:17, 21. "To flee" was used earlier at 4:3. "To leave" or "to abandon" (ver. 21) was seen earlier at 2:20. "To rain" was seen earlier at 9:18. The word translated "flashing" in verse 24 is not used elsewhere in the OT. "Thunder" (ver. 23) is the word for "voice," but in this context, it refers to the sound of thunder. "To smash" (ver. 25) is used 148 times in the OT; it was used in Genesis 19:9. It will be used in Exodus at 9:25; 12:46; 22:9, 13; 23:24; 32:19; 34:1, 13.

HEBREW GRAMMAR:

The verb "flashing" in verse 24 is a *hitpael* in the Hebrew language which is reflexive. It suggests the "fire" (lightning) flashing on itself or against itself. These were impressive bolts of lightning!

COMMENTARY:

The plagues are the battlefields between Jehovah God and the gods of the Egyptians (12:12; Num. 33:4). This is plague #7. The Egyptians worshipped the goddess of the sky, Nut, the god which held up the sky, Shu, the goddess of rain, Tefnut, and Seth, who was in the wind and storm. God shows that He has all these elements under His control in this plague.

In response to God's warning (9:19), some of Pharaoh's servants "feared" the word of Jehovah and they brought their servants and livestock in from the fields to safety. Remember earlier Pharaoh had referred to Moses' (God's) words as "lies" (5:9). Jehovah God has proven His words are not lies and now some of Pharaoh's own servants are recognizing God's threats are not idle. The expression "word of Jehovah" was used twice in Genesis (15:1, 4). It was used in Exodus earlier at 4:28; it will be used here (9:20-21), and again at 24:3-4. The expression is used a total of 259 times in the OT.

The contrast to “fearing the word of Jehovah” (ver. 20) is “not putting the word to his heart” (ver. 21). Those who feared, listened and obeyed. Those who refused to obey did so because he did not take Jehovah’s words into his heart. It is obvious that “heart” is a key theme that runs through the whole group of plagues on Egypt. These servants did not fear Jehovah God so they did not put His words into their heart and they did not protect their servants and their livestock. This is the first plague in which Egyptian lives will be destroyed, but God had graciously warned them. This death of Egyptians is a prelude to the death of the firstborn in the last plague.

In verse 22, Jehovah God commanded Moses to extend his hand toward the heavens so that hail would fall over all the land of Egypt, against mankind, against beasts, and against all the grass of the field in all the land of Egypt. The broad extent of the destruction on Egypt will be set in contrast to the protection God will provide for Goshen, where His “son” lives.

In verses 23-25 Moses obeys Jehovah God’s command and we see the total destruction that results. When Moses extended his hand holding the staff of God, Jehovah caused the storm: thunder, hail, fire (lightning), and rain. This event would remind the Israelites who had Genesis in their hands of the storm over Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:24-25, 28. The “fire flashing from within” suggests bright, powerful, successive flashes of lightning within the sky and striking the ground. Then “very heavy” hail (cf. 9:3) hit Egypt which had not been seen since the beginning of the nation 1,500 year earlier. Verse 25 emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the damage that was done. The hail struck all of Egypt, everything that was outside, in the open, in the field: humanity, beasts, the grass of the field, and even all the trees which were in the field. Moses emphasizes it was “smashed.” The word “hail” will be used 13 times between verse 18 and verse 34.

Yet God knows His own and God is able to preserve His own. Verse 26 states that the land of Goshen was not struck with the hail.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - Perhaps it is some of these servants who “feared the word of Jehovah” who are part of the multitude who leave Egypt with Israel in 12:38.

TRANSLATION - 9:27-35:

27 And Pharaoh sent and called to Moses and to Aaron and said to them, “I have sinned this time. Jehovah [is] the Righteous One. And I and my people the wicked ones. **28** Plead to Jehovah and only to be the thunder of God and hail and I will send you out and you all will not again stand.”

29 And Moses said to him, “When I go up from the city, I will spread out my hands to Jehovah, the thunder will cease and the hail will not be again so that you will know that to Jehovah [is] the land. **30** And you and your servants will know that not yet you will fear before the face of Jehovah God. **31** And the flax and the barley will be struck because the barley ears and the flax [are] in pods. **32** But the wheat and the spelt will not be struck because they [are] ripened.”

33 So Moses went up from with Pharaoh from the city and he spread out his hands to Jehovah and there ceased the thunder and the hail and the rain did not pour to the earth.

34 And Pharaoh saw that the rain stopped and the hail and the thunder and he repeated to sin and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. **35** And the heart of Pharaoh hardened and he did not send out the sons of Israel just as Jehovah spoke by the hand of Moses.

HEBREW WORDS:

“To sin” (ver. 27) is used 240 times in the OT; it was used 8 times in Genesis. This is its first use in Exodus. It will be used at 9:27, 34; 10:16; 20:20; 23:33; 29:36; 32:30-31, 33.

“Righteous One” is used 206 times in the OT. It is only used in Exodus at 9:27; 23:7-8.

“Wicked” is used at 2:13; 9:27; 23:1, 7, out of 264 times in the OT. “To plead” (ver. 28) was

seen earlier at 8:8-9, 28-30. It will be used again at 10:17-18. "To spread out" (ver. 29) is used 67 times in the OT; in Exodus, at 9:29, 33; 25:20; 37:9; 40:19. "To cease" is used 55 times in the OT; it will be used at Exodus 9:29, 33-34; 14:12; 23:5. "To fear" (ver. 30) was used at 9:20.

"Flax" (ver. 31) is used 16 times in the OT, only here in Exodus. "Barley" is used 34 times in the OT, only here in Exodus. "Ear" is used 8 times, mostly in Exodus: 9:31; 13:4; 23:15; 34:18. "Pods" is used only here. "Wheat" (ver. 32) is used 30 times; in Exodus, at 9:32; 29:2; 34:22. "Spelt" is only used here; Isa. 28:25 and Ezekiel 4:9. "Ripened" is only used here. "To pour" (ver. 33) is only used here in Exodus, out of 21 uses.

REFERENCES AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

The description of the storm that attended the hail storm sounds very much like God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:23-25.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Flax and barley were harvested in Egypt in February or March. The wheat and spelt (*Triticum spelta*) were not harvested until March or April. It is a grain related to wheat. It might also be *emmer* (*Triticum dicoccon*).

COMMENTARY:

Having experienced the devastating effects of the hail storm, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron and confesses "I have sinned." Pharaoh is the first person recorded in human history (in biblical history) to have uttered that phrase. He will make the statement again in 10:16. The statement is made a total of 15 times in the OT. While Pharaoh does not mean to say that he needs a Savior, we should not doubt that he is feeling some sense of remorse. Just because he changes his mind soon does not mean he was not sincere now; don't we do the same? Pharaoh recognizes that Jehovah is the "Righteous One." Here he uses God's personal name, Jehovah, when he had said in 5:2 that he did not know "Jehovah." Now he does! Up to this point in the Bible, "righteous" has only been used to describe human beings (Gen. 6:9; 7:1; 18:23-26, 28). In Genesis 20:4, Abimelech, king of Gerar, states that his nation is righteous.

For Pharaoh to refer to Jehovah as the "Righteous One," perhaps he recognizes the justice of God's actions; perhaps he recognizes the grace of God's actions. God gave him and his people opportunity to avoid this specific plague. But in contrast to Jehovah God who was "righteous," Pharaoh says he and his people are the "wicked" ones. They were the oppressors; they were the enslavers; they were the hardhearted ones. Under the influence of a small degree of humility, Pharaoh asks Moses, for the third time (cf. 8:8, 28), to pray for him so that the "thunder of God" (literally the "voice of God" - did Pharaoh see God "speaking" through the storm?) and hail would stop. Pharaoh agrees to "send out" the Israelites and they will not need to stand again in his presence.

Moses responded in affirmation of Pharaoh's thoughts (ver. 29). Moses will leave Pharaoh's presence (the city) and spread out his hands in prayer to Jehovah God and the thunder and hail will cease. This will be done, as with all the plagues, so that Pharaoh will know that the land (or "earth" to interpret the word more broadly) belongs to Jehovah God (cf. ver. 14; 8:10). However, Moses acknowledges (ver. 30) that Pharaoh and many (most?) of his servants still do not fear Jehovah God. Many did (ver. 20); most probably did not. This suggests that the plagues are not finished.

In verse 31, Moses makes a note that the crops that were exposed to the hail: the flax and barley were ruined, "struck." The crops which had not yet ripened, the wheat and spelt, were not ruined. This specific statement helps scholars identify late February or early March for this specific plague. This sets the stage for the "passover" (the last plague) to happen in April.

In verse 33, Moses did just as he said and Jehovah God responded to his prayer and brought the storm to an end. However, as Pharaoh did each time before, he repeated his sin and hardened his heart. For the first time, some of Pharaoh's servants also harden their hearts

(ver. 34). For emphasis, in verse 35 Moses writes that Pharaoh hardened his heart, he did not send out Israel, just as Jehovah God had predicted (3:19).

The score: Jehovah God - 7; gods of Egypt - 0.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - The Hebrew midwives had "feared Jehovah" in 1:17 and 21, so they did not kill the Israelite babies. The description of the storm that accompanied the hail sounds very similar to the presence of God on Mount Sinai (19:16, 19). This is the first time the phrase "fear the Lord" is used in the Bible; after this text, it will be used 49 more times. The plagues were starting to make believers out of the Egyptians; see 12:38 for reference to Egyptians who joined Israel when they left Egypt.

Later Jewish writers - Hail is often used as a symbol of God's judgment in later writers: Isa. 28:2, 17; 30:30-31; Ezek. 13:11-13; 38:22-23; Haggai 2:17. Jeremiah held out hope that some Egyptians would be saved: 46:26. Ezekiel (29:13-16) and Isaiah (19:19-25) held out the same hope. The psalmist will note in 24:1 that the whole earth belongs to Jehovah God.

NT writers - John will use the hail as a symbol of God's destruction of the Roman Empire in the book of Revelation (16:17-21). We should recognize that this is a *symbol* of destruction (cf. 1:1) and is not intended to be understood literally. We see that some Jews from Egypt were in Jerusalem in Acts 2:10 on the day of Pentecost, who became Christians. Later, a large Christian population would be found in Alexandria, Egypt. The NT warns Christians about hard-heartedness (Heb. 3:12).