

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

9 Then Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go in unto Pha-raoh, and tell him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. (2) For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, (3) behold, the hand of Je-ho-vah is upon thy cattle which are in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the herds, and upon the flocks: *there shall be* a very grievous murrain. (4) And Je-ho-vah shall make a distinction between the cattle of Is-ra-el and the cattle of E-gypt; and there shall nothing die of all that belongeth to the children of Is-ra-el. (5) And Je-ho-vah appointed a set time, saying, To-morrow Je-ho-vah shall do this thing in the land. (6) And Je-ho-vah did that thing on the morrow; and all the cattle of Egypt dièd; but of the cattle of the children of Is-ra-el died not one. (7) And Pha-raoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the cattle of ~~the~~ Is-ra-el-ites dead. But the heart of Pha-raoh was stubborn, and he did not let the people go.

(8) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses and unto Aar-on, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Mo-ses sprinkle it toward heaven in the sight of Pha-raoh. (9) And it shall become small dust over all the land of E-gypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast, throughout all the land of E-gypt. (10) And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pha-raoh; and Mo-ses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast. (11) And the magicians could not stand before Mo-ses because of the boils; for the boils were upon the magicians, and upon all the E-gyp-tians. (12) And Je-ho-vah hardened the heart of Pha-raoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as Je-ho-vah had spoken unto Mo-ses.

(13) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pha-raoh, and say unto him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. (14) For I will this time send all my plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people;

that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. (15) For now I had put forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou hadst been cut off from the earth: (16) but in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. (17) As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go? (18) Behold, to-morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very greivous hail, such as hath not been in E-gypt since the day it was founded even until now. (19) Now therefore send, hasten in thy cattle and all that thou hast in the field; *for* every man and beast that shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. (20) He that feared the word of Je-ho-vah among the servants of Pha-raoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: (21) and he that regarded not the word of Je-ho-vah left his servants and his cattle in the field.

(22) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Stretch forth thy hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of E-gypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of E-gypt. (23) And Mo-ses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and Je-ho-vah sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down unto the earth; and Je-ho-vah rained hail upon the land of E-gypt. (24) So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as had not been in all the land of E-gypt since it became a nation. (25) And the hail smote throughout all the land of E-gypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. (26) Only in the land of Go-shen, where the children of Is-ra-el were, was there no hail.

(27) And Pha-raoh sent, and called for Mo-ses and Aar-on, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: Je-ho-vah is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. (28) Entreat Je-ho-vah; for there hath been enough of *these* mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer. (29) And Mo-ses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto Je-ho-vah; the thunders shall cease,

neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know that the earth is Je-ho-vah's. (30) But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear Je-ho-vah God. (31) And the flax and the barley were smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom. (32) But the wheat and the spelt were not smitten: for they were not grown up. (33) And Mo-ses went out of the city from Pha-raoh, and spread abroad his hands unto Je-ho-vah: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth. (34) And when Pha-raoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. (35) And the heart of Pha-raoh was hardened, and he did not let the children of Is-ra-el go; as Je-ho-vah had spoken by Mo-ses.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER NINE
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter, propose a brief theme or topic for it.
2. Before which plagues in chapter nine did Moses come in unto Pharaoh with demands? (9:1; etc.)
3. What did the LORD intend for his people to do after they were released? (9:1, 13)
4. What is *murrain*? (9:3)
5. What animals would be affected by the murrain? (9:3)
6. How would the murrain affect the cattle of Israel? (9:4)
7. What time was set for the murrain to begin? (9:5)
8. Who investigated the effects of the murrain on Israel's cattle? (9:7)
9. What does Pharaoh's reaction to the murrain reveal about him? (9:7)
10. What was to be sprinkled toward heaven? By whom? In the sight of whom? (9:8)
11. What effect would the ashes produce? (9:9)
12. What are *blains*? (9:9)

13. Why could not the magicians stand before Moses? (9:11)
What does "stand before" mean?
14. What happened to Pharaoh's heart after the plague of boils?
(9:12)
15. When was Moses to stand again before Pharaoh? (9:13)
16. What lesson was Pharaoh to learn from the plagues? (9:14)
17. What possible plague did God threaten Pharaoh with in
9:15? What would have been the effect of this plague?
18. Why had God not smitten Pharaoh with pestilence, but
rather let him live? (9:16)
19. Where would God's name be declared? (9:16)
20. What question did God ask of Pharaoh? (9:17) Why ask this
question?
21. How much advance warning was given about the hail? (9:18)
22. How severe would the hail be? (9:18-19, 24)
23. What precaution was Pharaoh urged to take before the hail?
(9:19) Why should God give Pharaoh such a forewarning?
24. Did Pharaoh's servants take heed to the warning about the
hail? (9:20-21) What determined whether they heeded or
not?
25. What act did Moses perform at the start of the hail? (9:22)
26. What was mixed with the hail? (9:23)
27. What effect did the hail have upon the trees? (9:25)
28. Where was there no hail? (9:26)
29. What confession about himself did Pharaoh make after the
hail? (9:27) What did Pharaoh confess about the LORD?
30. What (lying!) promise did Pharaoh make to Moses?
31. When did Moses promise to call off the thunder? (9:29, 33)
How does this promise show faith on the part of Moses?
32. What was Pharaoh to learn by the LORD's stopping the
thunder? (9:29)
33. What did Moses foreknow about Pharaoh's conduct after the
hail? (9:30)
34. What two crops were smitten by the hail? (9:31)
35. What two crops were not smitten by the hail? Why not? (9:32)
36. Was Moses able to get the thunder stopped as he promised?
(9:33)

37. Who hardened Pharaoh's heart after the hail stopped? (9:34)
38. How did Pharaoh sin "yet more" by hardening his heart? (9:34)
39. Was Pharaoh's breaking his promise a surprise? (9:35)

**EXODUS NINE: WEALTH AND HEALTH
DESTROYED BY DISOBEDIENCE**

1. Plague of death of livestock; 9:1-7.
2. Plague of boils; 9:8-12.
3. Plague of hail; 9:13-35

EXODUS NINE: SUFFERINGS CAUSED BY SIN

1. Brute creation suffers; 9:1-7, 9, 19, 25; Rom. 8:20.
2. Physical bodies suffer; 9:8-11, 19, 25.
3. National wealth suffers; 9:6, 24-25.

EXODUS NINE: MAN POWERLESS BEFORE GOD'S PUNISHMENTS

1. Powerless to prevent them; (9:3, 18)
2. Powerless to endure them; (9:10-11, 27-28)
3. Sometimes powerless to learn from them; (9:7, 12, 30, 35).

EXODUS NINE: GOD'S MERCIES DURING GOD'S JUDGMENTS

1. The mercy of advance warning; 9:2-3, 18-19.
2. The mercy of deferred punishment; 9:15-16; II Pet. 3:9.
3. The mercy of praying ministers; 9:28-29.
4. The mercy of removed plagues; 9:33.

WEALTH AND HEALTH DESTROYED

9:1-35

HEART PLAGUES! (Ex. 9:14) (The Hail, Locusts, Darkness, Passover)

1. Cause agony of spirit; 9:27; 10:4-7; 12:30.
2. Sent when lesser corrections fail; 9:15-17.
3. Cause men to confess God; 9:27; 10:16.

FEAR OF THE WORD OF GOD (9:20-21)

1. Based on God's past acts.
2. Brings action; 9:20; Matt. 7:21.
3. Brings deliverance; 9:25.

REPENTANCE BASED ON FEAR (9:27)

1. Felt by the mightiest of men; 9:27.
2. Causes us to acknowledge sin; 9:27.
3. Causes us to seek God's servants; 9:27-28.
4. Often concerned with removal of penalty rather than removal of sin.
5. Often very temporary; 9:34-35.

THE WORK OF GOD'S MINISTER WITH A STUBBORN SINNER (9:27-33)

1. Be available to help him; 9:27.
2. Pray for him; 9:28, 33.
3. Proclaim God's deliverance; 9:29.
4. Present God's demands; 9:29.
5. Tell him the truth; 9:30.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER NINE

1. *What instruction did God give Moses after the plague of flies?* (9:1)

He sent him back to Pharaoh, presumably at Pharaoh's house, as in 8:1. There he was to make the same demand as before: "Let my people go that they may serve me." This was the fourth or fifth time this demand was made to Pharaoh (5:1; 7:2, 7, 16; 8:1, 20).

2. *What threat was to be made to Pharaoh?* (9:2-3)

If he refused there would be a grievous (heavy) *murrain* on all the livestock of Egypt. A *murrain* (Heb. *deber*) is a destruction, pestilence, or plague. The English word *murrain* is an archaic term from the same root as the word *murder* and the Latin *mors* (meaning death). We do not know exactly the nature of this plague, whether it was like anthrax or rinderpest, or some other disease. But it was deadly!

This murrain may have been a *unique* pestilence, because it was not confined to one species of animal, as most diseases are. This murrain is said to be the **HAND** of the Lord.

First God destroyed Egypt's cattle, then its crops (by hail and locusts). This really cut off its food supply. The change from plagues affecting people's personal comfort to economic disasters represents a worsening of the plagues.

3. *What animals would be affected by the murrain?* (9:3)

The disease was to affect cattle in the field, horses, donkeys, camels, herds and flocks. Cattle and domestic animals were very common in Egypt, and very precious to the Egyptians, as witnessed by their paintings and literature. Pharaoh himself kept a large number of cattle (Gen. 47:6, 17). The disease appears to have been limited to cattle in the fields; those that were sheltered indoors escaped. This partly explains why some cattle survived the plague (9:10, 21).

Horses were affected. Horses were common in Egypt in the XVIII dynasty (1570-1345 B.C.), which was the time of Moses. They were primarily used for war, and their introduction has been attributed to the Hyksos (1670-1570 B.C.).

Note that the animals presented to Abraham at an earlier date do not include horses (Gen. 12:16).

The reference to *camels* has been thought by some to be an anachronism, something out of its true historical position, because supposedly camels were not domesticated in Moses' time.¹ However, numerous evidences have been brought forth showing that camels were in limited use during the times of the patriarchs and Moses. The Egyptologist K. A. Kitchen mentions the "Mesopotamian lexical lists that originated in the Old Babylonian Period [which] show a knowledge of the camel about 2000/1700 B.C., including its domestication." Also from the city of Byblos comes an incomplete camel figurine of the nineteenth/eighteenth centuries B.C.²

4. *What animals were not affected by the murrain? (9:4)*

It did not kill the Israelites' cattle. Regarding the distinction which God made between Egyptians and Israelites, see 8:22. The fact of this distinction certainly shows that the death of the cattle had miraculous features. Also the setting of a specific time for its coming makes it miraculous.

5. *When would the murrain strike? (9:5)*

God said, "Tomorrow." And true to the prediction on the next day all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel, not one died.

This plague shows the absolute rulership of Jehovah. He completely controls every creature in the world. Disease strikes only when and where He decrees. The believer is safe in the hands of God.

6. *What portion of the cattle of Egypt died? (9:6)*

"All the cattle of Egypt died." This *all* is restricted in 9:3 to those "which are in the field." It would seem that the term *all* in 9:6 (as in 8:17) is not to be taken in an absolute sense, but as referring to such a large portion that what remained

¹For example, see G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), pp. 40, 46.

²K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966), p. 79.

was as nothing in comparison.³ Thus, we find that there were some cattle still remaining in 9:19 and 12:29.

7. *How did the Egyptians regard cattle?*

While the Egyptians did sacrifice cattle and eat them, the cow had *sacred* associations to the Egyptians. The goddess *Hathor* is pictured in the form of a cow. She was the goddess of love, beauty, and joy. She helped the departed soul on its perilous journey after death. This goddess is often pictured as a cow suckling one of the kings, giving him divine nourishment.

The *Apis* bull was regarded as the incarnation of the Egyptians creator-god Ptah of the capital city of Memphis. After their deaths these bulls were mummified. During their lifetimes the bulls were fed choice food, bathed, brushed, and pampered daily. On their birthdays they were brought out for the people's adoration. When one died, another was chosen on the basis of various markings such as a black color, with a square or triangular spot on his forehead. Mummification for these animals is estimated to have cost \$50,000 to \$100,000 each. In A.D. 1856 the excavator Auguste Mariette found a long underground avenue where these bulls had been buried in black granite sarcophagi. The burial tunnels extended 1120 feet; and sixty-four large burial chambers lay along the avenue. Remains of drink-offerings dedicated by visitors were still lying near some of the sarcophagi.⁴

8. *Who checked on the survival of the Israelites' cattle? (9:7)*

Pharaoh himself sent investigators, who found that not even one Israelite cow had died in the plague. The possibility that such a thing might have happened in an ordinary plague is almost nonexistent.

Nonetheless, Pharaoh's heart was stubborn, and he probably attributed the sparing of the Israelites' cattle to natural

³Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 487.

⁴G. Frederick Owen, *Archaeology and the Bible* (Westwood, N. J.: Revell, 1961), pp. 181-183.

causes; or, more probably, he just did not let himself think about it.

9. *What was used at the start of the plague of boils? (9:8)*

Moses and Aaron both took full handfuls of ashes (or soot, or dust) from a furnace (or oven). Then apparently Aaron passed his handfuls to Moses, who scattered (or sprinkled) the ashes toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

Some authors (Pink, for example) have suggested that the ashes came off an altar for human sacrifice. This does not seem to be true, as we have no evidence the Egyptians burned human bodies. More probably the ashes came from a brick kiln or smelting furnace.⁵

If these ashes did come from a brick kiln, there is a sardonic twist of vengeance revealed. The Israelites had been enslaved at brick-making, and now the ashes that made the lives of the oppressed bitter smite the oppressor with boils.

10. *What effect did the ashes produce? (9:9-10)*

They spread like a dust cloud over all the land of Egypt, settling upon men and beasts. This caused an inflammation to break out in boils (blains), which became blisters, or running sores (Lat. *pustulae*). Such boils were sometimes regarded as leprous (Lev. 13:12, 18-20; 14:43). This disaster struck both man and beast. The previous plague had caused the deaths of domestic animals in the fields, but spared others to be afflicted by the boils and hail. This time the boils affected every beast and man in Egypt.

What irresistible power lay in those ashes! We do not assume that there was a biological connection between the ashes and the boils. God caused the boils; but the scattering of the ashes was a visual aid linking Moses to the boils, and doing it right under Pharaoh's nose.

This plague is a further advance in the terribleness of the disasters. Previously the Egyptians had not been directly attacked in their persons (although admittedly the lice and flies were not pleasant).

⁵Keil and Delitzsch. *op. cit.*, p. 488.

In Deut. 28:27, 35 God threatened to smite the Israelites with the *botch* of Egypt, if they disobeyed Him. The *botch* is the boil referred to here in Ex. 9:9.

The plague of boils may have been an attack on Imhotep, the Egyptian god of medicine. Imhotep had been a sage, architect, and chief ritualist in the Old Kingdom of Egypt; but had become regarded as a demigod after his death, and later was "canonized" to become their god of medicine. The inability of their gods to save Egypt must have shaken the Egyptians profoundly.

11. *How did the magicians fare with the boils? (9:11)*

Very poorly! Just after being "loused-up" (8:18-19), now they find themselves "boiled." God's judgment comes on high and low alike. So great was their pain that they could not stand before Moses. They were probably in such misery they could not endure to remain in one position for more than a few seconds. To stand up face to face with Moses in a confrontation was utterly beyond their power.

12. *Why did not Pharaoh let Israel go after the plague of boils? (9:12)*

He did not let them go because Jehovah hardened his heart. This is the FIRST time that the text specifically says that God himself hardened Pharaoh's heart. Of course, God had predicted that He would do this (4:21).

We wonder if Pharaoh sensed that he was being driven by some irresistible force outside of himself. Perhaps after this plague he wondered within himself how he could have been so stubborn. We have the opinion that he WAS in some manner conscious that matters had gotten beyond his control. If this were not so, then it would seem that God was dealing with him solely for the purpose of punishment. That stage did come to pass, but it was not there yet. In the very next plague God gave Pharaoh the choice; and he hardened his own heart. Apparently then during this plague of boils and during the next plague, God was still dealing with Pharaoh for the purpose of persuasion and not just punishment.

Before we accuse Jehovah of being unjust for hardening

Pharaoh's heart, we need to consider how often Pharaoh had already hardened his own heart. (See 8:15, 32. See also notes on 4:21 and the special study on *Hardening Pharaoh's Heart.*)

It is God's right as God to deal with sinners any way He chooses. Any good that God does to a sinner is an act of pure grace. What all sinners really deserve is death.⁶ God's dealings with men never remove from man the responsibility for his own actions.

13. *How and where did Moses announce the plague of hail? (9:13) (9:13)*

Moses met Pharaoh again at an early hour (compare 8:20), possibly again at the water's edge (7:15; 8:20). There Moses spoke God's demand that Pharaoh let Israel go so they could serve Him. See notes on 9:1.

14. *Upon what would God send the plague of hail and the following plagues? (9:14)*

He would send them upon the *heart* of Pharaoh, and upon his servants. These last three plagues were of greater severity than the previous ones, and pointed toward the final decisive blow. These plagues attacked his innermost nature and feelings. These plagues would break his will or destroy him. Each of the three plagues before the passover produced a real, though temporary, change in Pharaoh's feelings.

These heart-plagues were to teach Pharaoh that there was none like Jehovah in all the earth. This lesson had been the assignment to learn in 8:10; but Pharaoh seemed to need a second lesson. (Compare 8:10; 18:11.)

The word *plagues* (plural, referring to the next three plagues) in 9:14 is a different word than is used with reference to the other plagues. This word means a blow (sometimes a fatal blow, as in Num. 14:37; Ezek. 24:16; I Sam. 4:17), or slaughter, or stroke, or striking.

15. *What had God considered doing to Pharaoh and the Egyptians? (9:15)*

He had considered smiting them with a pestilence that would have killed them all. The word for *pestilence* is the

⁶Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

same word translated *murrain* in 9:2. The people would have died, as the cattle had died. Pharaoh could justifiably have been slain. So could we all for our sins! But, bless the Lord, He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner (Ezek. 33:11), but only desires that the sinner may turn from his wicked way and live.

16. *Why had God spared Pharaoh? (9:16)*

He spared him to show Pharaoh His power, and that God's name might be declared throughout all the earth. WE must now declare Moses' deeds and God's wonders in Egypt, so that His name may be honored throughout all the earth.

The King James Vers. of Ex. 9:16 says, "For this cause I have *raised thee up*. . . ." This is very similar to the wording used by Paul in Rom. 9:17. What does "raised thee up" mean? It seems to mean two things: (1) I have raised you up to be king in Egypt; and (2) I have enabled you to stand firm in your kingship against all the punishments that have come upon you in the plagues. The Hebrew Bible simply reads (as given in the A.S.V.) "I have made thee to stand."

The Greek O.T. says, "On account of this I have preserved thee." The R.S.V. gives a similar reading: "I have let you live." This seems to us to limit the meaning too much. God had not only preserved Pharaoh through the plague-disasters, but even before that had raised him up to be king. Pharaoh had already made of himself a vessel fitted for destruction (Rom. 9:22). Nonetheless, God had raised him up to become king, and preserved him as king, so that Pharaoh could see God's power (and therefore be without excuse), and that God's power might be declared in all the earth.

17. *Is Ex. 9:17 a question?*

We feel that it is a question. It is given as a question in the KJV, the A.S.V., the *Berkeley Bible*, the *New American Bible*, and the *Living Bible*. The R.S.V., the *Jerusalem Bible*, and the *New English Bible* render it as a statement. On the basis of grammar alone, it can be read either as a question or as a statement.

As a statement it would either state a completely obvious

fact, or it would express amazement on the part of God. God was certainly not amazed at Pharaoh's response; He had predicted it exactly.

As a question, it functions not as a request for information, but to bring about conviction. Like God's questions to Cain and to Adam (Gen. 3:11; 4:10), this one was directed at the conscience: "Are you still exalting yourself against my people?"

The verb translated "exalting yourself" may have the idea of "fortifying yourself" by heaping up mounds and ramparts. Pharaoh was digging in for a fight against God.

18. *When was the hail to begin? (9:18)*

"Tomorrow!" Moses announced before four of the plagues that they would start *tomorrow*. (Flies, 8:23; murrain, 9:5; hail; locusts, 10:4) Hailstorms are rare in Egypt. This hailstorm was to be the worst in all the history of Egypt. It was to be very *grievous*. The word *grievous* (Heb. *kabed*) is the word used to describe Pharaoh's *heavy* stubborn heart (Ex. 9:7). Heavy hail for a heavy heart!

19. *What opportunity to escape the hail was announced? (9:19)*

Moses announced that men and beasts who came in from the fields and took shelter in houses would be saved from the hail. Those that remained outdoors would be killed by hailstones. This warning was an act of pure divine mercy.

20. *Was the warning about taking shelter from the hail heeded? (9:20-21)*

Those of the servants of Pharaoh who feared (respected) God's word as uttered by Moses caused their servants and cattle to flee into the houses. But he who did not take the word of Jehovah to heart left his servants and his cattle in the field.

The expression "regarded not the word of Jehovah" is literally "set not his heart . . ." This is a similar expression to Ex. 7:23, where Pharaoh did not "set his heart" on the matter after the water was turned to blood.

This is the first plague where we see indication that the warnings were taken seriously by the Egyptians. This is

definite progress toward victory. We imagine that Pharaoh was displeased to see his subjects obeying the word of Moses and Aaron.

In Egypt cattle are usually kept out-of-doors from January to April. After that they are kept indoors for protection from the heat. Note that the livestock were kept in people's houses, a custom in many lands. See note 17 in Ex. ch. 8.

Giving attention to the word of God is the condition for deliverance from the coming judgments of God. God has promised to keep us from the hour of trial coming upon the whole world (Rev. 3:10). But we must heed His word to receive deliverance.

21. *How was the plague of hail started? (9:22-23)*

Moses stretched forth his hand with his rod toward heaven. In the three plagues just before the Passover, Moses stretched forth his hand and/or rod toward heaven (10:12-13, 21-22). Regarding the rod, see 4:17.

22. *What was the plague of hail like? (9:23-25)*

There was thunder⁷ and hail, and fire (presumably lightning) going to the land. Jehovah rained upon all the land of Egypt. Psalm 78:47-48: "He killed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with hail-stones. He delivered up to the hail their cattle, and their flocks to the lightning-flashes." Psalm 105:32-33 says, "He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also and their fig trees, and broke the trees of their borders." This fire was mingled together, perhaps into balls of fire.

Assuming that the hailstorm covered just the habitable area of Egypt, it would be a ribbon-shaped hailstorm, about ten miles wide and four hundred miles long, with a fan-shaped end.

At the south end of the Nile delta, near Cairo, about two inches of rain falls each year. Hail sometimes accompanies the rain, but not with great severity. South of this area rain

⁷Thunder in Hebrew is *voices of God*. Thunder is often used as a representation of God's voice. See Ex. 19:19; John 12:29; Job 37:2-5; Psalm 77:18.

is a rare occurrence. The rains usually fall from January to April. This is the time when the cattle are likely to be outdoors.

The extent of the hail disaster was indicated by the Egyptians themselves. In Ex. 10:7 they begged Pharaoh to release Israel before any more plagues came. The economy of the country had been ruined.

God's judgments in all ages have often been accompanied by dreadful hail. See Isa. 30:30; Ps. 18:13; Rev. 16:21.

23. *How did the Israelites fare in the hail storm? (9:26)*

There was no hail in Goshen where they were. Also the Israelites had no flies (8:22), no murrain of cattle (9:4, 6), and no darkness (10:23). Compare 11:7 and 12:13.

24. *How did Pharaoh respond to the plague of hail? (9:27-28)*

He summoned Moses and Aaron, and confessed his sin, and asked for prayer that the hail stop. He promised to let Israel go. The terribleness of the plague really seized him. Pharaoh had given up calling upon his magicians. The solution was obviously only in Moses and Aaron.

The wicked often seek the prayers of the righteous when the wicked find themselves defeated. Note the cases of King Jeroboam I (I Kings 13:6) and Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:24).

Pharaoh's confession that he had sinned *this time* sounds as if his guilt were not very deeply felt. He certainly had sinned before this (see 8:29).

Pharaoh's confession that Jehovah was righteous, and he and his people were wicked, is progress. He had once said he did not even know Jehovah (5:2). For similar confessions, see II Chron. 12:6 and Lam. 1:18. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness, that is, of God's righteousness and Christ's righteousness (John 16:10). Pharaoh repeated his confession about sinning in 10:16, during the plague of locusts.

This was the third time Pharaoh begged for a removal of a plague. Compare 8:8, 28.

Pharaoh made an unconditional promise to let Israel go if

the thundering and hail stopped.

25. *Where did Moses go to pray about the hail? (9:29, 33)*

He went out of the city. See notes on 8:12.

Moses was utterly confident that his prayers would stop the hail. And they did!

Moses indicated that Pharaoh was to learn from the plagues that the earth (or the land) was the LORD'S! Compare 8:10, 22; 9:14. Pharaoh had already learned that Jehovah was a God, and that there was no one like him. He is now to learn that Jehovah owned and controlled all the land. Compare Psalm 24:1. When this assertion is read against the background of divine kingship in Egypt and the Egyptian view of different deities controlling different areas and different activities of life and nature, the assertion takes on a tone of triumph, exultation, and victory. It is not Pharaoh who controlled and owned the earth. It was not even the gods of Egypt, but YAHWEH, God of Israel!

26. *Did Moses trust Pharaoh's promise to release Israel? (9:30)*

Moses knew he would not keep it. Moses knew this by God's revelation, rather than by his own natural understanding of human nature. (See 4:21; 9:35)

"Let favor be showed unto the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:10).

Note the full name *Jehovah God* in 4:30. It appears that Moses relished speaking this name in all its fulness in Pharaoh's hearing.

27. *What crops were smitten by the hail? (9:31-32)*

The flax and barley were smitten. These ripen about the same time, in the month of March. The hail hit when the barley heads had appeared and the flax was in bloom, that is, with immature heads blooming with pollen. This would be near the end of January. Regarding the importance of flax as the source for linen cloth, see note 17 in ch. 8.

The wheat and spelt mature in April, about a month after the barley. The hail fell at a time when it would not greatly harm the subsequent yield of wheat and spelt. Spelt (not rye, or rie) is a grain much like wheat, but inferior to it.

The desperate Egyptians were in sorrow and fright. Their sky-goddess Nut could not protect them from hail from the sky. (She is often pictured as a lanky nude female arching from horizon to horizon across the sky, touching the ground with finger tips and toes.) The goddess Isis and the god Seth also were thought to have care over agricultural production. But the gods were silent.

28. *Did Pharaoh keep his promise to let Israel go? (9:34-35)*

No. He hardened his heart, and his Egyptian servants did also. Observe that Pharaoh hardened *his own* heart. God had hardened his heart after the plague of boils (9:12). This time God let Pharaoh make the decision, and Pharaoh proved himself to be a hard-hearted liar. He also revealed (unintentionally!) that God's treatment of him was completely just. (See notes on 4:21 concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.) In refusing to let Israel go, Pharaoh sinned "yet more." (See 9:27.)

The Text of EXODUS
TRANSLATION

10 And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go in unto Pha-raoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servant, that I may show these my signs in the midst of them, (2) and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought upon Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know that I am Je-ho-vah. (3) And Mo-ses and Aar-on went in unto Pha-raoh, and said unto him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me. (4) Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to-morrow will I bring locusts into thy border: (5) and they shall cover the face of the earth, so that one shall not be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat