

Exodus Chapter Nine

Read **Exodus 9:1-7** – The Murrain of Beasts

v.1 “THEN THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, GO IN UNTO PHARAOH, AND TELL HIM, THUS SAITH THE **LORD** GOD OF THE HEBREWS, LET MY PEOPLE GO, THAT THEY MAY SERVE ME.”

Four plagues have now come and gone, Pharaoh is still being obstinate toward God so Moses is given instructions to go to Pharaoh again. His message is to “LET MY PEOPLE GO”. As we study the record of Israel in Egypt, the wilderness and later the occupation of Canaan we need to keep in mind that this is all part of God’s plan to bring redemption to mankind. This is the sole reason that the nation of Israel is God’s “PEOPLE” as Moses describes later:

Deuteronomy 14:2 “FOR THOU *art* AN HOLY PEOPLE UNTO THE **LORD** THY GOD, AND THE **LORD** HATH CHOSEN THEE TO BE A PECULIAR PEOPLE UNTO HIMSELF, ABOVE ALL THE NATIONS THAT *are* UPON THE EARTH.”

That relationship between God and the remnants of Israel ended when the Mosaic Covenant was fulfilled, completed and replaced with the new covenant of Christ.

Hebrews 8:6-7 “BUT NOW HATH HE OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY, BY HOW MUCH ALSO HE IS THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED UPON BETTER PROMISES. FOR IF THAT FIRST *covenant* HAD BEEN FAULTLESS, THEN SHOULD NO PLACE HAVE BEEN SOUGHT FOR THE SECOND.”

And now God’s “PEOPLE” are those who have been added to the saved (**Acts 2:47**), those to whom Peter was writing:

I Peter 2:9 “BUT YE *are* A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, AN HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE; THAT YE SHOULD SHEW FORTH THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO HATH CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT;”

v.2-3 “FOR IF YOU REFUSE TO LET *them* GO, AND STILL HOLD THEM, BEHOLD, THE HAND OF THE **LORD** WILL BE ON YOUR CATTLE IN THE FIELD, ON THE HORSES, ON THE DONKEYS, ON THE CAMELS, ON THE OXEN, AND ON THE SHEEP—A VERY SEVERE PESTILENCE.” (NKJV)

In this next plague God strikes at Egypt ability to sustain themselves. A pestilence or murrain against the cattle and sheep takes away their food as the fish in the Nile are already dead. The murrain against their horses, donkeys, oxen and camels destroys the ability of many to conduct business or have animals to work their fields.

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But was this destruction upon all of these animals in the land? No, the verse says specifically those in the field and **Exodus 9:19** and **25** speaks of cattle that were still living.

The KJV and the ASV call this a murrain, the NKJV a pestilence, and the ESV a plague. What might a murrain be? In the early translations it was also translated in various ways but with basically the same meaning. The Septuagint uses the greek word for death, the Latin Vulgate uses a word that can mean either plague or pestilence.

Clarke describes it this way in his commentary on these verses: "The murrain is a very contagious disease among cattle, the symptoms of which are a hanging down and swelling of the head, abundance of gum in the eyes, rattling in the throat, difficulty in breathing, palpitation of the heart, staggering, a hot breath and a shining tongue." The animals just waste away and die.

v.4 "AND THE LORD SHALL SEVER BETWEEN THE CATTLE OF ISRAEL AND THE CATTLE OF EGYPT: AND THERE SHALL NOTHING DIE OF ALL *that is* THE CHILDREN'S OF ISRAEL."

God would not allow this affliction to fall upon any of the animals of the Israelites; they would be protected.

v.5 "AND THE LORD APPOINTED A SET TIME, SAYING, TO MORROW THE LORD SHALL DO THIS THING IN THE LAND."

Again to make sure that everyone knows that this murrain is from the hand of God; he sets a specific time to bring this plague upon the land, people and their animals. It will not be something that comes on over a period of days, as most do most diseases, but will appear abruptly – brought by the hand of God.

v.6 "AND THE LORD DID THAT THING ON THE MORROW, AND ALL THE CATTLE OF EGYPT DIED: BUT OF THE CATTLE OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DIED NOT ONE."

As a result of the plague brought by God, all of these animals that belonged to the Egyptians and were left in the fields died. Those belonging to Israel were spared of this plague.

v.7 "AND PHARAOH SENT, AND, BEHOLD, THERE WAS NOT ONE OF THE CATTLE OF THE ISRAELITES DEAD. AND THE HEART OF PHARAOH WAS HARDENED, AND HE DID NOT LET THE PEOPLE GO."

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Being, in some ways at least, a prudent man Pharaoh sends someone to verify that the cattle of the Israelites was spared from this affliction. The scripture says that “NOT ONE” of the cattle belonging to Israel was dead. Pharaoh’s response is probably anger; his people are being punished, Israel is being spared and that would be enough to stir this powerful man to wrath. But the scripture only tells us that he hardens his heart again against the demand that God has made.

Read **Exodus 9:8-12** – The Plague of Boils

v.8 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES AND UNTO AARON, TAKE TO YOU HANDFULS OF ASHES OF THE FURNACE, AND LET MOSES SPRINKLE IT TOWARD THE HEAVEN IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH.”

Since Pharaoh’s heart is hardened again, God prepares another plague for Egypt. This one has as its source the “ASHES OF THE FURNACE”. One commentator suggests that this was perhaps the ashes of the furnaces used to harden the brick that Israelites were tasked to make. That would be a possible source that was readily available but the scripture doesn’t tell us what furnace the ashes came from.

v.9 “AND IT SHALL BECOME SMALL DUST IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND SHALL BE A BOIL BREAKING FORTH *with* BLAINS UPON MAN, AND UPON BEAST, THROUGHOUT ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT.”

I think most of us know what a boil is, it’s a burning tumor or carbuncle found on the surface of the human body. We remember from our study of Job that this was one of the afflictions that Satan was allowed to bring upon him.

Job 2:7-8 “SO WENT SATAN FORTH FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE **LORD**, AND SMOTE JOB WITH SORE BOILS FROM THE SOLE OF HIS FOOT UNTO HIS CROWN. AND HE TOOK HIM A POTSHERD TO SCRAPE HIMSELF WITHAL; AND HE SAT DOWN AMONG THE ASHES.

One boil is bad enough, but to be covered with them must have been excruciatingly painful.

They also were stricken with the “BLAINS”, how can we describe this affliction? One commentator speculates that this was caused by the disease we know as anthrax but Clarke goes to the root word and gives us a definition of the original Hebrew. The word a-ba-buoth, root word baah that means a swelling, bulging out, inflammatory swelling, node or pustule. The Septuagint translates it “AND IT SHALL BE AN ULCER WITH BURNING PUSTULES.” Later, as part of God’s warning to Israel of the punishments that disobedience would bring, the same condition is called the botch of Egypt.

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Deuteronomy 28:27 “THE **LORD** WILL SMITE THEE WITH THE BOTCH OF EGYPT, AND WITH THE EMERODS, AND WITH THE SCAB, AND WITH THE ITCH, WHEREOF THOU CANST NOT BE HEALED.”

v.10 “AND THEY TOOK ASHES OF THE FURNACE, AND STOOD BEFORE PHARAOH; AND MOSES SPRINKLED IT UP TOWARD HEAVEN; AND IT BECAME A BOIL BREAKING FORTH *with* BLAINS UPON MAN, AND UPON BEAST.”

These boils not only afflicted men but beasts as well. This is also the first of the plagues that is visited upon people directly.

v.11 “AND THE MAGICIANS COULD NOT STAND BEFORE MOSES BECAUSE OF THE BOILS; FOR THE BOIL WAS UPON THE MAGICIANS, AND UPON ALL THE EGYPTIANS.”

At the time of this affliction and during the plagues that follow the magicians were no longer involved in the confrontations between Moses and Pharaoh . The scripture here says that they were unable to participate at this time because of the boils that were upon them. Clarke, in his comments, speculates that they died as a result of their boils and blains but we find no scriptural support for this notion. What the scripture does tell us is that they knew that they were beaten, they could not discredit Moses and they gave up:

II Timothy 3:8-9 “NOW AS JANNES AND JAMBRES WITHSTOOD MOSES, SO DO THESE ALSO RESIST THE TRUTH: MEN OF CORRUPT MINDS, REPROBATE CONCERNING THE FAITH. BUT THEY SHALL PROCEED NO FURTHER: FOR THEIR FOLLY SHALL BE MANIFEST UNTO ALL MEN, AS THEIR'S ALSO WAS.”

Paul is describing men who would stand against God in the perilous times to come and how that such foolishness as was the efforts of the magic in the times of the plagues.

v.12 “AND THE **LORD** HARDENED THE HEART OF PHARAOH, AND HE HEARKENED NOT UNTO THEM; AS THE **LORD** HAD SPOKEN UNTO MOSES.”

Pharaoh is as unmoved and stubborn as ever.

Read **Exodus 9:13-26** – The Plague of Hail

v.13 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, RISE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING, AND STAND BEFORE PHARAOH, AND SAY UNTO HIM, THUS SAITH THE **LORD** GOD OF THE HEBREWS, LET MY PEOPLE GO, THAT THEY MAY SERVE ME.”

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Since Pharaoh has remained stubborn as ever, God now begins that one commentator called the last series of plagues. This time God tells Moses to get an early start, he is to “RISE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING” to go before Pharaoh.

v.14 “FOR I WILL AT THIS TIME SEND ALL MY PLAGUES UPON THINE HEART, AND UPON THY SERVANTS, AND UPON THY PEOPLE; THAT THOU MAYEST KNOW THAT *there is* NONE LIKE ME IN ALL THE EARTH.”

God is now preparing to provide Pharaoh with heart changing lessons. After these final four plagues there will be no doubt in the mind of Pharaoh just who the sovereign ruler of the universe is. Of course, we already know that God is like that described in a psalm about His sure promises:

Psalm 89:6 “FOR WHO IN THE HEAVEN CAN BE COMPARED UNTO THE **LORD?** WHO AMONG THE SONS OF THE MIGHTY CAN BE LIKENED UNTO THE **LORD?**”

v.15 “FOR NOW I WILL STRETCH OUT MY HAND, THAT I MAY SMITE THEE AND THY PEOPLE WITH PESTILENCE; AND THOU SHALT BE CUT OFF FROM THE EARTH.”

If you are using the original King James translation of scripture, this verse, as you can see, seems to indicate that God will now destroy Egypt. He tells them that they will be “CUT OFF FROM THE EARTH.” But this is not supported by any of the other reliable translations, or by the commentators that are available to me. God is not telling Pharaoh that he will remove Egypt from the face of the earth. What God is telling Pharaoh is that “HAD” he chosen to do so he could have removed him and Egypt from the face of the earth. As we know well for other studies, God had that capability and has caused that to happen at other times and other places.

v.16 “AND IN VERY DEED FOR THIS *cause* HAVE I RAISED THEE UP, FOR TO SHEW *in* THEE MY POWER; AND THAT MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH.”

We will make a couple of observations concerning this verse. First of all we know that governments and powers that be; exist due to the providence of God. Paul tells us this:

Romans 13:1 “LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT UNTO THE HIGHER POWERS. FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD: THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD.”

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So God, who ordains the “HIGHER POWER” has raised up Pharaoh for the purpose of making the world aware that there is a Sovereign, a Supreme Ruler of all being, Jehovah, God of heaven. The bringing down of the mighty empire of Egypt and freeing Israel from its slavery will ensure that His name will be declared throughout the entire world. Not just now; but for all generations to come, just as it is today through study of the inspired writings of God’s penmen.

v.17 “AS YET EXALTEST THOU THYSELF AGAINST MY PEOPLE, THAT THOU WILT NOT LET THEM GO?”

God has brought six plagues against Pharaoh and against Egypt, yet Pharaoh has not been touched, has not bent; is still as stubborn as ever. So God asks with all of the evidence of the power against him; how is it that he continues to exalt himself above all others and all things, even Jehovah God? God gave the people of Edom much the same message through the prophet Obadiah:

Obadiah 1:4 “THOUGH THOU EXALT *thyself* AS THE EAGLE, AND THOUGH THOU SET THY NEST AMONG THE STARS, THENCE WILL I BRING THEE DOWN, SAITH THE **LORD**.”

v.18 “BEHOLD, TO MORROW ABOUT THIS TIME I WILL CAUSE IT TO RAIN A VERY GRIEVOUS HAIL, SUCH AS HATH NOT BEEN IN EGYPT SINCE THE FOUNDATION THEREOF EVEN UNTIL NOW.”

Now God describes the plague that is to come. Hail is going to rain from the sky, a phenomenon that was probably never seen in this desert land. First of all it didn’t rain very often. The wettest part of Egypt only received about 8 inches of rain a year. For comparison that is about 1/6 of what Shreveport receives in an average year. Secondly, this is desert country, even when it does rain for something frozen to fall from the sky would be against nature.

Another thing that we want to see is that God has now put a time on this occurrence. It is going to happen at “ABOUT THIS TIME” or about the same time on the morrow as Pharaoh is now meeting with Moses.

v.19 “SEND THEREFORE NOW, *and* GATHER THY CATTLE, AND ALL THAT THOU HAST IN THE FIELD; *for upon* EVERY MAN AND BEAST WHICH SHALL BE FOUND IN THE FIELD, AND SHALL NOT BE BROUGHT HOME, THE HAIL SHALL COME DOWN UPON THEM, AND THEY SHALL DIE.”

We are told that the common practice in Egypt was to send the cattle to pastures from January to April when grass was abundant for graze. The rest of the year they were kept in stalls. So Pharaoh is warned that man or beast, whatever is outside, will be destroyed, beaten to death, by the hail that is to come.

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v.20 “HE THAT FEARED THE WORD OF THE **LORD** AMONG THE SERVANTS OF PHARAOH MADE HIS SERVANTS AND HIS CATTLE FLEE INTO THE HOUSES:”

The Egyptians now have people among them who are ready to listen to Moses, they have been convinced that what he says is true. They now have faith that God will indeed carry out the pestilence that he promises to bring against them.

v.21 “AND HE THAT REGARDED NOT THE WORD OF THE **LORD** LEFT HIS SERVANTS AND HIS CATTLE IN THE FIELD.”

So here we have a contrast. Some Egyptians believed the message brought by Moses, some did not. Those that did not left their men and cattle in the field.

v.22 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, STRETCH FORTH THINE HAND TOWARD HEAVEN, THAT THERE MAY BE HAIL IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT, UPON MAN, AND UPON BEAST, AND UPON EVERY HERB OF THE FIELD, THROUGHOUT THE LAND OF EGYPT.”

The hail that falls, just like rain, does not just fall on one thing but on everything. So not only are the beasts of the field and anyone outside going to be destroyed by this bombardment of ice but crops and “EVERY HERB OF THE FIELD.”

v.23 “AND MOSES STRETCHED FORTH HIS ROD TOWARD HEAVEN: AND THE **LORD** SENT THUNDER AND HAIL, AND THE FIRE RAN ALONG UPON THE GROUND; AND THE **LORD** RAINED HAIL UPON THE LAND OF EGYPT.”

So we not only have hail but thunder; Clarke characterizes it as repeated peals of thunder like we might hear in connection with a summer thunderstorm. In addition there is fire that runs across the ground. This isn't just lightning but rather something greater and more sinister than lightning. We can see in our imaginations how the earth would look after being pounded by hail and scorched by fire.

v.24 “SO THERE WAS HAIL, AND FIRE MINGLED WITH THE HAIL, VERY GRIEVOUS, SUCH AS THERE WAS NONE LIKE IT IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT SINCE IT BECAME A NATION.”

Fire and ice “MINGLED” together, only God could accomplish this.

v.25 “AND THE HAIL SMOTE THROUGHOUT ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT 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.”

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We have a picture of complete devastation. Men, animals, crops, herbs and plants of all kinds are destroyed and even the trees are broken down by the hail. As we travel and see the trees in southern Missouri where the ice storm broke them down over a year ago, we can still see the effect of this storm and will continue to see it for some time to come. A scene of that nature gives us only a little flavor of the kind of destruction being described here in these verses.

v.26 “ONLY IN THE LAND OF GOSHEN, WHERE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE, WAS THERE NO HAIL.”

We have seen this phenomenon with summer showers where it can literally rain on one side of the street and not on the other only a few feet away. There was no hail, no fire, no destruction in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived.

Read **Exodus 9:27-35** – Pharaoh’s Change of Heart

v.27 “AND PHARAOH SENT, AND CALLED FOR MOSES AND AARON, AND SAID UNTO THEM, I HAVE SINNED THIS TIME: THE **LORD is** RIGHTEOUS, AND I AND MY PEOPLE ARE WICKED.”

Now Pharaoh is calling for Moses and Aaron, a first in this record. He confesses sin, another first. A literal translation of the original Hebrew would be “The **Lord** is the righteous one and I and my people are the sinners.” Pharaoh finally recognizes Jehovah God, but does he acknowledge Him as more than just another god? Not yet.

v.28 “INTREAT THE **LORD** (FOR IT IS ENOUGH) THAT THERE BE NO MORE MIGHTY THUNDERINGS AND HAIL; AND I WILL LET YOU GO, AND YE SHALL STAY NO LONGER.”

Pharaoh now pleads with Moses to pray to God, “INTREAT THE LORD”, because it is enough, he wants the thundering to stop. What Pharaoh has heard; David describes as the “voice of the Lord.”

Psalm 29:3-4 “THE VOICE OF THE **LORD is** UPON THE WATERS: THE GOD OF GLORY THUNDERETH: THE **LORD is** UPON MANY WATERS. THE VOICE OF THE **LORD is** POWERFUL; THE VOICE OF THE **LORD is** FULL OF MAJESTY.”

Pharaoh has gotten the message, he will let Israel go, they are to stay no longer. But will that decision hold up as soon as the plague is ended?

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v.29 “AND MOSES SAID UNTO HIM, AS SOON AS I AM GONE OUT OF THE CITY, I WILL SPREAD ABROAD MY HANDS UNTO THE **LORD**; *and* THE THUNDER SHALL CEASE, NEITHER SHALL THERE BE ANY MORE HAIL; THAT THOU MAYEST KNOW HOW THAT THE EARTH IS THE **LORD'S**.”

So Moses assures him that as soon as he leaves the city he will pray to God to end this affliction brought upon Egypt. He will “SPREAD MY HANDS ABROAD UNTO THE LORD”, a position frequently taken in prayer by the Hebrews. It brings to mind the battle between Israel and the Amalek. So long as Moses held his hands aloft in supplication to God, Israel prevailed, when he let them down Amalek prevailed:

Exodus 17:11-12 “AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN MOSES HELD UP HIS HAND, THAT ISRAEL PREVAILED: AND WHEN HE LET DOWN HIS HAND, AMALEK PREVAILED. BUT MOSES HANDS *were* HEAVY; AND THEY TOOK A STONE, AND PUT *it* UNDER HIM, AND HE SAT THEREON; AND AARON AND HUR STAYED UP HIS HANDS, THE ONE ON THE ONE SIDE, AND THE OTHER ON THE OTHER SIDE; AND HIS HANDS WERE STEADY UNTIL THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN.”

All of these plagues were to impress upon the mind of Pharaoh that God is indeed the Lord of the universe. Egypt, as did most ancient countries, worshipped a multiplicity of gods, each representing some feature of the earth, animal or mythical person. Each of these gods was restricted to a specific region, specific group of people or specific purpose. The Greek, Romans and Europeans followed the same pattern.

Now Pharaoh is acknowledging that there is a Supreme God who had power over all the earth and everything found therein. Even over the gods that the Egyptians worshipped.

v.30 “BUT AS FOR THEE AND THY SERVANTS, I KNOW THAT YE WILL NOT YET FEAR THE **LORD** GOD.”

But Moses knows how that this is going to proceed. The moment that Pharaoh and Egypt no longer feel the hand of God upon them, they will renege. His promises are empty and meaningless.

v.31 “AND THE FLAX AND THE BARLEY WAS SMITTEN: FOR THE BARLEY *was* IN THE EAR, AND THE FLAX *was* BOLLED.”

Now we get a description of the crop damage that occurred as a result of the hail. The flax and barley were “SMITTEN”. Flax was grown extensively in Egypt and they were known for the fine linen they could produce. Barley was a staple food of all countries in this region, especially of the poor and still is today.

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At the time of the hail the barley was "IN THE EAR", the heads were fully developed, possibly even ready to harvest and this is the time that storm damage would be most devastating to the crop. By knowing that; we can see that the plagues occurred in March or April because the flax is described as being in the "BOLL". While flax doesn't produce bolls like cotton it does produce a pod after flowering that contains the flax seed which also be nearly ready to harvest. The flax fiber is extracted from the stalk of the plant and the seeds produce linseed oil which is an edible oil though we probably think of it more as an ingredient in furniture polish and products used to treat wood.

v.32 "BUT THE WHEAT AND THE RYE WERE NOT SMITTEN: FOR THEY **were** NOT GROWN UP."

Moses writes that the wheat and rye were not "SMITTEN" simply because they had not come up yet.

v.33 "AND MOSES WENT OUT OF THE CITY FROM PHARAOH, AND SPREAD ABROAD HIS HANDS UNTO THE **LORD**: AND THE THUNDERS AND HAIL CEASED, AND THE RAIN WAS NOT POURED UPON THE EARTH."

So Moses goes out of the city and raises his hands in supplication to God. As Pharaoh was promised God ends this plague.

v.34 "AND WHEN PHARAOH SAW THAT THE RAIN AND THE HAIL AND THE THUNDERS WERE CEASED, HE SINNED YET MORE, AND HARDENED HIS HEART, HE AND HIS SERVANTS."

Again Pharaoh backslides, just as Moses said that he would. As soon as the plague is ended Pharaoh changes his mind, hardens his heart and refuses to honor the commitment just made to release Israel.

v.35 "AND THE HEART OF PHARAOH WAS HARDENED, NEITHER WOULD HE LET THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL GO; AS THE **LORD** HAD SPOKEN BY MOSES."

So we're back again where we started. Pharaoh is determined not to let Israel go, confirming what God had told Moses at the burning bush:

Exodus 4:21 "AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, WHEN THOU GOEST TO RETURN INTO EGYPT, SEE THAT THOU DO ALL THOSE WONDERS BEFORE PHARAOH, WHICH I HAVE PUT IN THINE HAND: BUT I WILL HARDEN HIS HEART, THAT HE SHALL NOT LET THE PEOPLE GO."