

KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, PART 3

EXODUS 9

In chapter 9, the judgments against Egypt continued with the death of the Egyptian's livestock.

Exodus 9:1–5 ¹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and speak to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ²For if you refuse to let *them* go and continue to hold them, ³behold, the hand of the LORD will come *with* a very severe pestilence [דָּבָר] on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks. ⁴But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.’”” ⁵The LORD set a definite time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.”

Moses was again sent to Pharaoh, apparently to his palace, to inform him that God wanted His people who belong to Him to be set free in order to serve Him. The word “serve,” meant the Israelites belonged to God and not to Pharaoh; they were His slaves, not Pharaoh's slaves. Moses issued a warning to Pharaoh that his refusal to let the people go would result in a very severe pestilence that would fall on all the livestock in Egypt. But this judgment would only affect the livestock owned by the Egyptians; Israel's livestock would not be affected at all. Pestilence, דָּבָר, means disease, plague, pestilence; it is a pandemic occurrence of sickness that causes widespread death. Moses told Pharaoh the specific day on which the pestilence would strike Egypt. Not only did the plague come directly from the hand of the Lord, but the Lord set the time the plague would begin.

There are a couple of noteworthy facts in this Scripture that eliminate any chance this pestilence could occur by means of naturally occurring circumstances; it was totally supernatural. Moses told Pharaoh this event would come about because of the “hand of the Lord” and this is the first plague this is specifically said about and it may be an indication of its severity because we know the earlier plagues came from the hand of God as well, but that wasn’t specifically said of them. Pandemics don’t just start on a specific day in full force. They start small and spread with increasing speed and ferocity resulting in a widespread pandemic. This judgment from God didn’t start small; it swept over the land as a pandemic from the start and Moses told Pharaoh exactly when the disease would begin in all its fury and the livestock would die off. Livestock immediately and in large numbers began to die on that day. One day, the day Moses appeared before Pharaoh, the livestock were alive and well; the next day they started dying off in massive numbers. Diseases and the resulting pandemics do not recognize national or ethnic boundaries. Goshen was surrounded by Egypt. If there was a widespread, infectious disease completely surrounding Goshen that was totally the product of a naturally occurring outbreak of disease, then Goshen would have experienced its effects right along with Egypt, but they didn’t. They didn’t because God was in control of this event and he controlled when it began, where it went, what it affected, and how long it lasted. Both of these facts were designed to let Pharaoh know that God was in charge and the pestilence was the result of Pharaoh’s refusal to obey God.

While it is an argument from silence, it seems that wild animals were not affected by this pestilence, whatever it was. Livestock were the target of this disease. The fact the specific disease was not named is also significant because humanistic rationalists have to try and figure out what disease this was so they can provide a naturalistic explanation for it. The reality is, they don't have the faintest idea what this disease was. They simply make something up that sounds good and seemingly fits into their naturalist paradigm in order to fool people into denying this was a supernatural act of God. What we do know is that it was a disease sent by God that began in full force on a specific day that attacked only the livestock of Egypt and not the livestock of the Israelites. This disease could have been a disease God designed for this specific purpose that was never before seen and has not been seen since; we don't know. All these factors are proof of the supernatural nature of the judgment.

This judgment would have really hit the Egyptians hard. The welfare of the nation's people was dependent on the welfare of its livestock. Animals were the implements of agricultural productivity, transportation, and the source of food. Losing the livestock would have been a serious blow to the psyche of the Egyptian people as well as to the economy. It would have been a serious sign of God's work in the midst of the Egyptian people on behalf of the Israelites when their livestock was spared.

Exodus 9:6–7 ⁶So the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all [כָּל] the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died. ⁷Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel

dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

It seems possible that verse 6 could be understood to be saying the plague began and ended all on the next day, but it could also mean “from the next day” meaning it began on that day and continued for an unspecified length of time. None of the judgments seemed to last for days on end. The longest recorded one was the water turned to blood which lasted seven days (Ex. 7:25).

“All” is not to be understood that every single Egyptian animal died in this plague. Some of the plagues following this one informs us that Egyptian livestock survived to endure more of the judgments. All, כָּל, can mean something other than the complete number of something. It may be translated “all sorts of,” “all kinds of,” “from all over,” or “all over the place.” A better interpretation of this verse may have been “all sorts of the livestock of Egypt died” or “Egyptian livestock died all over the place.”¹ The contrast is with the livestock of the Israelites none of which died in this plague. Some commentators believe “all” refers to livestock in the field and not to livestock that was housed in shelter of some sort,² but that seems forced into the text and the meaning “all sorts of” or something similar is the better translation.

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus*, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 223-224.

² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1: The Pentateuch*, 10 vols. (1866-91, repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 1:316).

Pharaoh inquired about the state of Israel's livestock and learned their animals did not die. Again, this is a visible proclamation of God's omnipotence that he can protect the livestock of His people when the livestock of the Egyptians are dying all around them. Despite this confirmation of God's Word, the king maintained his hard heart and did not let the people go.

What pagan gods would have been humiliated by this devastation of Egypt's livestock? The primary god affected by this plague was Apis the most prominent and important of the cattle gods.

Apis was the bull cult god. This bull was not simply the incarnation of a god, he was the god. When a bull was found that had the specific markings Apis had to have, that bull was placed in some sort of luxurious quarters in Memphis, fed the best feed, and given a harem of cows. He was to be a black bull with the markings of a white diamond on the forehead, the image of a vulture on the back, double hairs on the tail, and the mark of a scarab under the tongue. Others claim up to 28 different marks were required to proclaim a bull the god Apis. He was treated like royalty and as a powerful and virile symbol he was associated with the Pharaoh who was sometimes called the "strong bull of his mother." Artifacts dated as far back as 3100 B.C. have been found depicting Pharaoh as a bull. This god is linked to Osiris and Isis, so once again the Babylonian mother-child cult is related to Egyptian paganism. Apis is thought to be the living embodiment of the dead Osiris, the image of his soul, and it was thought that Apis was conceived when a flash of lightning struck his mother who was

known as the Isis cow which signifies some sort of conception less a male. There could only be one Apis bull at a time. When he died, he was embalmed and buried in the manner of royalty.³ In 1856, an archaeologist found the burial tombs of the Apis bulls in Memphis. They discovered an avenue 1,120 feet long with 64 burial chambers alongside it. In the center of each chamber was a red or black granite sarcophagus about 12 feet deep, 9 feet high, and 6 feet wide each weighing about 60 tons and each contained the body of a dead Apis bull.⁴

In terms of the Exodus narrative as history, we are not told whether or not this plague struck down the Apis bull living at that time. If God struck the Apis bull dead in this plague, that would have been a serious blow to the Egyptian's confidence in their religious system, but we don't know.

Hathor, the goddess of love, beauty, and joy was represented by a cow. She nursed Pharaoh in the guise of a cow providing him with divine nourishment and she was the goddess of women, fertility, children, and childbirth. She is often depicted with cow horns holding a sun disc and having cow's ears.⁵

Skeptics claim the fact that horses were included in this plague means this pericope had to take place much later than I stated in the introduction to the book because horses came into Egypt later, but that is untrue. The Hyksos introduced them and we know this Egyptian dynasty began when the Hyksos

³ <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/bullcult.html> (accessed 11 July 2017).

⁴ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lakes, IN: BMH, 1986), 122.

⁵ <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/hathor.html> (accessed 11 July 2017).

were defeated and thrown out of Egypt. We also know that Abram was not given horses as a gift when the Egyptians gave him gifts of other animals (sheep, oxen, donkeys, camels) (Gen. 12:16) before the Hyksos ruled Egypt. Finally, we know that by the time Jacob died and Joseph took his body back to Canaan for burial, they had horsemen and chariots (Gen. 50:9) which was during the rule of the Hyksos.

Genesis 12:16 ¹⁶Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

Genesis 50:9⁹There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company.

Skeptics also claim camels were not in Egypt until much later but that seems very unlikely. Camels had been coming into Egypt in caravans for many, many years. Joseph was taken into Egypt and sold into slavery by Midianite traders who had camels in their caravans. It seems likely these animals that were so suited to working the desert would have quickly been purchased early on by the Egyptians for use as beasts of burden and for transportation. This would have been before Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt which was obviously long before the Exodus narrative took place.

Genesis 37:25 ²⁵Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring *them* down to Egypt.

The rationalistic argument is this plague was a disease spread by the bugs of the third plague, or a disease resulting from bacteria springing from the frog

carcasses rotting in piles from the earlier plague of frogs. Many people assume it was anthrax, but this is very unlikely. That was not a disease of the Sahara Desert region of North Africa; it was a sub-Saharan Africa disease and it was also very contagious for humans and no people were struck by this plague. The naturalistic excuse for the Israelites livestock to be unaffected by this outbreak of anthrax was the flood waters receded from the delta later than from the main channel of the Nile River, allowing winter rains to flush the anthrax spores from the Goshen region in the delta therefore sparing the livestock in Goshen. As mentioned earlier, we have no idea what this pestilence was; it may well have been a disease God used in this plague for this reason and it was never heard of before or heard from since.

The Ipuwer Papyrus possibly referred to the plague on the livestock. "All animals, their hearts weep. Cattle moan ..." (Ipp. 5:5). "Behold, cattle are left to stray, and there is none to gather them together" (Ipp. 9:2-3).⁶

Exodus 9:8–10 ⁸Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and let Moses throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹It will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and will become boils [שִׁחִין] breaking out with sores [אֲבַעְבֵּעִת] on man and beast through all the land of Egypt." ¹⁰So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils [שִׁחִין] breaking out with sores [אֲבַעְבֵּעִת] on man and beast.

Throwing soot into the air is the start of the next plague. Some theologians believe this was symbolic, but the text says it became a "fine dust over all the land of Egypt." Certainly, this was an easily accomplished feat when carried out

⁶ J. R. Church, "An Egyptian Description of the Exodus" in *Prophecy in the News*, June 2017, 13.

by the Creator God of the universe. It was obviously a sign to Pharaoh that signaled the beginning of this plague. Boils, נִשְׁחִיךְ, generally denotes a staphylococcal infection of the skin that produced boils. A boil is a painful skin infection that begins in a hair follicle or oil gland. Sores, [אַרְבַּעַת], means festers, blisters, boils; they are skin ulcers that are pustule sores. Any infection is serious and these were painful as well, so it should be obvious this was a very serious plague. The language indicates they were covered in open, running sores; they were probably a stinking, pain stricken mess. "The Hb. uses a compound of terms to be sure the reader understands that these were not mere boils or skin eruptions but what are sometimes in English called angry boils and/or putrefying sores and/or skin ulcers."⁷ Some people think this may be some sort of dermatitis, but, while uncomfortable and itchy, dermatitis does not come close to describing the nature of this plague.

Many commentators think this may have been soot from the kilns used to dry the bricks the Israelites slaves were making thus using part of the product of their subjugation to be the catalyst for punishing the Egyptians with this malady as judgment for the harsh labor imposed on the Hebrews, but this seems to be trying to force a concept into Scripture that sounds good to us, but probably isn't accurate. The bricks the Egyptians used in their building projects were sun dried, not kiln dried. The soot more likely came from kilns used to smelt metal or

⁷ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus*, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 228, n. 100.

fire pottery. In later dynasties, they used kiln dried bricks but during the time the Israelites were Egyptian slaves, sun dried bricks was the norm. Anything is possible, but the brick kiln theory does seem to be only remotely possible.

Some people think this was a cutaneous (skin) anthrax, but we've already noted anthrax wasn't a problem in this part of Africa. The Scripture says it was boils and we have no reason to doubt that. On the contrary, the inspired, inerrant Word of God revealed the problem was boils and that had to have been the issue.

Exodus 9:11 ¹¹The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians.

The magicians of Pharaoh's court not only could not duplicate this miraculous work of God, they suffered under it to the extent they could not bear up under the pain and suffering and appear before Moses to oppose him. This is an indication of how much suffering this plague inflicted on all the people of Egypt. It is also an indication of how impotent these agents of Satan were in the presence of God. It also seems that Pharaoh and his family must have suffered them as well.

Exodus 9:12 ¹²And the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

This is the first mention of the Lord's action to harden Pharaoh's heart. At some point, God allows those who are in continual rebellion against Him, despite all His efforts to draw them to Him, to go their own way. That's not to say it is too late to change one's mind, but Pharaoh was never going to listen to God.

This action by God may be an indication the end is near and it will come to pass just as God has willed it to do from the beginning.

An examination of commentaries reveals a number of pagan Egyptian deities that were shown to be powerless by this plague, but a closer examination of them reveals this to be greatly exaggerated. Sekhmet seems to be the only one who fits the time frame of the Exodus.

Sekhmet was known as a fearsome goddess known as “the destroyer” and the “Lady of Pestilence”, but for her friends she was able to avert plagues and cure diseases.⁸ She was a goddess of sun, war, plagues, and healing. Obviously, this goddess was powerless to spare the Egyptians the suffering of this plague. Sunu was a priesthood dedicated to Sekhmet rather than a healing god as some claim.

Imhotep and Serapis were also gods of healing and many commentaries list them as objects of God’s judgment during the Exodus pericope, but this is unlikely. Imhotep was an ancient Egyptian official who was also a skilled physician who became a god, but it wasn’t until Greco-Roman times that he was granted widespread recognition although he was elevated to deity status in the sixth century B.C. Nevertheless, that is long after the Exodus account. Likewise, Serapis was a creation of the Ptolemaic dynasty combining elements of Greek paganism with Egyptian paganism. This god, popular with the Greeks, was never popular with the Egyptians.

⁸ <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/sekhmet.html> (accessed 12 July 2017).

Exodus 9:13–17 ¹³Then 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. ¹⁴For 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. ¹⁵For *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. ¹⁶But, 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. ¹⁷Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.

Once again, God had Moses tell Pharaoh to let God's people go so they could serve the One to whom they belong. God warned the king that His plagues were going to become the full expression of His wrath so they will know there is no one like Him on earth. The irony is the Egyptians would ultimately learn this lesson, but as we have seen, to this day, people still try to explain away God's supernatural activity in Egypt with rationalistic explanations. Some things just never change! To this point, God has stayed His hand so the Egyptians have not been cut off from the earth. They have been stuck with pestilence but not with the amount of force that would have eradicated them. He could have simply wiped Egypt out and removed the Israelites but he had a larger purpose. The world would not have recognized what happened if God had destroyed Egypt in one powerful moment. This way, the world had time to see, hear, and learn about Yahweh and we still do today by means of the historical account we have in the book of Exodus. We have to remember that God's purpose for history is doxological, that is, everything is ultimately done for His glory and this Exodus narrative is no exception. Part of God's purpose in this is to make Egypt

an example to the rest of the world. The first plagues were a real nuisance and caused serious problems, but the plagues to come would cause even more damage and even take human life. But through it all, God would be glorified and His name would be known throughout the earth, then and now. Pharaoh is going to learn, one way or another, there is only one true God and the gods of Egypt are powerless against Him. To that end, Pharaoh will serve as a timeless object lesson to the people of the world.

Through His judgment on Egypt and His relationship with His people, the Hebrews, the world would know His name. We know this happened. The people of the world at the time feared this God of the Hebrews after hearing what He had done in Egypt and during the Exodus.

Joshua 2:8–11 ⁸Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. ¹⁰For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Joshua 9:9 ⁹They said to him, “Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt

1 Samuel 4:8 ⁸Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all *kinds of* plagues in the wilderness.

Romans 9:17 ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

The next plague will be a devastating plague of hail.

Exodus 9:18–21 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. ¹⁹Now 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."'" ²⁰The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses; ²¹but he who paid no regard to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

Even at this late point in the Exodus saga, God showed mercy to the Egyptian people. He warned them an incredible hail storm such as had never been seen in Egypt before would pound the nation killing the people and animals who refused to heed his warning and seek shelter indoors. Egypt was a country proud of its long heritage even at that time; they believed they were the foundational and most civilized nation on earth. To suggest this storm would be something never before seen is quite a statement; nothing outdoors would be spared damage and even destruction. This was a divine assault on the agricultural productivity of the land. This storm had a definite starting point; it was not a naturally occurring thunderstorm. The delta region of Egypt only gets about 10 inches of rain per year and Upper Egypt even less to nothing so severe storms were probably very rare especially in the South.

Even though a skeptic himself, Pharaoh nonetheless sent couriers out to warn the people and some of the Egyptian people were beginning to figure out

this God of the Hebrews was much more powerful than any of their Egyptian gods and they obeyed the Word of God, sought shelter, and were spared. This is not to say they were saved, but they were beginning to recognize His power and that He could cause to happen all that He said was going to happen. They were fearing the Word of the Lord because they had seen that this God meant what He said! Those who were remaining in rebellion were free to stay out in the fields and suffer the consequences.

Exodus 9:22–26 ²²Now 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.” ²³Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire [שֶׁט] ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. ²⁴So there was hail, and fire [שֶׁט] 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. ²⁵The 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. ²⁶Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, there was no hail.

Moses was commanded to stretch out his staff toward the sky and when he did, God commenced the hail storm. The description of this storm seems to indicate it was not just a hail storm but also a very severe thunderstorm in all respects.

The fire, שֶׁט, spoken of here refers to lightning and a very severe lightning storm at that. That is not to say it could not have started fires in both vegetation and buildings, but lightning is what the word means in this context. That is also not to say that God can't cause literal fire to come down from heaven because He can do that, but that isn't what is happening here although many people think it is. This is describing a thunderstorm the likes of which Egypt had never

seen and perhaps a storm the world has never seen before or since either. If you have ever seen the aftermath of a very severe hail storm and what it does to trees and vegetation, then you have only glimpsed what Egypt looked like after this storm was over.

The fact that Goshen was spared while the rest of the nation was not, is evidence of the supernatural nature of this event, but even this fact does not deter skeptics from developing an alternate explanation of the storm. Here is one example.

[T]his was a normal, albeit very severe storm. Stuart observes that the destructive power of this hailstorm has analogies in recent history. There may be an alternative explanation [other than lightning] for “fire” in the hail, however. The exodus may have occurred during a time of volcanic activity; Mt. Sinai appears to have been volcanic, and numerous scholars have speculated on the relationship of the plagues to eruptions such as Santorini (probably late 17th century B.C.) and Yali (in the eastern Aegean, and probably dated to the mid-15th century B.C.) Ash particles from an eruption can travel great distances and be the “seed” for precipitation of rain or hail. According to geologist Barbara Silverstein, the “icy ashballs” from a volcanic eruption could be electrically charged and perceived as “hail shot through with lightning.” Hail and rain with a high concentration of volcanic ash might also cause chemical burns on the skin. The sparing of the land of Goshen, where Israel resided, needs no real explanation. Severe storms are outrageously unpredictable, annihilating one community and leaving a neighboring community untouched. This storm, directed by God, was selective.⁹

There are no recent analogies of hailstorms to this magnitude. With the possible exception of atmospheric conditions during and immediately after the Flood, there is probably nothing in world history that can compare with the widespread

⁹ Duane A .Garrett, *Kregel Exegetical Library: A Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 333-334.

damage, across the entire nation or at least the entire Nile River valley and delta, caused by this hail storm. It is noteworthy this theologian had to qualify his entire theory with the word, "may," as in "may have occurred during a time of volcanic activity." That claim is the logical fallacy of assumption; there is no basis for it at all. He also notes the "scholars" he is relying on are speculating rather than presenting facts about the time of the incident. If these "scholars" would begin their work with the presupposition the Bible is the inspired Word of God, they wouldn't have to speculate or assume. The information provided about volcanic ash and its effects on storms is quite correct, but it cannot be assumed or speculated that is what happened during the Exodus. God started this storm at the command of Moses; volcanic ash doesn't just appear on schedule and cause a nationwide hail storm with the exception of one small area called Goshen right in the middle of it all. This theologian wrote this paragraph denigrating the possibility of supernatural activity in generating this storm and in the last line he tried to deceive people over his true intentions by confirming the storm was directed by God. The rationalistic explanation for his plague is that it was simply a very severe thunderstorm much like the severe storms we experience today. But that is untrue. This storm was not naturally occurring and its coverage was over all the nation.

The point is you must be extremely discerning when reading anything and always compare whatever you read to the Word of God. This is also not to say

this theologian doesn't have some good information in his commentary, but you have to carefully mine that out of it while disregarding the rest.

The goddess Nut was the personification of the sky and the heavens. She was depicted arching over the earth. When storms came during the day, it was thought she had moved closer to the earth. She separates chaos from the ordered world.¹⁰ You can only imagine how shocked the Egyptians would have been that such destruction could have come this goddess.

Shu was the god of light and air and personified the wind and the earth's atmosphere which he created allowing life to flourish.¹¹

Seth or Set was the storm god associated with eclipses, thunderstorms, and earthquakes. He was the master of storms, the sky god. He was a highly venerated god in the Nile delta region.¹²

Isis was related to agricultural productivity in that she was the goddess of fertility and was considered to be the giver of bread.¹³

Pharaoh was alarmed at the amount of damage this storm caused in his nation so he sent for Moses and Aaron. You can imagine the horror felt by the Egyptian people. Not only had their gods failed to protect them, but their nation was nearly destroyed by this storm.

Exodus 9:27–28 ²⁷Then 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

¹⁰ <http://www.crystalinks.com/nut.html> (accessed 12 July 2017).

¹¹ <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/shu.html> (accessed 12 July 2017).

¹² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Seth-Egyptian-god>;
<http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/set.html> (accessed 12 July 2017).

¹³ <http://www.landofpyramids.org/isis.htm> (accessed 12 July 2017).

the wicked [רָשָׁע] ones. ²⁸Make supplication to the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder [קוֹל] and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer."

Pharaoh makes some astonishing admissions here for a man who thinks he is a god himself, but he will never acknowledge Yahweh and turn to him in faith. Even though his theological knowledge is growing his sincerity is lagging far behind. No matter how much he learned, he would never come to faith.

It is noteworthy that he didn't call for his wise men or his sorcerers and magicians; he called for the men of God. He acknowledged that Yahweh was the Righteous One. It was only a short time before when he said he didn't know Yahweh (Ex. 5:2) and wasn't interested in knowing Him. However, he also qualified it by saying, "this time" which seems to indicate he still didn't think he sinned before in disobeying God. His admission almost certainly had more to do with regretting the damage done to his nation and his people than in regretting his rebellion against God. By this time, he was certainly getting to know Yahweh in ways he couldn't have imagined only a short time before. He was probably insincere when he admitted he and his people were the wicked ones. Given his change of mind about letting the people go when the storm ceased, he seemed to think he could manipulate God into stopping this judgment. He didn't want to let the people go; he wanted the storm to stop. That seems to be why he agreed to let the people go and asked Moses to pray for him again. He knew that when Moses prayed for him, the plague would stop.

Wicked, רָשָׁע, refers to violating a standard or it pertains to being legally not innocent of a law violation. Pharaoh is not referring here to violating a moral standard; he is referring to not doing something he should have done to avert this disaster. Some versions interpret this word to mean “in the wrong” or “guilty.” Pharaoh also recognized God was trying to tell him something. Thunder, קוֹל, means sound or a voice which in this context is the sound of God.

Exodus 9:29–30 ²⁹Moses 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. ³⁰But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear [יִרָא] the LORD God.”

Moses agreed to pray for him and told the king that when he did so, the hail would cease. This would be another visible object lesson for Pharaoh that Yahweh was the king over the earth and the worthless, powerless pagan gods Pharaoh served were no gods at all. Moses wasn't fooled by all the manipulative words of the king; he knew the Pharaoh still had no fear of the Lord. Fear, יִרָא, means to revere, venerate, and show profound respect for someone none of which characterized Pharaoh's view of Yahweh. It also contains an element of fear for offending a holy, righteous God and Pharaoh didn't have that either.

Exodus 9:31–32 ³¹(Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. ³²But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they ripen late.)

This dates the plague to February-March. If the judgments began during the annual flood, then they have been going on for six to eight months, but some believe they took place in a short period of time from winter to spring or

thereabouts. It is only those who insist on explaining the plagues as the result of natural forces that must force the first judgment into the time of the yearly flood. It was nearly harvest time for the flax and the barley which is why they were destroyed. The hail not only shredded the plants, but it knocked the grain off the stalks and the rain ruined it on the ground insuring it was useless. The wheat and spelt were just coming up and had not started putting on grain. The commentators who know nothing of agriculture, claim the wheat and spelt were not damaged, but that is untrue. They would have suffered severe damage, but the plants were so young they were able to recover. Flax was a very important crop used for making linen cloth for clothing. They didn't wear wool. Linen was also used for the garments of the pagan priests so this was a judgment against them as well. Barley was an important crop for making bread which probably fed the poor and the commoner. It was also used for making beer.

Exodus 9:33–35 ³³So 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. ³⁴But 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. ³⁵Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

By coming and going, Moses was demonstrating that in the midst of a storm that was killing people and animals he could move around without harm. This was another visible lesson for Pharaoh to see and understand the power and nature of the God of Moses. Pharaoh continued in his sinful rebellion once he saw the storm had stopped. But it wasn't just Pharaoh who hardened his

heart, but the officials of his court as well. While Moses did just as he said he would do, the pagan king did not.

These sinful, arrogant men insisted on marching on to their destruction. But isn't that what sinful man has always done and continues to do? Unless and until they come to faith in Christ Jesus, they just keep moving deeper and deeper in to that which leads to their doom. These men saw up close and personal the power of God and they still rejected Him over and over again. They had chance after chance and they would not give in. Ultimately, they destroyed their country.

The Ipuwer Papyrus seemed to reference this judgment in several places.¹⁴

"... gates, columns, and walls are consumed by fire" (Ip. 2:10).

"Lower Egypt weeps ... The entire palace is without its revenues. To it belong [by right] wheat and barley, geese and fish" (Ip. 10:3-6).

"... grain has perished on every side" (Ip. 6:3).

"...that has perished, which was yesterday seen. The land is left over to its weariness like the cutting of flax" (Ip. 5:12).

¹⁴ J. R. Church, "An Egyptian Description of the Exodus" in *Prophecy in the News*, June 2017, 13.