

EXODUS

Chapter 9

The Fifth Plague: Egyptian Livestock Die

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. 2 For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, 3 behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks. 4 But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.”” 5 And the LORD set a time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.” 6 And the next day the LORD did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. 7 And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

9:2 Moses highlighted Pharaoh’s obstinate resistance. (TLSB)

9:3 *plague on your livestock.* The flies of the fourth plague probably carried the anthrax bacteria that would now infect the animals, which had been brought into the fields again as the floodwaters subsided. The Egyptians worshiped many animals and animal-headed deities, including the bull-gods Apis and Mnevis, the cow-god Hathor and the ram-god Khnum. Thus Egyptian religion is again rebuked and ridiculed. (CSB)

Usually translated “pestilence” (5:3), it is any infectious outbreak. The Eng term came to describe all 10 wonders by which God struck the Egyptians. *upon ... livestock.* Possibly murrain, similar to anthrax, which could affect the grazing cattle and other domestic animals, destroying the wealth of the Egyptians. God could have used the flies (8:21) to carry the bacteria now infecting the animals. (TLSB)

9:5 *the LORD set a time.* To this plague, God adds a warning and a time for the Egyptians to respond. They could rescue their animals by trusting the Lord’s word and segregating their livestock from animals in the fields (cf v 20). The protected cattle survived (vv 19–21). (TLSB)

Tomorrow. To give those Egyptians who feared God time to bring their livestock in from the fields and out of danger (see also v. 20). (CSB)

9:6 *All the livestock of the Egyptians died.* That is, all that were left out in the fields. Protected livestock remained alive (see vv. 19–21). (CSB)

Those in the field (cf vv 3, 19). The sin of one man who thought he was a “god” had not only personal but also communal repercussions. Herds and flocks were equivalent to wealth. (TLSB)

9:7 *sent.* Confidential messengers confirmed that the cattle of the Israelites had been spared. (TLSB)

heart of Pharaoh was hardened. Threat, promise, judgment, and mercy made no impression on him (cf Ps 51). (TLSB)

9:1–7 Despite the number of times Pharaoh goes through the cycle of sin, oppression, regret, and deliverance, God will not be mocked. God deals another detrimental blow to the Egyptian religious and

economic systems. By God's grace, Israel is delivered from temporal judgment and destruction. The Lamb of God delivers us from sin, death, and the devil through His atoning blood. • Heavenly Father, many smile when Your precious Word of Law and Gospel is condemned. Many hear of redeeming grace in Your Son, Jesus Christ, and rail against Him in thought, word, and deed. Protect us as we bear witness to all who are hardened to Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

The Sixth Plague: Boils

8 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt." 10 So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast. 11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians. 12 But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

9:8–10 Soot blew like dust over the land, and God used it to make boils break out on people and animals. (TLSB)

9:8 *Take ... soot ... toss it into the air.* Perhaps symbolizing either the widespread extent of the plague of boils or their black coloration. (CSB)

kiln. Possibly a kiln for firing bricks, the symbol of Israel's bondage (see 1:14; 5:7–19). The same word is used in Ge 19:28 as a simile for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (CSB)

Smelting furnace or limekiln for firing the bricks the Israelites were forced to produce (1:14; 5:7–19). The kiln is now an instrument of chastisement against the Egyptians. (TLSB)

9:9 *boils.* Probably skin anthrax (a variety of the plague that struck the livestock in vv. 1–7), a black, burning abscess that develops into a pustule. (CSB)

Skin swollen in abscesses and blisters as a result of disease. (TLSB)

man and beast. The plague on the livestock now extended to other animals as well as to the people of Egypt. (CSB)

9:11 *magicians could not stand.* The "boils of Egypt" (Dt 28:27) seriously affected the knees and legs (see Dt 28:35). (CSB)

Boils and pustule abscesses seriously affected leg and joint movement (cf Dt 28:35). (TLSB)

9:12 *the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart.* The Lord confirmed Pharaoh in his persistent unbelief. "Even Pharaoh perished in this way. (Of whom it is written [in Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17], 'But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you My power, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth.') This was not because God had begrudged him salvation or because it had been His good pleasure that Pharaoh should be damned and lost. For God is not willing that any should perish [2 Peter 3:9]; '[He also has] no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live' (Ezekiel 33:11)" (FC SD XI 84). (TLSB)

them. Pharaoh's counselors. (TLSB)

9:8–12 The magicians collapse under the Lord’s chastisement; both people and animals are smitten by painful skin abscesses. The Lord again distinguishes His people in this plague by sparing the Israelites and their animals. The blessings God gives us should extend beyond us to bless even our animals! If the Lord shows such mercy to sheep, how much more shall He show mercy toward you? His Gospel rescues us from sin, death, and the devil. • Dear Father in heaven, You saved me by grace through faith in Christ, Your Son. As long as this corrupt nature clings to me like a dead corpse, teach me to say, “Forgive me, for I am a wretched sinner worthy of punishment.” Free me, O Lord, for I am helpless without You. Amen. (TLSB)

The Seventh Plague: Hail

13 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. **14** For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. **15** For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. **16** But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. **17** You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go. **18** Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. **19** Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them.’” **20** Then whoever feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, **21** but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the LORD left his slaves and his livestock in the field. **22** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.” **23** Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. **24** There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. **25** The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. **26** Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail. **27** Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. **28** Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” **29** Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD’s. **30** But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God.” **31** (The flax and the barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. **32** But the wheat and the emmer were not struck down, for they are late in coming up.) **33** So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and stretched out his hands to the LORD, and the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured upon the earth. **34** But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. **35** So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

9:13–10:29 These three preparatory plagues will be exponentially greater than the previous one and will prepare Pharaoh for the final plague of judgment. God did not destroy Pharaoh with just one act of judgment in order that (1) Pharaoh might glorify God, and (2) the name of the Lord might be declared to the ends of His kingdom. (TLSB)

9:14 *this time I will send all My plagues.* Difference of degree. Previous plagues (blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, and boils) failed to touch the hard heart of Pharaoh. (TLSB)

9:16 *I have raised you up.* Kings reign by God's permission. (TLSB)

Paul quotes this verse as an outstanding illustration of the sovereignty and mercy of God (see Ro 9:17). (CSB)

9:17 *still exalting yourself.* Though the Lord had distinguished Israel, Pharaoh's attitude toward them had not changed. (TLSB)

9:18 *I will cause ... hail to fall.* The flooding of the Nile (the probable occasion of the first six plagues) came to an end late in the fall. The hailstorm is thus in the proper chronological position, taking place in January or February when the flax and barley were in flower but the wheat and spelt had not yet germinated (see vv. 31–32). (CSB)

Hail of great size in awful volleys, accompanied by thunder and fire (lightning; v 23). (TLSB)

9:20 *whoever feared.* Some of Pharaoh's servants had come to believe Moses. (TLSB)

livestock into the houses. A sign of divine mercy and rescue. Herds of cattle were turned out to pasture between Jan and Apr, so this plague would have killed range cattle. Other plagues threatened the livestock as well. (TLSB)

9:21 Those who ignored God's warning would reap the prophesied judgment (vv 22–26). (TLSB)

9:24 *fire flashing.* Lightning intensified the threat (cf Ezk 1:4). (TLSB)

9:25 *every plant.* Probably occurred in Jan or Feb, when the flax and barley were in flower but the wheat and emmer had not yet germinated (vv 31–33). (TLSB)

9:27 *This time I have sinned.* For the first time the pharaoh acknowledges his sinfulness and perceives its devastating results. (CSB)

The supernatural aspect of this plague, esp the terrible violence of the hailstorm, made a stronger impression upon Pharaoh than the previous plagues. Pharaoh finally admitted limited guilt. (TLSB)

9:29 *stretched out my hands.* See 1Ki 8:22, 38, 54; 2Ch 6:12–13, 29; Ezr 9:5; Ps 44:20; 88:9; 143:6; Isa 1:15; 1Ti 2:8. Statues of men praying with hands upraised have been found by archaeologists at several ancient sites in the Middle East. (CSB)

9:31 *flax and the barley were struck down.* Not yet ripe but in ear and in blossom. (TLSB)

flax. Used for Egyptian linen; a valuable crop. (TLSB)

9:32 *emmer.* Grains of spelt, a member of the grass family allied to wheat, have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs. Although inferior to wheat, it grows well in poorer and drier soil. (CSB)

Grain for making bread. (TLSB)

9:13–35 Pharaoh mocks God with false repentance, but the Lord is unmoved. Sinners cannot bargain with God by conceding some of their sins or by amending behaviors. God sees through it all. Like the thief on

the cross, we do not appeal to mockery but instead call on God's mercy. Jesus is always ready to forgive.

- O Lord Christ, I am the worst evil; You are the highest good. But You took my sin and gave me Your righteousness. I am led to this confession through Your Law and Gospel-promises. O faithful God, my merciful Redeemer, grant that I trust in You alone. Amen. (TLSB)