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### The Plague of Hail

**W**hile rainfall and snowfall can come from different kinds of clouds, hail can fall only out of severe thunderstorms, or cumulonimbus clouds. Therefore, in comparison with rain and snow, hail is not so common. Hailstones can have different sizes ranging from the size of a pea to a cricket ball. They make a hard impact when they fall and depending upon their size and weight, they can cause direct damage to the object on which they fall. Standing crops can particularly be affected very severely.

Hailstones most often form around ice nuclei which are frozen raindrops or snowflakes but also around particulate matter that has been thrown up into the air by strong vertical upward motions or updrafts. Small hail exists in the colder parts of all thunderstorms but it does not reach the ground. When the updrafts are strong, the hail gets the opportunity to accumulate more ice, but when the hailstones become very large the pull of gravity counteracts the updrafts and they fall down to the ground. That is why every hailstone comes from a thunderstorm, but every thunderstorm does not send down hail. Hailstorms are rare compared to thunderstorms.

Hail is a product of thunderstorms which are very tall, dark and awesome cumulonimbus clouds. Thunder and lightning therefore go hand in hand with hail, and lightning may cause its own additional damage.

The Bible makes it clear that all the forces of nature are at God's command. They do his bidding and only he knows all

**their secrets. God questions Job: *Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail?*<sup>1</sup> *Lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,*<sup>2</sup>**

**Hail, in particular, is often regarded in the Bible as a phenomenon that represents God's anger. Hail is one of the weapons in God's armoury and he uses it by itself or in combination with others.**

***The Lord will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail.***<sup>3</sup>

***Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury.***<sup>4</sup>

***I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulphur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.***<sup>5</sup>

***He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore-figs with sleet. He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning.***<sup>6</sup>

***He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast?***<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Job 38:22

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 148:8

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 30:30

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 13:13

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 38:22

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 78:47-48

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 147:17

*See, the Lord has one who is powerful and strong. Like a hailstorm and a destructive wind, like a driving rain and a flooding downpour, he will throw it forcefully to the ground. hail will sweep away your refuge, and water will overflow your hiding place.<sup>8</sup>*

*I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the Lord.<sup>9</sup>*

In the book of Revelation, there are several imageries of thunder and lightning, but only three involving hail. But what we have experienced so far on earth is nothing compared with the hailstorms of Revelation. The biggest hailstones documented have weighed less than a kilogram or two pounds. But in Revelation, huge hailstones weighing 50 kilograms or 100 pounds each are seen to fall upon men, making it like a terrible plague of hail<sup>10</sup>. We hear the first angel sounding his trumpet, and hail being hurled down upon the earth. This hail is mixed with fire and blood and together they cause destruction of one-third of the earth<sup>11</sup>. Further on we read that when God's temple in heaven is opened, there come flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm<sup>12</sup>. What a dreadful combination of natural forces that would be, with the skies and the earth resonating to each other's fury!

The Lord had inflicted ten plagues on the Egyptians to force the Pharaoh to set the Israelites free. Each of the successive plagues was more severe than the one before. However, it is important to note that the plague of hail was

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<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 28:2, 28:17

<sup>9</sup> Haggai 2:17

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 16:21

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 8:7

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 11:19

preceded by the plague of boils and followed by the plague of locusts.

God had told Moses to confront Pharaoh and give him a day's advance warning of the greatest hailstorm ever to strike Egypt in its history. Some of Pharaoh's officials who heeded the warning hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock to safe places, but others ignored it and left them in the field. This is what happened the next day:

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt - on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt." When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the Lord sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the field - both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.<sup>13</sup>*

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said that had been enough thunder and hail, and he will let them go. Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. He spread out his hands toward the Lord; the thunder and hail stopped, and the rain no longer poured down on the land. But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he changed his mind.

So the Lord had to bring the plague of locusts. The Lord made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts;

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<sup>13</sup> Exodus 9:22-25

they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts... They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail - everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

The order in which the successive plagues were unleashed is important here. To bring about the plague of boils, the Lord had told Moses to take handfuls of soot from a furnace and toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. It would become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land. Now, the fine dust, which was like soot or ash, is known to facilitate the formation of ice nuclei, which in turn develop into hailstones. Thus while the plague of boils was in operation, the background work had been done for the plague of hail. Following the hailstorm, the soil had become wet and moist, which served as the breeding ground for locusts which were produced in huge numbers. Thus the plague of hail served as a link between the plagues that preceded and followed it.



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<sup>14</sup> Exodus 10:13-15