

Thunder, hail and fire

“And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD [Yahweh] sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD [Yahweh] rained hail upon the land of Egypt. 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. 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” (Ex. 9:23-25). While reading the above-mentioned verses in the daily readings earlier this year, some brethren and sisters in the west of England may have been reminded of the ferocious snowstorm which struck their area a few days previously across a hundred-mile front. This ‘thundersnow’ (as a thunderstorm in the snow can be termed) was the subject of two short articles by Paul Simons in his “Weather Eye” column in *The Times* of 29 and 30 January.

As an Arctic weather front moved rapidly south, it encountered much warmer air, and triggered extreme conditions: a large snowfall in a short time, and down-draughts on the gust front triggering ‘gustnados’ (similar to tornados, but less powerful), causing damage such as the spinning around by ninety degrees of a cargo plane at Guernsey airport. Paul Simons himself experienced this storm and reported: “intense flashes of blue lightning ripped through the blizzard like laser beams and sharp cracks of thunder bellowed out. It could have been a scene from a horror movie film . . . A massive burst of rain, snow, hail and graupel (snow pellets) fell”. Undoubtedly the storm which smashed into Egypt was considerably more severe and damaging, and so terrifying that it temporarily humbled even Pharaoh, who called for Moses and Aaron and said to them: “I have sinned this time: the LORD [Yahweh] is righteous, and I and my people are wicked” (v. 27). This is the same man who earlier had answered a request to let Israel go by saying: “Who is the LORD [Yahweh], that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD [Yahweh], neither will I let Israel go” (5:2).

Weather is certainly one of the ways in which God controls the nations today, as stated in Job 37:9-13: “Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering He wearieth the thick cloud: He scattereth His bright cloud: and it is turned round about by His counsels: that they may do whatsoever He commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it to come, *whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy*”. Indeed, when we experience extreme climatic conditions, we can identify with the words of the shepherd David, who wrote, “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that *Thou visitest him?*” (Ps. 8:3,4).
Russell Ebbs