

**Behold, at this time tomorrow I shall rain a very heavy hail...  
And now send, gather in your livestock and everything that  
you have in the field.... Whoever among the servants of  
Pharaoh feared the word of Hashem chased his servants and  
livestock into the house. (9:18,19,20)**

Egypt is a country where rain is rare and hail is virtually a climate phenomenon that does not occur. Thus, the plague of *barad*, hail, was unusual in that it would be a first for Egypt. Moshe's warning was unique, in that he told Pharaoh the exact time at which the plague would commence and warned him to inform his slaves to take cover in order to protect themselves and their property. The Torah commends those Egyptians who listened, referring to them as G-d-fearing. The plague of *barad* and the entire format of its descent onto the land of Egypt has an idiosyncratic format. First, why did Moshe *Rabbeinu* state an exact time for the hail to begin raining down on the country? Second, why grant the people the chance of circumventing damage to themselves and their livestock by giving them a warning to seek shelter? What value is a plague that does not inflict damage? Last, why would an Egyptian who listened to the warning and stayed inside be considered G-d-fearing? If anything, he possessed simple common sense. Every one of the previous warnings concerning an impending plague came to fruition. Why should this one be any different?

*Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita*, explains the uniqueness of *makas barad*. While Hashem sent all the other plagues as a punishment for not listening to Hashem, *barad* was different. Hashem wanted to teach the Egyptian people a lesson: *Shomer mitzvah lo yeida davar ra*; "He who obeys commandment will know no evil." (*Koheles* 8:5). Only if one listens to Hashem will he not be hurt. (Obviously, this requires further explanation.) An Egyptian who listened to Moshe and followed all the "prompts" was G-d-fearing. This means he went in and protected his valuables the day before, because running inside when the hail was coming down shows that one is scared for his life, not that he fears Hashem.

This plague was in a different league than the other nine plagues which wreaked havoc on the country and its people. This was a more "gentle" plague, because it gave the "faithful" the opportunity to demonstrate their conviction and ultimately be rewarded. Those who did not, were devastated with the full force of the plague. We wonder why *barad*, more so than any other plague, was selected to teach the Egyptians this lesson. It could very well have applied to the other plagues. Perhaps it was what comprised the physical makeup of the hail that created the difference. The commentators (cited in *Aleinu L'Shabaeiach*) teach that the hailstones which rained down on Egypt were created from an unusual source, a component which was poignant, as well as compelling: tears. When the Egyptians persecuted and tyrannized the Jewish People, they wept copious tears of pain, longing and hope. Hashem never allows a Jew's tear to go for naught. He saves every one, until one day He will make use of it – either for the sons of the individual who

shed those tears or for someone else in need. It is now understandable why this plague was used as the barometer for determining the Egyptians' level of *yiraas Shomayim*. Tears present a true expression of emotion. One does not fake true tears. Likewise, one does not simulate tears. Likewise, *yiraas Shomayim* is real, or it is not true *yiraas Shomayim*.