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“The Significance of the Seventh Plague.”

First Published in:
Biblica 76/4 (1995), 532-539.

The Significance of the Seventh Plague

Regarding biblical lists that contain ten items G. A. Rendsburg writes: "in the Bible where rosters of ten occur, special prominence is given to the entries listed in the seventh and tenth positions"⁽¹⁾. Rendsburg's short note dealt primarily with Genesis 15 and the appearance of the Amorites in seventh position in a list of nations. He also drew attention to the findings of other scholars concerning the use of the positions seven and ten in Genesis 5 (specifically with respect to Enoch and Noah) and Ruth 4,18-22 (with regard to Boaz and David)⁽²⁾.

While these observations are undoubtedly correct, their foci have been primarily on lists of nations and genealogical rosters. However, as will be demonstrated below, the device also occurs in narrative, in particular in the most famous of all series of tens: the plagues of Egypt.

Studies and commentaries have dealt with the plagues of Exodus from a wide variety of angles and are so numerous so as not to require recapitulation here. Suffice it to say that the importance of the tenth plague, the death of Egypt's first born, long has been understood as the most devastating of the plagues. It is with the tenth plague, specifically with the death of Pharaoh's son, that the story reaches its climax. Pharaoh finally concedes and releases the people Israel.

While the sense of climax that accompanies the tenth plague escapes few readers, the importance of the seventh plague has gone unnoticed. Rather, the seventh plague typically is viewed simply as part of one dramatic build-up incorporating plagues one through nine⁽³⁾. It is here where an awareness of the convention noted above comes into play. In what follows, I will present the evidence in support of the notion that the seventh plague, like the tenth, was intended to stand out in the narrative, that is, above the other eight.

As observed already by Rashbam and Abrabanel, and more recently by U. Cassuto, M. Greenberg, and N. Sarna, the account of the plagues occurs in a tripartite literary structure⁽⁴⁾. According to Sarna: "The

plagues are arranged in the form of three series of calamities comprising three afflictions in each series" (*Exodus*, 77). The first of each series begins with a time indication of warning (*Exod* 7,15; 8,16; 9,13), which happens to be in the morning, and with an instruction formula 'station yourself' employing the root *nsh*. As Greenberg notes⁽⁵⁾, the beginning of the third series, i.e., the seventh plague, contains an important variation on the formula. The first two series (first and fourth plagues) start: "Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Lo, he goes out to the water, and stand before him to confront him on the bank of the Nile" (*Exod* 7,15; compare 8,16). The seventh plague, however, omits "Lo, he goes out to the water" and "on the bank of the Nile"⁽⁶⁾. The author deviates from the expected order to suspend the reader's anticipation of the mention of water. It appears, of course, a few lines later in the form of hail⁽⁷⁾.

In addition to cues in the literary structure of the plague account, the importance of the seventh plague may be seen in that it is given the most verses of any plague except for the tenth⁽⁸⁾. Cassuto accounts for this by saying that since the seventh plague

is severer and more decisive than the earlier ones, the account of the plagues that it comprises is longer and fuller than that of the preceding plagues⁽⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ U. CASSUTO, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem 1967) 92-93; Greenberg, *Exodus*, 171; SARNA, *Exodus*, 76-77. See also COLLMAN, *Exodus*, 57; C. JOHNSON, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Chicago 1962) 57; F. B. MEYER, *Exodus: Chapters I-XX* (Edinburgh 1952) 117. Both S. R. DRIVER, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge 1911) 72-76; and J. P. HYATT, *New Century Bible Commentary: Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI. 1971) 117, attributed the structural differences to the hands of the assumed J, E, and P sources. D. MCCARTHY, "Moses' Dealings with Pharaoh: Ex 7,8-10,27", *CBQ* 27 (1965) 336-347 believed that the narrative is organized into two symmetrical groups of five. Some of these scholars, e.g., Cassuto, noted a secondary literary structure which operates simultaneously, namely, the pairing of the plagues into blood/frogs (both connected with the Nile), lice/flies (both insects), etc.

⁽²⁾ M. GREENBERG, "The Thematic Unity of Exodus III-XI", *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* vol. I (Jerusalem 1967) 151-154; see also *idem.*, *Exodus*, 188; and "The Redaction of the Plague Narrative in Exodus", *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. H. GOEDIKE; Baltimore 1971) 249. Greenberg, however, did not comment on the significance of the variation.

⁽³⁾ Two other variations on the formula may be noted in passing. In 7,15 the niph'al form *nissabta* "stand" is used. In 8,16 we get the hitpa'el *hitvassēb* "place yourself". In 7,15 the imperative of *lēk* "go" appears, but in 8,16 the high'il *haskēm* "rise up early" is used. It may also be argued that the expected water does not occur until 9,33, when rain first is mentioned as part of the storm. See already G. RAWLINSON, *Pulpit Commentary: Exodus* vol. I (Grand Rapids, MI. 1950) 220.

⁽⁴⁾ IBN EZRA seems to have questioned the purpose of this omission in his comment to *Exod* 9,13: "It is not mentioned in this place that he [Pharaoh] went out to the water; perhaps there is another reason for this".

⁽⁵⁾ The seventh is given 22 verses (*Exod* 9,13-35) and the tenth, 43 (*Exod* 11,1-12,33). This also was noted by CHILDS, *Exodus*, 158 and M. NOTI, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia 1962) 80. Greenberg noted only the length of the third triplet, not the plague pericope alone; see SARNA, *Exodus*, 176.

⁽⁶⁾ *Exodus*, 115. This formerly has been explained along the lines of COFFMAN, *Exodus*, 112: "Part of the reason (for its length) ... lies in the fact of God's taking pains to explain to Pharaoh why God had not already taken him off the face of the earth".

⁽¹⁾ "Notes on Genesis XV", *VT* 42 (1992) 269.

⁽²⁾ *Ibid.*, 271, n. 20, 292, n. 21.

⁽³⁾ For instance B. S. CHILDS, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia 1974) 160; N. M. SARNA, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York 1986) 77; J. B. COFFMAN, *Commentary on Exodus: The Second Book of Moses* (Abilene, TX 1985) 119. To my knowledge, the only scholar to recognize the double climax was M. GREENBERG, *Understanding Exodus* (New York 1969) 172, n. 1, though he did not offer an explanation thereof and he did not pursue the matter.

Similarly, the versions of the plagues given in Ps 68,42-51 and Ps 105,27-36 also devote more verses to the plague of hail than to any other. In addition to being given the most space, this scene also contains the longest uninterrupted divine monologue in the plague account: a total of seven (!) verses (Exod 9,13-19)¹⁰.

Further, it is with the seventh plague that we first are told that Pharaoh repents¹¹ of his deeds: "I have sinned this time. Yahweh is righteous¹², and I and my people are wicked" (9,27), and that he promises to let the Israelites go¹³. As J. Hayes and J.M. Miller note, in other ancient Near Eastern accounts of plagues it is usually "the gods rather than the humans who repent and reform after a plague"¹⁴. Here, the god-king Pharaoh, who would have appeared to the Egyptian masses as responsible for the plagues, repents¹⁵. Thus Pharaoh's repentance marks a turning point in the story¹⁶ by coming at a time when the reader may be expecting a cessation or completion of events, i.e., in the number seven slot¹⁷.

Moreover, as A. Berlin observes¹⁸, after Moses intercedes to stop the plague at Pharaoh's request, Pharaoh sees the temporary cessation of events in reverse order. Immediately after the narrator states that "the thunder and hail ceased, and rain did not pour down on the land" (9,33), Pharaoh observes that "the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased" and so "he continued sinning" (9,34)¹⁹. Elsewhere, either the phenomena are reported to Pharaoh in the order in which they occur, or Pharaoh's observations are not recorded, e.g. 8,27; 9,7; 10,19; 12,29.

¹⁰ Compare: plague one - 5 (7,14-18); plague two - 4 (7,26-29); plague three - 1 (8,12); plague four - 4 (8,16-19); plague five - 4 (9,1-4); plague six - 2 (9,8-9); plague eight - 1 (10,12); plague nine - 1 (10,21); plague ten - 2 (11,1-2).

¹¹ For the view that Pharaoh is not penitent see A. H. McNEILE, *The Book of Exodus* (London 1908) 56; Driver, *Exodus* 75. That he does appear penitent see M. POOLE, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. 1: *Genesis-Job* (McLean, Virginia 1980) 134.

¹² Moreover, as Ibn Ezra noted, the divine name appears in the mouth of Pharaoh only here; cf. Exod 9,28.

¹³ He does so again in 10,17.

¹⁴ J. HAYES and J.M. MILLER, *Israelite and Judaeon History* (Philadelphia 1977) 200.

¹⁵ HAYES and MILLER (*Ibid.*, 200), in my opinion, totally missed the point when they added: "This is certainly not the case with the plagues of Exodus 7-11". They questioned why, contrary to other ancient Near Eastern plague accounts, Yahweh does not repent. It is not the God Yahweh who is expected to repent here, but the god-king Pharaoh.

¹⁶ Indeed, as Ibn Ezra rightly noted, the reader is to connect the use of *pa'am* "time" in Exod 9,35 with its use earlier in Exod 9,14 where we read: "This time I will send all my plagues upon your heart..."

¹⁷ Similar to the seven days of creation (Gen 1,1-2,3).

¹⁸ A. BERLIN, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield 1983) 73.

¹⁹ BERLIN (*Ibid.*, 73), sees this as "a hint that Pharaoh has not yet got things straight; he does not see things the same way as Moses and the narrator do". Also W. J. MARTIN, "'Dischronologized' Narrative in the Old Testament", *Congress Volume Rome 1968* (SVT 17; Leiden 1969) 179-186.

In addition to literary markers, there are clues in the language which bespeak the heightened relevance of the seventh plague. Before the arrival of the hail and thunderstorms Moses repeats Yahweh's threat: "For I will at this time send *all* my plagues upon your heart and upon your servants, and upon your people, that you may know that there is none like me in *all* the earth" (Exod 9,14). According to Berlin the word "all" is a quantifier often used "to highlight an important event or theme in the narrative"²⁰. As only four plagues remain (including the seventh), the word "all" can serve no other purpose²¹. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 119) also notes a hyperbolic use of the word "all" in 9,25, where we are told that the hail devastated "*everything* that was in the field, *every* herb of the field, and *every* tree that was in the field". Moreover, as T. Fretheim remarks:

In terms of rhetoric, repetition is noteworthy, for example, the word *kōl*, "all", is pervasive, used over fifty times; it may provide an inter-pretive clue to the narrative. While in every plague, there is an explosion in its use...as one moves into the seventh plague. This is an extravagance of language, perhaps even a failure of language, in an effort to speak of the increasing intensity in the final plagues...²².

The same verse contains a significant variation on Yahweh's threats. Instead of stating, as is done for all previous plagues, "Yahweh will send upon *you* (i.e., upon the Pharaoh and upon Egypt) the particular plague, Yahweh thunders, "I will... send all my plagues upon *your heart*". After each of the previous plagues, we are told that the Pharaoh "hardened his heart" (Exod 7,22; 8,15; 9,12.35)²³. That Yahweh now aims the plague at Pharaoh's heart signals the importance and directness of the attack²⁴. This connection is cemented further by the nexus between Pharaoh's hardened (*kābēd*) heart and the hail which was "heavy" (*kābēd*) (Exod 7,14; 8,11.28; 9,7.18.24.34; 10,1)²⁵. In addition, unlike the hardening of Pharaoh's heart after other plagues, with the seventh, Yahweh hardens not only the heart of Pharaoh, but also the hearts of his servants (9,34)²⁶.

²⁰ *Poetics*, 105. See also COFFMAN, *Exodus*, 92, 112.

²¹ DRIVER (*Exodus*, 72) struggled with the "inconsistent" expression, suggesting the need for emendation. It is interesting to note that Rashi saw the phrase "all my plagues" as harkening to the most climactic of the plagues, the tenth: "We learn from here that the plague of the firstborn is balanced (of equal importance) against all other plagues (together)".

²² T. E. FRETHEIM, "The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster", *JBL* 110 (1991) 386.

²³ The formula also appears after the following four plagues: 10,20.27; 14,4.8. For the meaning of a "hardened heart" and its frequent use in the plagues account see SARNA, *Exodus*, 64; R. WILSON, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart", *CBQ* 41 (1979) 18-36; and H. RÄISÄNEN, *The Idea of Divine Hardening* (Helsinki 1972).

²⁴ This also was noticed by COFFMAN, *Exodus*, 112 and by POOLE, *A Commentary*, 133. Note the remark of McNEILE, *Exodus*, 54, that "the text may be corrupt".

²⁵ As noted by CASSUTO, *Exodus*, 122.

²⁶ Ibn Ezra noted the same, cf. Exod 9,30. It is also interesting to note that Cassuto (*Exodus*, 115) took this line as a reference to the tenth plague.

Furthermore, after each of the previous plagues we are told that despite the miraculous efforts of Moses, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. After six such hardenings on the part of God the reader quite naturally is forced to ask why. It is only here, immediately before the seventh, where an explanation is given: "Nevertheless, I have spared you for this purpose: in order to show you My power, and in order that My Name may resound throughout the world" (Exod 9,16)⁽²⁷⁾.

In 9,14 the pericope also contains a significant variation on the repeated admonition, "that you may know that there is none like Yahweh our God". In Greenberg's words it

is not out of place in the first triplet, and yet it is not as thematically significant as the analogous clause in 9:14. For the latter occurs in God's message at the head of a triplet, and is reiterated four times in the following narrative. This is not the case of the clause of 8:6, nor, again, of that of 9:29 (*Exodus*, 175, n. 1).

The placement of the warning immediately before the seventh plague is meant to heighten the expectation of relief, a relief befitting the number seven slot. The seventh plague also stands out by its peculiarly descriptive range of devastation. Greenberg remarks:

... the first triplet establishes God as a power beyond and other than the magic of Egypt, the second shows his presence in the land through a discriminating application of punishment, and the third gives scope to his power, more than anything that history has to tell (*Ibid.*, 175).

As G. Hort notes⁽²⁸⁾, unlike the others which are said to have struck either "upon all of Egypt" or "not upon the land of Goshen", the seventh is given a three-fold description of its range; i.e., "upon all of Egypt", "not upon the land of Goshen", and upon those in Egypt who did not regard the word of Yahweh (9,20-21,22,26).

Moreover, as the narrator tells us in 9,31, the seventh plague had most devastating repercussions: "the flax and the barley were smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled". This affected the production and export of Egypt's linen goods, for which it was famous, and upon which its economy depended⁽²⁹⁾. That the upper levels of Egyptian society, and especially the priestly class seldom wore any other kind of clothing⁽³⁰⁾ also suggests that the plague represented a direct attack upon the political and religious establishment. As C. Aling, among others, observes, the seventh plague

⁽²⁷⁾ It perhaps is also no coincidence that after the seventh plague the verb כָּבַד "harden" no longer occurs in reference to the "hardening" of Pharaoh's heart; cf. Exod 7,14,22; 8,11,15; 9,7,12,34,35; 10,1,20,27; 11,9; 13,15; 14,4,5,8,17.

⁽²⁸⁾ G. HORT, "The Plagues of Egypt", *ZAW* 69 (1957) 86.

⁽²⁹⁾ Prov 7,16, Ezek 27,7. See A. LUCAS, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (4th ed., London 1962) 143; C. F. ALING, *Egypt and the Bible from Earliest Times to 1000 B.C.* (Grand Rapids, MI 1981) 107; COFFMAN, *Exodus*, 117.

⁽³⁰⁾ HERODOTUS, 2,37.

may also be seen as an attack on the gods of Egypt who were considered responsible for that productivity, primarily Re and other solar deities, and Osiris, a god of the dead who was intimately connected with grain⁽³¹⁾.

Support for the importance of the seventh plague also comes from the fact that in a land where the threat of most of the mentioned plagues is always a possibility, the seventh plague would have appeared miraculous even to the Egyptians. As R. Stieglitz remarks:

In the case of the ten plagues in Exodus, the Bible portrays the pharaoh and his magicians and physicians confronted first by some plagues that were known previously — blood and frogs. Other plagues, however — hail and darkness — were unprecedented, and thus defied Egyptian understanding and experience⁽³²⁾.

Even if a periodic hail or thundershower could occur in Egypt⁽³³⁾, as some suggest⁽³⁴⁾, the seventh plague is twice recorded as greater than any other storm that had struck Egypt from its foundation to the present (9,18,24)⁽³⁵⁾.

The plague of hail is visibly important also in 9,23-26. Three points stand out in this section which suggest that the seventh plague held special importance. The first is the frequency with which we hear the word hail. In the entire pericope, the word hail occurs a total of fourteen times! No other plague is mentioned as often. Moreover, the word "hail" resounds later in the account of the next plague, locusts, where it appears three times in connection with the crops available to the insects (10,5,12,15).

We may take this a step further. Cassuto observes a deliberate and frequent use of the number seven in the plagues account. After the Nile becomes blood the narrator informs us: "And seven days were fulfilled after Yahweh had struck the Nile (7,25)". To Cassuto the number seven "serves to emphasize the principal word in the paragraph, namely the Nile,

⁽³¹⁾ *Egypt and the Bible*, 107. That the plagues represent judgments against the Egyptian gods is brought out further in Exod 12,12: "I will meet out punishments against all the gods of Egypt, I Yahweh". See also Num 33,4; Jer 46,25; Wisdom of Solomon 12,23-27; 16,1-14. As noted by SARNA, *Exodus*, 78. See also COFFMAN, *Exodus*, 115-116. For specific gods hypothesized see W. FIELDS, *Exploring Exodus* (Joplin, Missouri 1976) 211. References to the Egyptian gods need not be explicit. See G. A. REINSBURG, "Targum Onqelos to Exod. 10:5, 10:15, Numb. 22:5, 22:11", *Henech* 12 (1990) 15-17.

⁽³²⁾ R. STIEGLITZ, "Ancient Records and the Exodus Plagues", *BAR* 13/6 (1987) 49.

⁽³³⁾ Such as the abnormal flooding which struck Egypt in late 1994. See, e.g., "200 Egyptians Die When Blazing Fuel Floods Their Homes", *New York Times*, November 3, 1994 A, 1:1.

⁽³⁴⁾ G. HORT noted that the phenomenon is extremely infrequent. "The Plagues of Egypt (Part Two)", *ZAW* 70 (1958) 48. See also SARNA, *Exodus*, 78; POOLE, *A Commentary*, 134.

⁽³⁵⁾ A. COLF, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL 1973) 98, noted that the magnitude of the storm is the issue deemed to be the most important aspect of the passage.

which occurs fourteen times in the course of the paragraph "twice times seven" (*Exodus*, 100). The use of the number seven is extensive. The swarm of flies occurs in its pericope seven times⁽³⁶⁾. In the account of the seventh plague, the word "land" (*'erey*) appears seven times, the seventh of which occurs alongside Goshen⁽³⁷⁾. In the same paragraph, "field" (*sādeh*) appears seven times, and as mentioned above, "hail" (*bārād*) occurs fourteen times, twice times seven⁽³⁸⁾. According to Cassuto, the plagues account utilizes "a numerical schematism that finds expression in the mention of the name of a plague seven times (flies, locusts), or fourteen times (hail)" (*Exodus*, 135). He adds:

The tendency towards numerical patterns based on the number seven and on the sexagesimal system is observable throughout the section. In the first cycle, the names of the plagues occur 21 times—three times seven (blood 5 times, frogs 11, gnats 5) and with the paragraph pertaining to the crocodile (3 times), 24—twice times twelve; in the second cycle 12 times (swarms of flies 7, pest 1, boils 4); in the third cycle 24 (hail 14, locusts 7, darkness 3); in all 60 times. All this can hardly be fortuitous (*Ibid.*, 135).

The importance of the seventh plague, therefore, is in keeping with the symbolic use of the number seven within the narrative⁽³⁹⁾.

The third point which stands out in 9,23-26 is that in the ancient Near East, and especially in Egypt, fire and water (hail), were manifestations of the divine presence⁽⁴⁰⁾. Not only were there a number of "fiery" deities in Egypt, but the appearance of a god before a priest was accompanied by fire⁽⁴¹⁾. The Egyptians' reverence for water and its valuable properties perhaps was due to their dependence on the annual inundation of the Nile which influenced many aspects of their lives, e.g., their calendar, property value, food supply, etc.⁽⁴²⁾. The significance of the two elements in Egyptian daily and religious life, therefore, suggests that there is a great fitness and propriety in the Egyptians being punished by fire and water⁽⁴³⁾.

To the Israelites, fire and water represented Yahweh's wrath and judgement⁽⁴⁴⁾. Thunder and lightnings were present as signs of Yahweh's

⁽³⁶⁾ CASSUTO, *Exodus*, 110.

⁽³⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁽³⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁽³⁹⁾ See also G. R. DRIVER, "Sacred Numbers and Round Figures", *Promise and Fulfillment: Essays Presented to S.H. Hooke in Celebration of his Ninetieth Birthday* (ed. F. F. BRUCE; Edinburgh 1963) 62-90.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ E. HORNUNG, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (Ithaca, NY 1982) 197. Babylonian literature also speaks of water and fire as elements in the creative process; see, e.g., *Enuma Elish* 1:4-5, 96, 160 (concerning the creation of the world) II:50, 109; and *Gilgamesh* XI: 100-104 (concerning Marduk).

⁽⁴¹⁾ HORNUNG, *Ibid.*, 80, 197.

⁽⁴²⁾ B. WATFERTON, *The Gods of Ancient Egypt* (New York 1984) 29-30.

⁽⁴³⁾ The writer's apparent familiarity with Egyptian religion may imply that the text was redacted at a time when Israel had much contact with Egypt, e.g., during the Solomonic period. However, this is beyond the scope of this study.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ See M. ASTOUR, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden 1967) 212.

presence on Sinai (*Exod* 19,16). Elsewhere in the Bible, hail figures in theophanies and as signs of Yahweh's judgment (*Josh* 10,11; [with fire] *Ps* 18,13; 148,8; 2 *Sam* 22,8-16⁽⁴⁵⁾; *Job* 38,22; *Hag* 2,17; *Isa* 28,2,17; 30,30). Moreover, not only were fire and water present at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but as the later sages note, the creation of the world and the great deluge involved torrents mixed with fire⁽⁴⁶⁾. Water and fire, therefore, are theologically important symbols in the narrative.

Finally, the Rabbis who were responsible for the annual reading cycle of the Torah also seem to have recognized the importance of the seventh plague. Note that *פרשת וארא* ends at *Exod* 9,35 and that *פרשת בא* begins at *Exod* 11,1, i.e., the reading cycle places a division between the first seven plagues and the remaining three⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The cumulative evidence demonstrates that the plague of hail and thunderstorms, like the death of the first born, was understood as possessing special significance⁽⁴⁸⁾. As with other lists of ten, the importance of the plague was cued by placing it in the seventh position⁽⁴⁹⁾. This conclusion illustrates that the convention here discussed was not limited to genealogical lists and rosters of nations, but also was incorporated into the structure of the biblical narrative. Such an interpretation demonstrates once more how a holistic approach bears out the unity of the narrative⁽⁵⁰⁾. Regardless of what sources may underlie the account in the book of *Exodus*⁽⁵¹⁾, the finished product reflects an essential coherence with the inclusion of a deliberate rhetorical device, namely, the double climax, organized in accordance with the seven/ten literary convention⁽⁵²⁾.

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⁽⁴⁵⁾ For the Samuel passage as an allusion to the seventh plague, see M. GARSIEL, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies, and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan 1985) 49-50.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ See, e.g., *b.Zev* 113b; *b.Sanh* 108b; *b.RHSh* 129; *y.Sanh* 10, 29b.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ For a similar understanding of such text divisions, see G. A. RENDSBURG, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN 1986) 25.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Note that seven and ten also appear in magical formulae found in the Cairo Genizah. See, e.g., L. H. SCHIFFMAN, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1* (Sheffield 1992) 163.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ The author of the book of Revelation also appears to have recognized the device. Observe how the plague of *χάλαζα* "hail" appears in connection with the seventh seal (*Rev* 8,7) and the seventh angel (*Rev* 16,21).

⁽⁵⁰⁾ See similarly RENDSBURG, *The Redaction of Genesis*.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Since none of the assumed sources (J, E, P) contains all ten of the plagues one might question whether a final redactor accented the seventh. Given that we do not possess any independent witnesses to these sources, I opt to examine the text as it appears before us now and not as based on hypothetical reconstructions.

⁽⁵²⁾ For other numerical patterns in the plagues narrative, see A. M. CARTUN, "Who Knows Ten? The Structural and Symbolic Use of Numbers in the Ten Plagues: *Exodus* 7:14-13:16", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 45 (1991) 65-119.