

# Hailstorm

BY STEPHEN L. KNIGHT

*With the storm only minutes away, there was nothing we could do physically to save our crop.*



In 1974 my wife and I made a decision that dramatically altered our lifestyle. Although neither of us had ever lived on a farm, circumstances offered us the opportunity to move from our comfortable city life in Portland, Oregon, to a small farm 350 miles away.

In October of the following year, I found myself standing, for the very first time, on the platform of a combine, harvesting 140 acres of barley. To the occasional passerby on the nearby highway, there was nothing remarkable about that scene. I was simply one of dozens of farmers in that valley who was busily engaged in the annual harvest. Unknown to those passersby was the unique and sacred significance of our harvest and the divine intervention that had made it so plentiful.

It happened on a day in midsummer. The barley crop was thick and fully grown but still green. The heads of grain were full and fat. We had recently finished the final irrigation, and now all that remained before harvest was the ripening that would turn the fields from green to gold. The skies were cloudy that morning, but not unusually threatening—at least not until early afternoon, when the local radio station issued a warning that a severe hailstorm was headed our way.

Stepping outside, I looked in the direction of the storm. The extremely dark and massive nature of the clouds told me this storm would be a serious threat to our crop.

Within an hour it would be directly over our farm.

Because I had always lived in the city, I had never looked at a hailstorm as anything more than a novelty of nature. As a child I had enjoyed watching as hailstones bounced on the ground and settled in the grass, and I remember occasionally running outside to scoop them up in my hands. The hailstones of my childhood seemed so harmless, but I realized that this day I would not be enjoying them at all.

I wasn't experienced as a farmer. As evidence of this, it wasn't until that day that I learned I could have purchased crop insurance for protection against such a storm. But now it was too late, and I realized that if this fierce hailstorm struck our barley, it could shatter many heads of grain and scatter our family's only source of income onto the ground.

Our farm was a square of land that measured slightly less than one-half mile (about 800 meters) on each side. There is no physical way to protect such a large expanse. After discussing the situation, my wife and I concluded that we were facing a major threat to our crop and that there was nothing we could physically do about it. Prayer was our only hope. Gathering our little family around us—two sons, ages two and four, and our five-year-old daughter—we followed the counsel Amulek gave to the Zoramites: "Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them" (Alma 34:24).



I'm sure there had been times in our lives when we had offered heartfelt prayers—asking Heavenly Father to help us remember what we had studied so we would do well on exams or asking to be led by the Spirit in preparing an especially challenging Sunday School lesson. However, on those occasions we were asking for His aid *in addition to our own preparation.*

This situation was totally different. Here we were utterly helpless. Ours was a desperate plea for His mercy and protection. We told Him that this was our first season trying to make a living on this farm; much effort had gone into preparing the soil, planting the seed, fertilizing and irrigating; and now it appeared that a significant portion of our annual income could be lost.

It was a solemn moment when we concluded our prayer and stepped out into the calm that preceded the storm, which by then was only minutes away.

The dark wall of hail in the distance was frightening enough, but then came the noise. We could almost feel its violence, a frightful combination of rattling, rushing, and beating. When it reached our property line, the intimidating noise was everywhere.

We kept waiting for the hail, but there was none. Although we could hear the sounds of violent hail all around us, there was none to be seen—no hail, no rain, only noise.

Immediately after the dark clouds and noise had moved on, I drove to the opposite boundary of our property. The first thing I noticed was my neighbor's ground, thick with hailstones. Parking my truck, I walked from the neighbor's property into our barley, and after taking but a few steps I saw no hail at all. Further inspection confirmed that. With the exception of the extreme fringes of our land, it had not hailed on our crop. It was as if a giant protective canopy had been spread above our farm. We were witnesses to the reality of the Lord's blessings to us and of His hearing and answering our prayer.

Thirty years have passed, but the memory is as vivid as if it had happened yesterday. I can never speak of that miraculous event without a feeling of great reverence. On that day we were standing on holy ground. In moments of quiet pondering, I have come to realize that not only was our grain saved, but new, sacred seeds were planted in our hearts, especially in the hearts of our young children. These were seeds of testimony, producing the conviction that when we must face the dark storms of life, there is refuge in our God, the Father of us all, who does hear and answer prayers.

In the years since that marvelous day, our family has learned that our faith increases as we strive to keep the commandments, and with that faith we can confidently proclaim to God, "I will trust in thee forever" (2 Nephi 4:34). ■