

Amos 4:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Analysis

I have smitten you with blasting and mildew (הִקְרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּשִׁקְפָּן וּבְיָרָן) —hikketi etkhem bashshiddaphon uvayeraqon)—God announces agricultural judgment using two Hebrew terms: shiddaphon (שִׁקְפָּן, scorching east wind that withers crops) and yeraqon (יָרָן, literally "yellowness," blight or mildew). These covenant curses from Deuteronomy 28:22 devastated Israel's staple crops. The phrase **when your gardens and your vineyards... increased, the palmerworm devoured them** describes the cruel irony: just as crops multiplied, locust swarms (gazam, גָּזָם, a cutting locust species) destroyed them. God's hand orchestrated these judgments as disciplinary warnings.

The devastating refrain **yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD** (velo-shavtem adai ne'um-YHWH, וְלֹא־שָׁבְתָם עָדִי נָאָמַרְתָּה) condemns Israel's persistent impenitence. The verb shuv (שׁוּב, "return/repent") is covenant language for turning from rebellion back to God. Despite famine (4:6), drought (4:7-8), crop failure (4:9), plague and war (4:10), and near-total destruction (4:11), Israel refused to repent. This reveals the depth of human hardness—even catastrophic suffering doesn't automatically produce repentance. Only sovereign grace breaks stubborn hearts.

Historical Context

Amos prophesied during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), when Israel experienced territorial expansion and economic growth. Yet beneath the prosperity, spiritual rot festered. Chapter 4 catalogs judgments Israel had already experienced—not hypothetical future threats but recent calamities they had survived yet ignored. Agricultural disasters were particularly devastating in an agrarian society where crop failure meant famine and economic collapse. The "palmerworm" (probably locust) was one of several locust species that periodically swarmed ancient Near East, devouring vegetation. Joel 1-2 describes similar devastation. These judgments fulfilled Deuteronomy 28's covenant curses for disobedience.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Why doesn't suffering automatically produce repentance? What does this reveal about human nature?
2. How does God use adversity as disciplinary warning before final judgment?
3. What is the difference between enduring hardship stoically versus responding with genuine repentance?

Interlinear Text

הַכִּי תִּתְעַמֵּךְ	אַתָּכֶם	בְּשִׁׁבְעָה וְבְּמִלְדָּה	הַרְבָּה וְתַּזְמִינְךָ
I have smitten	H853	you with blasting	and mildew
H5221		H7711	H3420
גַּנְוֹתִיכֶם	וְתַּאֲגִינְכֶם	וְכַרְמִינְכֶם	וְזִיתִינְכֶם
when your gardens	and your vineyards	and your fig trees	and your olive trees
H1593	H3754	H8384	H2132
וְאַכְלָה	וְלֹא	שְׁבַתָּה	עַד
devoured	the palmerworm	them yet have ye not returned	
H398	H1501	H7725	H5704
נָאָמָה	יְהֹוָה:		
unto me saith	the LORD		
H5002	H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 28:22 (References Lord): The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.

Haggai 2:17 (References Lord): I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.

Joel 1:4 (Parallel theme): That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpiller eaten.

Amos 4:6 (References Lord): And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.