

Joel 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

Analysis

How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed (mah ne'enechah behemah nivoku edrei baqar)—Even animals suffer the consequences of human sin. 'Groan' (ne'enechah) and 'perplexed' (nivoku) personify animal distress. Romans 8:19-22 teaches that creation itself groans under sin's curse, awaiting redemption.

Because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate (ki ein lahem mir'eh gam-edrei ha-tson ne'shamu)—Locusts consumed all vegetation, leaving nothing for livestock. The Hebrew ne'shamu (made desolate) uses the same root as 1:17's 'garners are laid desolate,' emphasizing total devastation. Innocent animals suffer for human covenant-breaking—a sobering picture of sin's ripple effects through creation.

Historical Context

Israel's economy depended on mixed agriculture and pastoralism. Deuteronomy 8:7-9 promised a land of grain, vines, flocks, and herds. Locust plagues destroyed this integrated system. Historical records (e.g., Pliny's Natural History) document devastating locust swarms in the ancient Near East that could strip entire regions bare within days.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does animal suffering due to human sin illustrate the cosmic scope of the fall?
2. What does creation's 'groaning' (Romans 8:22) teach about God's plan to redeem not just souls but all creation?
3. Where do you see innocent parties suffering consequences of others' sins, and how does this point to Christ's substitutionary atonement?

Interlinear Text

כִּי בְּקָר עֲדָלָה תְּבִנָּה אֲנָטוּ הַמָּה
H4100 groan H929 How do the beasts are perplexed H943 the herds H5739 of cattle H3588 H1241

לְאֵין מִרְאֵץ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ יְלָמַד עֲדָלָה תְּבִנָּה
H369 because they have no pasture H4829 H1992 H1571 the herds H5739 of sheep H6629

בְּאֶשְׁמָה:
are made desolate
H816

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 12:4 (Parallel theme): How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.

Hosea 4:3 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

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