

Joel 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

Analysis

Neither shall one thrust another (Hebrew *ve'ish achiv lo yidchaqun*, אֲיַשׁ אֶחָיו לֹא יִדְחָקָעַ)—*dachaq* (דָּחַק, "thrust/push/crowd") describes jostling or shoving. Despite the massive swarm's density, individual locusts don't collide or impede each other. The phrase *ish achiv* ("each his brother") emphasizes this remarkable coordination—as though they're brothers working in perfect harmony rather than mindless insects. This supernatural order demonstrates divine orchestration.

They shall walk every one in his path (Hebrew *gever bimesillato yelekun*, גֵּרֶר בִּמְسִלָּתוֹ יֵלְקָעַן)—*gever* (גֵּרֶר, "man/warrior") emphasizes strength and masculinity, reinforcing military imagery. *Mesillah* (מְסִלָּה) means highway, pathway, or course—each locust has an assigned route from which it doesn't deviate. *Halak* (הַלָּךְ, "walk") continues the military march imagery. This phrase parallels verse 7's description of maintaining ranks—perfect discipline without collision or confusion.

And when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded (Hebrew *uve'ad hashelach yippolu lo yivtsa'u*, וְבָעֵד הַשְׁלָחֵךְ יִפְלֹא לֹא יִבְצַעֵוּ—this phrase is textually difficult. The KJV renders *shelach* (שְׁלָחֵךְ, "weapon/missile/sword") as "sword," though some translations render it "missiles" or "javelins." *Naphal* (נִפְלָא) "fall") means to fall upon, attack, or charge. *Batsa* (בְּצַעַ, "wound/cut off") in the niphil form (*yivtsa'u*) means to be cut off or broken. The meaning: even when locusts encounter weapons or defensive measures, they aren't stopped. Some

individuals may die, but the swarm continues undeterred—they're effectively invulnerable as collective force.

Historical Context

Ancient attempts to stop locust plagues included fire, smoke, trenches, and physical barriers—all ultimately futile against swarms numbering in billions. While individuals could be killed, the swarm overwhelmed defenses. Modern locust control uses pesticides and early detection, but even with technology, complete prevention remains difficult. Ancient peoples facing locust plagues without modern tools could only watch helplessly as crops were devoured.

Joel's description of weapons proving ineffective parallels military conquest imagery. When God sends judgment, human defenses fail. Jeremiah warned Jerusalem that resistance against Babylon was futile because God ordained the conquest (Jeremiah 21:3-10, 27:6-8). Similarly, Jesus warned that resisting Rome would result in destruction (Luke 19:41-44, 21:20-24)—exactly what occurred in AD 70. The principle: when God executes judgment, all human opposition proves vain.

The phrase "they shall not be wounded" (or "broken") uses language elsewhere applied to covenant curses. Leviticus 26:26 warns that in judgment "ye shall eat, and not be satisfied"—similarly, Joel describes invaders that cannot be stopped or broken. This language reverses covenant blessings where God promises to "break the yoke" of enemies (Leviticus 26:13). Now, in judgment, the enemy's advance cannot be broken. This demonstrates *lex talionis*—measure-for-measure justice where covenant breakers experience covenant curses.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the locusts' invulnerability to weapons teach about the futility of resisting God's ordained judgments?
2. How should recognition that God's purposes cannot be thwarted affect your response to divine discipline in your life?
3. In what ways do people today attempt to defend against God's judgments through human means (technology, wealth, military power)?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹכֶד וְלֹא בְּמַסְלָתָה זוּ	וְלֹא אֲחֵר יָדַק וְלֹא בְּבָרְךָ וְלֹא יָשַׁב	בְּמַסְלָתָה זוּ	בְּמַסְלָתָה זוּ
Neither shall one	another	H3808	thrust
H376	H251		H1766
every one	in his path	H1397	
		H4546	H1980
וְלֹא יִפְנַץ לְחֵם וְלֹא יִכְעַד	וְלֹא יִפְנַץ לְחֵם וְלֹא יִכְעַד	וְלֹא יִפְנַץ לְחֵם וְלֹא יִכְעַד	וְלֹא יִפְנַץ לְחֵם וְלֹא יִכְעַד
upon the sword	and when they fall	H3808	they shall not be wounded
H1157	H7973		H1214

Additional Cross-References

Job 33:18 (Word): He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

2 Chronicles 32:5 (Parallel theme): Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.