

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*, וְאִישׁ אָחִיו לֹא יִדְחָקוּן)—*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*, גֶּוֶר בְּמִסְלָתוֹ יֵלֶכֶן)—*gever* (גֶּוֶר, "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* (הָלַךְ, "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 הַשֶּׁלַח יִפְּלוּ לֹא יִבָּצְעוּ)—this phrase is textually difficult. The KJV renders *shelach* (שֶׁלַח, "weapon/missile/sword") as "sword," though some translations render it "missiles" or "javelins." *Naphal* (נָפַל, "fall") means to fall upon, attack, or charge. *Batsa* (בָּצַע, "wound/cut off") in the niph'al 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

וְאֵין יֵשׁ	אֲחֵיוֹ	לֹא	יִדְחֶק וְ	כָּל	בְּמַסְלַת וְ	יֵלֵךְ וְ
Neither shall one	another		thrust	every one	in his path	
H376	H251	H3808	H1766	H1397	H4546	H1980
וְכַעַד ד	הַשֵּׁלַח	וְכַעַד ד	לֹא	וְכַעַד ד	וְכַעַד ד	וְכַעַד ד
H1157	upon the sword	and when they fall		they shall not be wounded		
	H7973	H5307	H3808	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.