

Psalms 147:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.

Analysis

He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. The psalmist now illustrates God's swift word (v. 15) through weather phenomena. The Hebrew hanoten sheleg katzamer (הַנֹּתֵן שֵׁלֶג תְּצַמֵּר) compares "snow" (sheleg, שֵׁלֶג) to "wool" (tzamer, תְּצִמֵּר)—both white, soft, and insulating. Wool was familiar to shepherding culture; the comparison emphasizes God's gentle provision even through winter's harshness. Snow insulates ground, provides moisture for spring growth, and demonstrates divine artistry in creation's diversity.

The second image, "**hoarfrost like ashes**" (kefor ka'efer yefazzer, כְּפֹר קָאֵפֶר יְפָזֵז), uses kefor (כְּפֹר), the white frost that forms on cold mornings. The verb yefazzer (scatter, sprinkle) portrays God distributing frost as one scatters ashes—the fine, powdery texture covering surfaces. Both images emphasize God's sovereign control over minute details of weather—every snowflake, every frost crystal originates from His creative word.

Job 37:6-10 and 38:22-23, 28-30 explore similar themes, asking "Who is the father of rain? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice?" These rhetorical questions establish that only God creates and commands these phenomena. What humans observe as natural processes, Scripture attributes directly to divine agency. Modern meteorology explains mechanisms; Scripture identifies the ultimate Cause behind all secondary causes.

Historical Context

Palestine's climate includes cold winters in highland regions, with occasional snow in Jerusalem and regular frost. These weather events, while not as severe as northern climates, were significant for agriculture—moisture from winter precipitation enabled spring and summer crops. The comparison to wool and ashes used everyday materials familiar to the psalmist's audience, making abstract divine power concrete and relatable.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does viewing weather phenomena as God's direct action (rather than impersonal natural processes) affect your daily awareness of His presence?
2. What 'small' details in your life might God be orchestrating with the same care He gives to individual snowflakes and frost crystals?
3. How can observing creation's intricacy lead to deeper worship and trust in God's providential care?

Interlinear Text

יְפִירָה:	לֹא	לֹא	שֶׁ	לֹא	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי
He giveth	snow	like wool	the hoarfrost	like ashes		he scattereth					
H5414	H7950	H6785	H3713	H665		H6340					

Additional Cross-References

Job 37:6 (Parallel theme): For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength.

Job 38:29 (Parallel theme): Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?

Psalms 148:8 (Parallel theme): Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: