

Psalms 78:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.

Analysis

He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. Yěḇûl (יְבוּל, "increase") means produce or harvest—the fruit of their agricultural labor. Ḥāsîl (חֲסִיל, "caterpillar") is likely a locust larva, while 'arbe (אַרְבֵּה, "locust") is the adult stage. Together they represent total agricultural devastation at every growth stage.

"Their labour" (yěḡî'ām, עֲמָלָם) emphasizes human toil and sweat—an entire year's work consumed in hours. This plague (Exodus 10:1-20) fulfilled covenant curse language: "Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in" (Deuteronomy 28:38). Egypt experienced what Israel would later face for covenant breaking.

The plague exposed the futility of labor apart from God's blessing. What humans build, plant, or produce exists at God's pleasure. He gives, and He can give to others—even insects. This cultivates dependence on divine providence rather than human industry alone.

Historical Context

Locust plagues were (and remain) devastating in the ancient Near East. A single swarm could contain billions of insects, darkening the sky and stripping all vegetation in hours. Egypt's breadbasket economy depended on grain crops—this plague threatened starvation.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How might God be using "locusts" (setbacks, losses) to teach you dependence on Him rather than your own labor?
2. What does it mean that all "increase" ultimately comes from God, not human effort?
3. How should awareness that God can give your labor's fruit to others affect your stewardship?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּן	לְחֶסֶל יל	יְבוּלָם	וְיִגִּיעַם	לְאַרְבֵּה:
He gave	unto the caterpillar	also their increase	and their labour	unto the locust
H5414	H2625	H2981	H3018	H697

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