

# Cursed is the Ground Because of You, Through Painful Toil You Will Eat of It

## 3: 17-19

**DIG:** How was Adam cursed? Which punishment would have been the most difficult for Adam? Why? What is the law of entropy? What does it have to do with the curse?

**REFLECT:** How has Adam's sin affected all of mankind today? How is the curse evident in your life today? Which part of the curse affects you the most today?

Adam would now meet the full force of the consequences of his sin in the **curse** and **death**. Because Adam listened to his wife and ate fruit from the tree about which God commanded him not to eat, a curse is placed on Adam, mankind and all of creation. Before the Fall, the ground had cooperated with man as he worked the ground (2:5, 15). But now it became reluctant to yield its food. Instead it began to yield thorns and thistles, requiring toil, sweat and tears before man could eat his food. And finally, in spite of all his struggle, death would triumph and man's body would return to the dust from which it was taken.<sup>69</sup>

Adam's sin was that he ate (3:6, 12, 17a). In response to that, Elohim speaks to him five times about eating in this section. This parallels the penalty on the snake: you will eat dust all the days of your life (3:14). In the same way, God's penalty of pain would be experienced by both Adam (3:17b) and Eve (3:16). The same Hebrew root word *etsev*, is used in both verses and occurs only three times in the TaNaKh, 3:16-17b and 5:29. For Adam the pain will be in gathering food and for Eve the pain will be in childbirth. But Adam's sin is far more pervasive than that. He is responsible for the present human condition.

**God placed a curse on Adam.** When Adam hid from Elohim he felt guilty because he had a sense of condemnation. Then God said: Cursed is the ground because of you (3:17b). Rabbi Sha'ul would write: The creation waits in eager expectation for the Lord to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration or futility (*mataiotes*), not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time (Romans 8:19-22).

Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food (3:17b-19a). Before the Fall there were no weeds, thorns or thistles to cause man pain. However, now **the ground** is frustrated because it is unable to achieve its original purpose. No part of nature exists as it was originally. Despite **the curse**, however, much of **God's** beauty remains. And because of that, no one has an excuse for not believing in **God (Romans 1:20)**. But **the earth's** destiny is connected to **mans'**. Rabbi Sha'ul says there is **hope** even for **creation itself**, which **will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21)**. Just as **mans'** sin brought **bondage and decay to the earth**, **mans'** restoration to a right standing before **Elohim** will also bring restoration to **the earth**. **Man** and **his** environment will once again be as **God** intended.

The rabbis teach that man was cursed with ten curses, just as the serpent and the woman were. First, his stature was reduced and he was shorter. Second, there was weakness after ejaculation. Third, there were thorns and thistles. Fourth, there was the anguish of earning a living. Fifth, the earth was cursed so that only grass would grow for mankind to eat. However, Adam complained about eating grass, so the fifth curse was replaced by the sixth curse, which was that sweat would be associated with work. Seventh, before he was too handsome to look upon, but now others could look upon him. Eighth, the serpent's hands and feet were cut off so that it could no longer be a useful worker for him. Ninth, mans' expulsion from the Garden. And tenth, death and burial into the ground.

In physics, the law of entropy refers to the constant and irreversible degradation of matter and energy in the universe to increasing disorder. That scientific law clearly contradicts the theory of evolution, which is based on the premise that the natural world is inclined to continual self-improvement. But it is evident even in a simple garden plot that, when it is untended, it deteriorates. Weeds and other undesirable plants will choke out the good ones. The natural bent of the universe - whether of humans, animals, plants, or the inanimate elements of **the earth** and heavens - is obviously and demonstrably downward, not upward. It could not be otherwise while the world remains in **bondage to the decay** of sin.<sup>70</sup> But one day the **groaning** and suffering of **the earth** will end. In the meantime, like Eve, whose sin brought **the curse** of painful childbirth, **the earth** itself endures its own kind of labor pains **right up to the present time**. But **the curse** reached much further, and Moshe will now mention the most obvious aspect of it.<sup>71</sup>

**The curse was ultimately a death sentence.** God spoke the truth when He said: **For when you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you will surely die (2:17).** Physical death is separation of the person, the spirit, and the soul from the body. **The Lord God said man would labor until he returned to the ground, since from it we were all taken. For dust we were and to dust we will return (3:19b).** Solomon wrote: **the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7).** We must ultimately answer to **ADONAI**. Whether we are saved or lost, we are going to have to answer to **Him**. **Adam** did not **die** physically the day **he ate**. **He** did not **die** until more than nine hundred years later. However, **he** did **die spiritually** the moment **he** disobeyed. **He** was separated from **God**. That's what **death** is, separation. Rabbi Sha'ul would write to the church at Colosse that they were **dead in their sins (Colossians 2:13)**. By that **he** did not mean that they were **dead** physically; they were **dead spiritually**, separated from **Elohim** and all love. That is **death**. But there is good news. **Jesus** said to Martha: **I AM the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die. Do you believe this (John 11:25)?**<sup>72</sup> Next we will see how **God** provided a proper sacrifice for **them**.