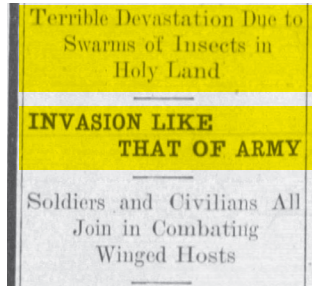


JOEL LESSON SEVEN



For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white. ... The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes. (Joel 1:6-7, 10)



Orange growers and owners of olive groves in Southern California will not this winter have to meet the competition of Syria in the eastern markets. Reports received through the bureau of foreign and domestic commerce at Washington, D. C., indicate that swarms of locusts have almost completely destroyed all forms of vegetation in northern Syria. Rev. Otis A. Glazebrook, American consul at Jerusalem, has forwarded to the department at Washington the following account of the great invasion:

"The recent devastation by locusts in Palestine will have disastrous effect on the people of the country whose sustenance is thus so largely destroyed. I have had to depend upon outside sources for some of this information, but the actual invasion, the result of the devastation, and the work of protection I have seen with my own eyes, and have aided in the latter by my personal assistance and advice. It is not an overdrawn metaphor to describe this inroad as an invasion. Truly the onward march of the serried ranks of the devastating insects was 'more terrible than an army with banners.' As far as the eye could reach the fields were covered by the locusts, and even the street in front of the American consulate had the appearance in the movement of the green and black mass of a flowing river.

"Such locust invasions are not unusual phenomena in Palestine. The last general and destructive visitation of the locusts occurred in 1865. Since then they have reappeared at different times in smaller numbers and limited areas, the last of these being some eleven years ago, but undoubtedly the disaster caused by the present visitation is not only greater and more general, but more profoundly felt than any in the recollection of the present generation.

Advance Swarms of Adults

"On February 28, 1915, the first swarms of adult locusts were seen in the bordering 'Judean Wilderness,' but it was not until the early part of March that they flew over and past Jerusalem. These adults did little damage, but being of the largest and most devouring species of all migratory locusts (*Schistocerca peregrina*), the same kind alluded to in that graphic of all descriptions of such ravages the property of Joel apprehensions were grave that the result would be most disastrous. These results have been fully realized.

"As soon as the news of the locust invasion reached his excellency, Djemal Pasha, Ottoman minister of the navy and commander of the fourth army, he vigorously grappled with the situation. He appointed a central commission to fight the locusts under the presidency of his excellency, Midhat Bey, governor of Jerusalem. The field which the commission was to cover were the sandjak of Jerusalem and the vilayets of Beirut and Damascus, and this commission was officially attached to the headquarters of the fourth army at Jerusalem. Dr. Aaron Aaronsohn, who is well known to the department of agriculture at Washington, was appointed high commissioner for the above mentioned provinces. This appointment promised well, as the doctor is one of the most scientific men in Syria and director of the Jewish Agricultural Experiment Station of Palestine.

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People Will Suffer

"In spite of all this fighting of the larvae instances are very rare where the results were satisfactory. Few crops or orchards escaped devastation. This was especially true on the Plain of Sharon, where the Jewish and German colonies, with their beautiful orange gardens, vineyards, and orchards suffered most severely. The only exception was the orange gardens in Jaffa proper, which, doubtless, owed their immunity to the sea breezes. In the lowlands there was a complete destruction of the summer crops, such as garden vegetables, melons, apricots and grapes, for all of which the plain between Jerusalem and Jaffa is renowned and upon whose supply the Jerusalem markets depend. The result is that there are few vegetables or fruits to be had in the markets, and such as appear command an almost prohibitive price.

"In the mountain district, notably about Jerusalem and Hebron, the heaviest loss from the onslaught of the locusts has been in connection with the olive groves and vineyards. Olive oil is a staple of food among the peasants and poorer classes, taking the place of meat. The grape, too, is a similar staple among all classes. The loss of this crop will be most keenly felt. This year, especially on account of the almost entire absence of sugar, now selling when obtainable, at a fabulous price, the grape crop was counted upon as a substitute from which 'dibs,' a kind of molasses, and divers kinds of jams are made without the use of sugar.

"Strange to relate, storks, which were always looked upon as the most effective enemy of the locusts, this year seemed to have been proportionately too few to have a perceptible effect upon them. The common house sparrow and domestic fowls doubtless have devoured quantities of them, but here again the invading host was so tremendous that this natural help was not noticeable."