

it is worth remembering that we can be viewed as being the same as secular evangelists such as Professor Dawkins: people with a mind set diametrically opposed to the 'other side', engaged in a dialogue of the deaf. Whilst never moving from our steadfast beliefs, as genetics and other

issues throw up more and more challenges to our beliefs we nevertheless should be seen to engage with the debate. I believe Brother Walker's article achieved this.

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The locust

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The locust occurs many times in Scripture, perhaps more times than most of us realise. *Arbeh*, *gazam* (palmerworm), *geb*, *gob*, *chagab* (all translated 'grasshopper' or 'locust' in the AV), *chargol* (beetle) *chasil* (caterpillar), *yeleq* (cankerworm), *solam*, *tselatsal* in Hebrew, and *akris* in Greek, are all different names for the locust in the various stages of its life cycle and possibly either of the common species of locust, the migratory and the desert. Below are the ones mentioned in the Bible and the AV translations. Quite obviously the translators were unaware of the different stages of the life cycle of the locust, and thought the Hebrew words indicated some other insect.

- *arbeh*—probably the migratory locust. A mature locust (translated 'grasshopper' four times and locust twenty)
- *geb*—locust (Isaiah 33:4; used only once)
- *gob*—locust. From the root *gbh*, meaning 'to come forth out of the ground'. Locusts do in fact lay their eggs in the ground ('grasshopper' twice)

- *gazam*—a locust with short wings that is not yet able to fly ('palmerworm' three times)
- *chagab*—locust, winged, edible, covering the ground; can signify a leaper ('grasshopper' four times, 'locust' once)
- *chargol*—from a root meaning 'leaping'. A winged and edible form of locust ('beetle' once)
- *chasil*—devourer, a pinkish stage of the larvae ('caterpillar' six times)
- *yeleq*—a feeder, probably the first stage of the larvae ('cankerworm' six times, 'caterpillar' three)
- *solam*—winged locust, from a root meaning to swallow down ('bald locust' once)
- *tselatsal*—a strident insect, grasshopper, cricket ('locust', 'shadowing' and 'spear' once each)
- *akris*—locust.

Migratory locusts are highly mobile, and usually fly with the wind at a speed of about 15–20 kilometres per hour. Swarms can travel 5 to 130 kilometres or more in a day. Locust swarms can vary from less than one square kilometre to several hundred square kilometres, with 40 to 80 million locusts per square kilometre. A swarm can hold as many as 2,000 million insects.

Desert locusts can consume the approximate equivalent of their body mass each day (2g) in green vegetation: leaves, flowers, bark, stems, fruit and seeds. Nearly all crops and non-crop plants are at risk, including millet, rice, maize, sorghum, sugarcane, barley, cotton, fruit trees, date palm, vegetables, rangeland grasses, acacia, pines and bananas. They can fly at 20 kilometres per hour and travel up to 2,000 kilometres without stopping.

Locusts usually live as solitary insects, but under certain conditions they release a pheromone (a



The migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria*).



Locusts being used as food in ancient times. The second bearer carries two strings of pomegranates.

chemical signal) which causes them to be attracted to one another, and then they form a swarm. Usually in ancient times they were cooked with butter or honey, and according to some sources the heads and legs were removed before cooking. No doubt this is how John the Baptist prepared his food. There is no evidence whatever to support the idea that John's food was a locust bean rather than the insect.

The locust was a clean food item under the Law of Moses. It is a vegetarian, but most importantly it does not creep on its belly like many insects but walks on its four front legs, using its hind pair of legs to leap upwards (Lev. 11:21). This characteristic symbolises aspiring to the Kingdom rather than to the things of the world: "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven . . ." (Lk. 6:23). Again, in Acts 3:8 the lame man who was cured at the hands of Peter leaped as he stood up, and leaped again as he entered the temple, which was symbolic of the resurrection and those who are worthy of entering the Kingdom.