

The Curse of Genesis 3:17-19 Is Upon Agriculture Not Animals¹

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; **cursed is the ground** because of you; **In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;** And you will eat the plants of the field; **By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**" (Gen 3:17-19)

It is the ground that is cursed.

"Cursed is the ground because of you." (Gen 3:17)

Genesis 3:17b-19 and 5:29 clarify that this refers to how difficult it will be for humans to raise crops. These verses say nothing about animals, and all of their statements refer specifically to human toil.

"In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, till you return to the ground," (Gen 3:17b-19a)

"Now he [Lamech] called his name Noah, saying, 'This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed.'" (Gen 5:29)

The specific reference in 3:17-19 to human toil in agriculture (the sphere in which man will work; Genesis 3:23) is parallel to the punishment for the woman in Genesis 3:16: pain in her area of specialization; childbearing and marriage.

"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.'" (Gen 3:16)

¹ Adapted from John Beckman.