
יִאֵל • JOEL

INTRODUCTION

The *Book of Joel* falls naturally into two parts. In the first, an invasion of locusts lays Judah waste, calling for a religious ceremony of lamentation and prayer. To this, Yahweh replies by promising the cessation of the plague and the return of prosperity (1:2-2:27). The second part describes, in apocalyptic style, the judgement on the nations and the final triumph of Yahweh and of Israel (3:1-4:21). The unity of the two parts is maintained by reference to the Day of Yahweh, the actual theme of Chs 3-4 but already mentioned in 1:15, 2:1-2:11. The locusts are Yahweh's army, sent to execute his sentence, a Day of Yahweh from which repentance and prayer offer the means of deliverance; the plague becomes a figure of the great, last judgement – the Day of Yahweh – to usher in the eschatological age.

The book's links with public worship are obvious; Chs 1-2 have the characteristics of a penitential liturgy, ending with the prophetic promise of divine forgiveness. Hence, the theory has been advanced that Joel was a cultic prophet attached to the ministry of the Temple. These characteristics may, however, may be accounted for as a literary imitation of liturgical forms. The book is *not* a transcript of a sermon given in the Temple, but a written composition intended to be read. It marks the end of the prophetic movement.

In the *Masoretic Text*, the *Book of Joel* is between Hosea and Amos (it is the 2nd of the 12 'Minor Prophets') but, in the *Septuagint*, it occurs between Micah and Obadiah. Fragments containing parts of the book can be found in the *Qumran MSS*, 4Q78 (4QXII^c) & 4Q82 (4QXII^g).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

The dates of Joel's ministry cannot be determined with precision. The majority of historical references in his book, the absence of any mention of the Assyrians or Babylonians, and the heavy borrowing from earlier prophets point to the period from about 400 to 350 BCE. There is no evidence for postulating two authors or two periods of composition.

Of Joel himself, nothing is known except that he was the son of Pethuel (1:1). Like Obadiah, even his name ('Yahweh is God') is not unique; for, he shares it with a dozen other Old Testament figures. From his book, it appears that he lived in Judah during the Persian Period of Jewish history (539-331 BCE). He was not only well acquainted with the Temple at Jerusalem but was so much interested in its priesthood and services that, like Haggai and Zechariah, he can be considered a 'cultic prophet' – one who could exercise his ministry within the life of the Temple, even using liturgical forms, and whose message may have been transmitted through priestly circles.

יואל פרק א

דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־יוֹאֵל בֶּן־פֶּתוּאֵל:

ב שִׁמְעוּ־זאת הַזְקֵנִים וְהֶאֱזִינוּ

כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ

הַהִיְתָה זֹאת בְּיָמֵיכֶם

וְאִם בְּיָמֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם:

ג עֲלִיָּה לְבָנֵיכֶם סִפְרוּ

וּבְנֵיכֶם לְבָנֵיהֶם

וּבְנֵיהֶם לְדוֹר אַחֵר:

ד יֵתֵר הַגָּזֵם אֲכָל הָאֲרֵבָה

וְיֵתֵר הָאֲרֵבָה אֲכָל הַיֵּלֶק

וְיֵתֵר הַיֵּלֶק אֲכָל הַחֶסֶל:

ה הִקִּיצוּ שֹׁכְרִים וּבָבוּ

וְהִילְלוּ כָּל־שְׁתֵי יַיִן

עַל־עֵסִים כִּי נִכְרַת מִפִּיכֶם:

ו כִּי־גוֹי עָלָה עַל־אֶרְצִי

JOEL 1

¹ The word of Yahweh that came to Joel son of Pethuel:

² Listen to this, you elders;

everybody in the country, attend!

Has anything like this ever happened in your day,

or in your fathers' days?

³ Tell your sons about it

and let your sons tell their sons,

and their sons the next generation!

⁴ What the nibbler has left, the grown locust has eaten;

what the grown locust has left, the hopper has eaten,

and what the hopper has left, the destroyer has eaten.

⁵ Wake up, you drunkards, and weep!

All you winebibbers lament

for the new wine: it has been snatched from your lips.

⁶ For, a nation has invaded my country,

JOEL 1

¹ 'Pethuel' does not appear elsewhere in the Bible.

² 'Elders' here refers not necessarily to men advanced in years, but to leaders within the community.

³ The NJB has 'children' in place of 'sons' (4 times in this verse).

⁴ Of the 4 terms used here for locust, 'grown locust' (אֲרֵבָה) is the commonest, indicating the species as a whole. The meaning of the other 3 is disputed; either they are various subspecies or, more probably, successive stages of growth: 'hopper' (יֵלֶק), 'destroyer' (חֶסֶל) & 'nibbler' (גָּזֵם).

⁵ The word 'drunkards' has a double-edge here: those accustomed to drinking too much must now lament the unavailability of wine; it may also hint that the people in general have become religiously inebriated and are unresponsive to Yahweh.

⁶ As becomes increasingly clear in what follows, this 'nation' is to be understood figuratively.

עָצוּם וְאֵין מִסְפָּר		mighty and innumerable,
שְׁנֵי שָׁנֵי אַרְיָה		with teeth like a lion's teeth,
וּמִתְלַעֲזוֹת לְבִיא לְוֹ:		with the fangs of a lioness.
שֵׁם גַּפְנֵי לְשֹׁמֵה	ז	7 It has reduced my vines to desolation
וּתְאֲנָתֵי לְקִצְפָּה		and my fig trees to splinters,
חֲשׂוֹף חֲשֵׁפָה וְהַשְׁלִיךְ		stripped them and broken them down,
הַלְבִּינוּ שְׂרִיגֶיהָ:		leaving their branches white.
אֵלַי כְּבַתּוּלָה חֲגֵרֶת־שֹׁק	ח	8 Mourn, as a virgin bride in sackcloth
עַל־בַּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ:		for the bridegroom of her youth!
הַכֶּרֶת מִנַּחֶה וּנְסֹךְ	ט	9 Cereal offering and libation
מִבַּיִת יְהוָה		are lost to Yahweh's Temple.
אֲבָלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים		The priests are in mourning,
מִשְׂרָתֵי יְהוָה:		the ministers of Yahweh.
שָׂדֵד שָׂדֵה	י	10 The fields are ruined,
אֲבָלָה אֲדָמָה		the land is in mourning,
כִּי שָׂדֵד דָּגָן		for the grain has been ruined,
הַזֹּבִישׁ תִּירוֹשׁ אֲמָלֵל יִצְהָר:		the new wine has failed, and of olive oil, there is only a trickle.
הַבִּישׁוּ אֲפָרִים הִילִילוּ כְרָמִים	יא	11 Stand dismayed, you farmers, wail, you vinedressers,
עַל־חֲטָה וְעַל־שְׂעֵרָה		for the wheat and for the barley!

7 The 3rd line has been corrected, following the *NJB*; the *MT* has 'he will certainly strip them and break them down'.

8 The prophet is here addressing the community. 'Sackcloth' symbolises grief and repentance.

9 The daily oblation (see Lv 2) and libation were offerings from the produce of the soil: flour, wine, and oil (see Ex 29:38-42, Nb 28:3-8).

10 Joel uses alliteration in the phrase שָׂדֵד שָׂדֵה (*suddad sadeh* - 'the fields are ruined') and אֲבָלָה אֲדָמָה (*abelah 'adamah* - 'the land is in mourning').

11 The literal translation of 'dismayed' is 'embarrassed' or 'ashamed'.

		The harvest of the fields has been lost!
כ	כִּי אָבַד קִצִּיר שָׂדֵה: הַגֶּפֶן הוֹבִישָׁה וְהַתְּאֵנָה אִמְלָלָה רְמוֹן גַּם-תְּמָר וְתַפּוּחַ כָּל-עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֵה יָבְשׁוּ כִּי-הִבִּישׁ שְׂשׂוֹן מִן-בְּנֵי אָדָם: {ס}	¹² The vine has withered, the fig tree wilts away; pomegranate, palm tree, apple tree, every tree in the countryside is dry, and for human beings joy has run dry too.
ג	חֲגֹרוּ וְסַפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים הַיְלִילוּ מִשְׁרַתִּי מִזֶּבֶחַ בָּאוּ לִינֹו בְשֻׁקִים מִשְׁרַתִּי אֱלֹהִי כִּי נִמְנַע מִבַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִנְחָה וְנִסְדָּ:	¹³ Priests, put on sackcloth and lament! You ministers of the altar, wail! Come here, lie in sackcloth all night long, you ministers of my God! For, the Temple of your God has been deprived of cereal offering and libation.
ד	קִדְשׁוּ-צוּם קְרֹאוּ עֲצֹרָה אִסְפוּ זְקֵנִים כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְזַעְקוּ אֶל-יְהוָה:	¹⁴ Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; you elders, summon everybody in the country to the Temple of Yahweh your God. Cry out to Yahweh:
ט	אֵהָה לַיּוֹם כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה וּכְשֵׁד מִשְׁדֵי יָבוֹא:	¹⁵ “Alas for the day! For the Day of Yahweh is near, coming as devastation from Shaddai.”

¹² The word תַּפּוּחַ probably refers to the ‘apple tree’ but other suggestions that scholars have offered include the apricot, citron, or quince.

¹³ The invitation to ‘come here’ is into the Temple (see 2:17).

¹⁴ The literal translation of ‘order’ (following the NJB) is ‘sanctify’ (as in the NRSV).

¹⁵ There is a play on the words ‘devastation’ (שֹׁד – shod) and ‘Shaddai’ (שֹׁדַי – a name of God, see Gn 17:1). The plague of locusts heralds the Day of Yahweh, which is a day of terror (see 2:1-2, 11, Am 5:18), even though, in the context of Jl 3-4 (but see Ob 15), it brings the ultimate triumph of Israel.

<p>טז הָלוֹא נִגְדַּ עֵינֵינוּ אֶכֶל נִכְרַת מִבַּיִת אֱלֹהֵינוּ שִׂמְחָה וְגִיל: זי עֲבָשׁוּ פְּרֻדֹּת תַּחַת מְגֻרְפְּתֵיהֶם נִשְׁמוּ אֶצְרוֹת נִהְרָסוּ מִמְּגֻרֹת כִּי הִבִּישׁ דָּגָן: יח מֵה־נִּנְאָנְחָה בְּהֵמָה נִבְכוּ עֲדָרֵי בָקָר כִּי אֵין מִרְעָה לָהֶם גַּם־עֲדָרֵי הַצֹּאן נִאֲשָׁמוּ: טו אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא כִּי אֵשׁ אֶכְלָה נְאוֹת מִדְּבָר וְלֵהָבָה לְהִטָּה כָּל־עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה: כ גַּם־בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֶה תִּעְרוֹג אֵלֶיךָ כִּי יִבְשׁוּ אַפְיָקֵי מַיִם וְאֵשׁ אֶכְלָה נְאוֹת הַמִּדְּבָר: {ס}</p>	<p>16 Has not the food disappeared before our very eyes? Have not joy and gladness vanished from the Temple of our God?</p> <p>17 The seeds shrivel under their clods; the granaries are deserted, the barns are in ruins, because the harvest has dried out.</p> <p>18 Loudly the cattle groan! The herds of oxen are bewildered because they have no pasture. The flocks of sheep bear the punishment too.</p> <p>19 Yahweh, to you I cry: for the fire has devoured the desert pastures, flame has burnt up all the trees in the countryside.</p> <p>20 Even the wild animals pant loudly for you, for the watercourses have run dry and fire has devoured the desert pastures.</p>
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¹⁶ The rhetorical questions of this verse expect a positive answer, and some translate them as affirmative statements.

¹⁷ The sense of the first 2 lines is uncertain: 3 out of the 4 Hebrew words occur only here. The MT reads 'the seed shrivels in their shovels', 4QXXII^c has 'the heifers decay in (their) stalls' and the LXX reads 'the heifers leap in their stables' (ἐσκήρτησαν δαμάλεις ἐπὶ ταῖς φάτναις αὐτῶν).

¹⁸ The verb בָּקָר ('are bewildered') normally means 'to be confused' but, as here, sometimes refers to wandering aimlessly in confusion (Ex 14:3).

¹⁹ 'Fire' (cf. 2:3) and 'flame' are symbolic of the drought following the depredations of the locusts (see Am 7:4).

²⁰ The language here is figurative (metonymy of cause for effect): the animals long for food and water, the ultimate source of which is Yahweh.

יואל פרק ב

א תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִיּוֹן
וְהִרְיעוּ בְּהַר קֹדְשִׁי
יִרְגְּזוּ כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
כִּי־בֹא יוֹם־יְהוָה כִּי קָרוֹב:
ב יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וְאִפְלָה
יוֹם עָנָן וְעֲרַפָּל
כְּשַׁחַר פָּרֶשׁ
עַל־הַהָרִים עִם רֶב וְעֲצוּם כְּמֵהוּ
לֹא נִהְיָה מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְאַחֲרָיו
לֹא יוֹסֵף עַד־שְׁנֵי דוֹר וְדוֹר:
ג לְפָנָיו אֲכָלָה אֵשׁ
וְאַחֲרָיו תִּלְהַט לֶהֱבֵה
כְּגֹן־עֵדֶן הָאָרֶץ לְפָנָיו
וְאַחֲרָיו מִדְּבַר שְׁמָמָה
וְגַם־פְּלִיטָה לֹא־הִיטָה לָּו:
ד כְּמִרְאֵה סוּסִים מִרְאֵהוּ
וּכְפָרָשִׁים כֵּן יִרוּצוּן:

JOEL 2

- 1 Blow the ram's horn in Zion,
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let everybody in the country tremble,
for the Day of Yahweh is coming – yes, it is near.
- 2 Day of darkness and gloom,
Day of cloud and blackness.
Like the dawn, across the mountains
spreads a vast and mighty people,
such as never been before,
such as will never be again to the remotest ages.
- 3 In their van, a fire devours;
in their rear, a flame consumes.
The country is like a Garden of Eden ahead of them
and a desert waste behind them.
Nothing escapes them.
- 4 They look like horses,
like chargers they gallop on.

JOEL 2

¹ The 'ram's horn' (שׁוֹפָר) was a warning of imminent danger (Ezk 33:3,6, Ho 5:8, Am 3:6); its sound heralds the punishment of Israel.

² 'Like the dawn' follows the LXX (ὡς ὄρθρος); the MT has 'as the dawn'.

³ The literal translation of the last line is, "And surely a survivor there is not for it." The antecedent of the pronoun 'it' is apparently the 'people' of v. 2, which seems to be a figurative way of referring to the locusts. Some have thought that the antecedent of this pronoun was 'land' but the masculine gender of the pronoun does not support this.

⁴ The comparison of locusts with horses is not uncommon, due to the similarity in appearance of the heads.

<p>ה בְּקוֹל מְרַפְּבוֹת עַל־רָאשֵׁי הַהָרִים יִרְקְדוּן בְּקוֹל לֶהֱבֵ אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה קֶשׁ כְּעַם עֲצוּם עֲרוּד מִלְחָמָה: ו מִפְּנֵי יַחִילוּ עַמִּים כָּל־פָּנִים קִבְּצוּ פְּאֵרוֹר: ז כְּגִבּוֹרִים יִרְצוּן כְּאֲנָשֵׁי מִלְחָמָה יַעֲלוּ חוֹמָה וְאִישׁ בְּדַרְכּוֹ יִלְכוּן וְלֹא יַעֲבֹטוּן אֶרְחוֹתָם: ח וְאִישׁ אָחִיו לֹא יִדְחֲקוּן גִּבֹּר בְּמַסְלַתּוֹ יִלְכוּן וּבַעַד הַשֵּׁלַח יִפְּלוּ לֹא יִבְצְעוּ: ט בְּעִיר יִשְׁקוּ בַּחוֹמָה יִרְצוּן</p>	<p>5 With a racket like that of chariots, they spring over the mountaintops, with a crackling like blazing fire devouring the stubble, a mighty army in battle array.</p> <p>6 At the sight of them, people are appalled and every face grows pale.</p> <p>7 Like fighting men, they press forward; like warriors, they scale the walls, each marching straight ahead, not turning from his path.</p> <p>8 They never jostle each other; each marches straight ahead; arrows fly – they still press forward, never breaking ranks.</p> <p>9 They hurl themselves at the city; they leap on to the walls,</p>
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⁵ The repetition of the preposition of comparison (כְּ - 'like') in vv. 4-7 should not go unnoticed: the author is comparing the locust invasion to familiar aspects of human invasion; if the preposition has its normal force here, it is **similarity** and not **identity** that is intended. On the other hand, this preposition is also on occasion used to indicate exactitude, a function described by grammarians as *Kaf Veritatis*.

⁶ The word פֶּאֵר ('pale') is found in the Hebrew Bible only here and in Na 2:11; its meaning is very uncertain.

⁷ 'Turning from' follows the LXX (ἐκκλίωσι), Vg (*declinabunt*) and Peshitta; the MT has 'entangling'.

⁸ The 3rd line has been interpreted in two different ways: **1** 'although arrows fly, they shall not be wounded' (NKJV), or **2** when they 'burst through' the city's defences, they will not break ranks (NRSV, NIV). Here, we follow the NJB.

⁹ An alternative reading for the 1st line is, "They dart about in the city."

<p>בַּבַּתִּים יַעֲלוּ בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹנִים יָבֹאוּ כַּגַּנָּב: י לְפָנָיו רָגְזָה אֶרֶץ רָעְשׂוּ שָׁמַיִם שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ קָדְרוּ וְכּוֹכְבֵי אֶסְפוּ נִגְהָם: יא וַיְהוֹה נִתַּן קוֹלוֹ לְפָנָי חִילוֹ כִּי רַב מְאֹד מַחֲנֶהוּ כִּי עֲצוֹם עֲשֵׂה דְבָרוֹ כִּי־גָדוֹל יוֹם־יְהוָה וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד וּמִי יִכַּלְנוּ: יב וְגַם־עַתָּה נֹאֲסִיְהוֹה שׁוּבוּ עָדַי בְּכָל־לִבְבְּכֶם וּבְצֹום וּבְבִכּוּי וּבְמִסְפָּד: יג וְקַרְעוּ לִבְבְּכֶם וְאַל־בְּגָדֵיכֶם וּשׁוּבוּ אֱלֹהֵיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כִּי־חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם הוּא אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְנָחַם עַל־הָרָעָה:</p>	<p>swarm up the houses, getting in through the windows like thieves.</p> <p>10 As they come on, the earth quakes, the skies tremble, sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brilliance.</p> <p>11 Yahweh's voice rings out at the head of his troops! For, mighty indeed is his army, strong, the enforcer of his orders, for great is the Day of Yahweh, and very terrible – who can endure it?</p> <p>12 "But now – declares Yahweh – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning."</p> <p>13 Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to Yahweh your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and he relents about inflicting disaster.</p>
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¹⁰ Cosmic phenomena mark the Day of Yahweh: at the time of the divine visitation, the sun, moon, and stars refuse to shine.

¹¹ 'Endure' follows the MT; the LXX has 'will be fit for' (ἔσται ἱκανός), 4QXXII^c has 'bear', and the NJB has 'face'.

¹² In place of 'but now', some open this verse with 'even now'.

¹³ The figurative language calls for genuine repentance, and not merely external ritual that goes through the motions.

<p>ד' מי יודע ישוב ונחם והשאיר אחריו ברכה מנחה ונסך ליהוה אלהיכם: {פ}</p> <p>טו תקעו שופר בציון קדשו צום קראו עצרה: טז אספו עם קדשו קהל קבצו זקנים אספו עוללים וינקי שדים יצא חתן מחדרו וכלה מחפתה: ז' בין האולם ולמזבח יבכו הכהנים משרתי יהוה ויאמרו חוסה יהוה על עמך ואלתתן נחלתך לחרפה למשלכם גוים</p>	<p>14 Who knows if he will not come back, relent and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a libation to be presented to Yahweh your God?</p> <p>15 Blow the ram's horn in Zion! Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly!</p> <p>16 Call the people together, summon the community, assemble the elders, gather the children, even infants at the breast! Call the bridegroom from his bedroom and the bride from her bower!</p> <p>17 Let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, stand weeping between portico and altar, saying, "Spare your people, Yahweh! Do not expose your heritage to contempt, to become a proverb of the nations!</p>
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¹⁴ The 'blessing' would be a good harvest (see Dt 7:13–14, 16:10–17, Hg 2:15–19), making sacred offerings possible again (Jl 1:9).

¹⁵ On the use of the 'ram's horn', see #2:1.

¹⁶ The literal translation of 'order' (and 'summon') is 'sanctify' (see 1:14).

¹⁷ The 3rd line locates the courtyard to the east of the Sanctuary (1K 6:3, Ezk 40:48–49), between the portico (*Ulam*) and the altar of burnt offering (1K 8:64, 2Ch 8:12). For the 6th line, the NJB has, "to the sarcasm of the nations;" for the MT reading לְמִשַׁל (an infinitive, 'to rule'), one should instead read לְמִשַּׁל (a noun, 'to a byword'). While the consonantal *Ketiv* permits either, the context suggests that the concern here is more one of not wanting to appear abandoned by God to ongoing economic depression rather than concern over potential political subjection of Israel.

לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ בְעַמִּים
אֵיִה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

יח וַיִּקְנֵא יְהוָה לְאַרְצוֹ
וַיַּחַמֵּל עַל־עַמּוֹ:

יט וַיַּעַן יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר לְעַמּוֹ

הַנְּנִי שֶׁלַח לָכֶם אֶת־הַדָּגָן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיִּצְהָר
וּשְׁבַעְתֶּם אֹתוֹ

וְלֹא־אֶתֶן אֶתְכֶם עוֹד חֲרָפָה בְּגוֹיִם:

כ וְאֶת־הַצָּפוֹנִי אֲרַחֵק מֵעַלְיֶכֶם

וְהַדְּחִיתִיו אֶל־אַרְץ צִיָּה וּשְׁמָמָה

אֶת־פָּנָיו אֶל־הַיָּם הַקְּדֹמָיִי

וּסְפוּ אֶל־הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרוֹן

וְעֹלָה בְּאִשׁוֹ

וְתַעַל צַחֲנָתוֹ

כִּי הִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת:

כא אֶל־תִּירָאִי אֲדָמָה

גִּילִי וּשְׂמַחִי

כִּי־הִגְדִּיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת:

Why give the peoples cause to say,
"Where is their God?"

18 Then, becoming jealous over his country,
Yahweh took pity on his people.

19 Yahweh said in answer to his people,
"Now I shall send you wheat, wine, and olive oil
until you have enough.
Never again will I expose you to the contempt of the nations.

20 I shall take the northerner far away from you
and drive him into an arid, desolate land,
his vanguard to the eastern sea,
his rearguard to the western sea.
He will give off a stench;
he will give off a foul stink.
Surely, he has done great things!

21 My land, do not be afraid!
Be glad, rejoice!
For, Yahweh has done great things.

18 'Jealous' includes the meaning 'zealous' (Dt 4:24).

19 4QXXII^c inserts 'and you will eat' before 'until you have enough'. The WEBBE opens the 2nd line with 'Behold' in place of 'Now'.

20 The last line here follows the NRSV; the NJB has, in parentheses, "for what he made bold to do" and the LXX has 'for he has magnified his works' (ὅτι ἐμεγάλυνεν τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ). The army of locusts (vv. 1-11) is now assimilated to the enemy coming from the north to execute Yahweh's judgements. The 'eastern sea' is the Dead Sea and the 'western sea' is the Mediterranean.

21 In place of 'my land', the NRSV has 'O soil' and the NJB has simply 'land'.

כב אֶל־תִּירָאוּ בַּהֲמוֹת שָׂדֵי
 כִּי דִשְׂאוּ נְאוֹת מְדִבֵּר
 כִּי־עַל נֶשֶׂא פְרִיֹו
 תֵּאֲנֶה וּגְפֹן נִתְּנוּ חֵילִם:
 כג וּבְנֵי צִיּוֹן גִּילוּ
 וְשִׂמְחוּ בִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 כִּי־נָתַן לָכֶם אֶת־הַמּוֹרָה לְצַדִּיקָה
 וַיִּזְרַד לָכֶם גֶּשֶׁם
 מוֹרָה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ בְּרֵאשׁוֹן:
 כד וּמְלֵאוּ הַגֵּרְנוֹת בָּר
 וְהִשְׁיִקוּ הַיְקָבִים תִּירוֹשׁ וַיִּצְהָר:
 כה וְשִׁלַּמְתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־הַשָּׁנִים
 אֲשֶׁר אָכַל הָאֲרֶבֶה
 הַיֵּלֶק וְהַחֲסִיל וְהַגּוֹם
 חֵילִי הַגָּדוֹל
 אֲשֶׁר שִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם:

22 Wild animals, do not be afraid;
 the desert pastures are green again,
 the trees bear fruit,
 vine and fig tree yield their richness.
 23 Sons of Zion, be glad,
 rejoice in Yahweh your God;
 for he has given you autumn rain as justice demands,
 and he will send the rains down for you,
 the autumn and spring rain as of old.
 24 The threshing-floors will be full of grain;
 the vats overflow with fresh wine and olive oil.
 25 "I will make up to you for the years
 devoured by grown locust and hopper,
 by destroyer and young locust,
 my great army
 that I sent to invade you.

22 The trees and vines will produce a maximum harvest, in contrast to the failed agricultural conditions previously described.

23 The meaning of the 3rd line is uncertain; the literal translation of 'as justice demands' (the NRSV has 'for your vindication') is 'for justice', perhaps a gloss: Yahweh gives the repentant people rain 'according to his justice' – that is, his loyalty towards the people in view of the Covenant; or 'in due measure' or again 'in view of justice', as a sign of the return of the people to righteousness. The Vg has given this text a messianic meaning by translating 'the teacher of uprightness' (see Ho 10:12 and Jr 23:6, 33:15), a title that recurs to denote the principal personality of the Covenant Sect in the Qumran texts.

24 The NJB and NRSV do not include the adjectives 'fresh' and 'olive'.

25 The plural, 'years' (שָׁנִים), suggests that the plague was not limited to a single season; apparently, the locusts were a major problem over several successive years. One season of draught and locust invasion would have been bad enough; several such years would have been devastating.

כו וְאִכַּלְתֶּם אֶכּוֹל וְשָׂבוּעַ
וְהִלַּלְתֶּם אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה עִמָּכֶם לְהַפְלִיא
וְלֹא־יִבְשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם:
כז וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי בְקִרְבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי
וְאֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאִין
עוֹד וְלֹא־יִבְשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם: {פ}

²⁶ “You will eat to your heart’s content,
and praise the name of Yahweh your God
who has treated you so wonderfully.

My people will never be humiliated again!

²⁷ “Then you will know that I am among you in Israel,
I, Yahweh your God, and no one else.

My people will never be humiliated again!”

²⁶ The *NJB* parenthesises the last line.

²⁷ An alternative reading for ‘know’ is ‘be convinced’.

יואל פרק ג

JOEL 3

וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן א *
אֶשְׂפּוֹף אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר
וְנִבְּאוּ בְּנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיכֶם
זְקֵנֵיכֶם חֲלֻמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוּן
בְּחֻזְרֵיכֶם חֲזִיּוֹת יִרְאוּ:
וְגַם עַל־הָעֲבָדִים וְעַל־הַשְּׂפָחוֹת ב
בְּיָמֵים הָהֵמָּה אֶשְׂפּוֹף אֶת־רוּחִי:

וְנִתְּתִי מוֹפְתִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ דָּם וְאֵשׁ וְתִמְרוֹת
עָשָׂן: ד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לְחֹשֶׁךְ וְהַיָּרֵחַ לְדָם לִפְנֵי בּוֹא
יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא: ה וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא
בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִמָּלֵט כִּי בְהַר־צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּהְיֶה
פְּלִיטָה כָּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה וּבְשָׂרֵידִים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה
קָרָא:

1 "And, after this,
I shall pour out my spirit on all humanity.
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
your old people shall dream dreams,
and your young people see visions.
2 Even on the slaves, men and women,
shall I pour out my spirit in those days.

3 "I shall show portents in the sky and on earth, blood, fire, and pillars
of smoke. 4 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood,
before the great and terrible Day of Yahweh comes. 5 All who call on the
name of Yahweh will be delivered; for, on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
will be those who escape, as Yahweh has said, among the remnant that
Yahweh is calling."

JOEL 3

The NRSV includes this chapter as 2:28–32, as do the Vg and many English translations. Here, we follow the MT, LXX & NJB.

- 1 The literal translation of 'humanity' is 'flesh'; as a term for humanity, the term suggests the weakness and fragility of human beings as opposed to God who is 'spirit'. The word 'all' refers not to all human beings without exception, but to all classes of human beings without distinction.
- 2 God's spirit will be poured out on all, regardless of social standing, in accordance with Moses' prayer (Nb 11:29).
- 3 The 'portents' herald the final judgement on the Day of Yahweh (1:15, 2:1–2, 10, Am 8:9).
- 4 Here, 'blood' indicates colour.
- 5 The NJB transposes 'and in Jerusalem' to before 'among the remnant'; here, we follow the NRSV. While a number of English translations render 'delivered' as 'saved' (NJB, NRSV, NIV), this can suggest a 'spiritual' salvation rather than the physical deliverance from the cataclysmic events of the Day of Yahweh described in the context.

יואל פרק ד

א כִּי הִנֵּה בַיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה וּבַעֲתָהּ הִיא אֲשֶׁר אָשׁוּב
אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוֹת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם: ב וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶת־
כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וְהוֹרְדֹתִים אֶל־עַמֶּמְךָ יְהוֹשָׁפָט וְנִשְׁפָּטִיתִי
עִמָּם שָׁם עַל־עַמִּי וְנַחֲלֹתַי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר פָּזְרוּ
בְּגוֹיִם וְאֶת־אֲרָצִי חִלְּקוּ: ג וְאֶל־עַמִּי יָדוּ גוֹרָל וַיִּתְּנוּ
הַיֵּלֶד בַּזֹּנָה וְהַיֵּלֶדָה מְכָרוּ בֵּין וַיִּשְׁתּוּ: ד וְגַם מָה־
אַתֶּם לִי צָר וְצִידוֹן וְכָל־גְּלִילוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּי הַגְּמוּל אֶתֶם
מִשְׁלָמִים עָלַי וְאִם־גְּמֹלִים אַתֶּם עָלַי קַל מֵהָרָה
אָשִׁיב גְּמֹלְכֶם בְּרֹאשְׁכֶם: ה אֲשֶׁר־כִּסְפִי וְזָהָבִי
לְקַחְתֶּם וּמַחְמַדֵּי הַטְּבִיִּים הִבַּאתֶם לְהִכְלִיכֶם:
ו וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם מְכַרְתֶּם לְבָנֵי הַיּוֹנִים
לְמַעַן הִרְחִיקֶם מֵעַל גְּבוּלָם: ז הַנְּגִי מְעִירָם מִן־

JOEL 4

¹ “For, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I shall gather the nations and take them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; there, I shall put them on trial as regards Israel, my people and my heritage, for having scattered them among the nations and having divided my land among themselves. ³ They drew lots for my people, bartering a boy for a whore and selling a girl for wine to drink. ⁴ “What are you to me, Tyre and Sidon and all you regions of Philistia? Can you take revenge on me? If you take revenge on me, I shall quickly, instantly, make your revenge recoil on your own heads ⁵ for having taken my silver and gold away and carried off my valuable treasures to your temples, ⁶ and for having sold the children of Judah and Jerusalem to the Ionians, to be taken far away from their own

JOEL 4

The *NRSV* (as most English translations) includes this chapter as Ch. 3 (see #3:1); here, we follow the *MT* (and *NJB*).

- ¹ In place of ‘restore the fortunes’, here following the *Qere* (אָשִׁיב), the *Ketiv* has ‘bring back the captives’ (אָשׁוּב).
- ² ‘Jehoshaphat’ (literally ‘Yahweh judges’), also in v. 12, is the symbolic name for the place where Yahweh is to judge the nations (see Is 66:16, Jr 25:31), called the ‘Valley of Decision’ in v. 14. Vv. 11 & 16 suggest that it is near Jerusalem, though it is unnecessary to identify it with the present ‘Valley of Jehoshaphat’ (the valley of the Kidron, to the southeast of the Temple).
- ³ Joel vividly refers to a situation where innocent human life has little value; its only worth is its use in somehow satisfying selfish appetites of wicked people who have control over others (cf. Am 2:6, 8:6).
- ⁴ Unlike the peoples in the previous prophecy (vv. 1–2), the Phoenicians (‘Tyre and Sidon’) and ‘Philistines’ are mentioned by name and charged with plundering (v. 5) and for trafficking in Jewish slaves (possibly victims of the disasters of 597 and 586 BCE). See Am 1:6–10 (probably dating from the Exile), where the same charges are brought against the same peoples.
- ⁵ In place of ‘temples’, some prefer ‘palaces’.
- ⁶ The ‘Ionians’ are the Greeks.

הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתָם שָׁמָּה וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי
 גְּמִלְכֶם בְּרֹאשְׁכֶם: ^ח וּמְכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם וְאֶת־
 בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם בְּיַד בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה וּמְכָרוּם לְשָׁבָאִים אֶל־גְּזוֹי
 רְחוֹק כִּי יִהְיֶה דְבַר: {פ}

ט קְרֹאוּ־זֹאת בְּגוֹיִם
 קְדָשׁוּ מִלְחָמָה
 הָעִירוּ הַגְּבוּרִים
 יִגָּשׁוּ יַעֲלוּ כָּל אַנְשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה:
 י כָּתוּ אֶתֵיכֶם לְחַרְבֹּת
 וּמִזְמַרְתֵיכֶם לְרִמְחִים הַחֲלָשׁ
 יֵאמֶר גְּבוּר אָנִי:
 יא עוֹשׂוּ וּבֵאוּ כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב וְנִקְבְּצוּ
 שָׁמָּה הַנִּחַת יְהוָה גְּבוּרֵי־ךָ:
 יב יַעֲזְרוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ הַגּוֹיִם
 אֶל־עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט
 כִּי שָׁם אֲשַׁב לְשֹׁפֵט
 אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב:

frontiers. ⁷ Look, I shall rouse them from the places to which you have sold them; I shall make your actions recoil on your own heads ⁸ by selling your sons and daughters to the sons of Judah, who in turn will sell them to the Sabaeans, to a nation far away – Yahweh has spoken!”

- ⁹ Proclaim this among the nations:
 Prepare for war!
 Rouse the champions!
 All you troops, advance, march!
- ¹⁰ Hammer your ploughshares into swords,
 your billhooks into spears;
 let the weakling say, “I am tough!”
- ¹¹ Hurry and come, all the nations around, and assemble there!
 Yahweh, send down your champions!
- ¹² “Let the nations rouse themselves and march
 to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
 for, there I shall sit in judgement
 on all the surrounding nations.

⁷ The literal translation of the last sentence is, “I will return your recompense on your head.”

⁸ The ‘Sabaeans’ were a mercantile, southern Arabian people with influence along the ancient caravan routes (see 1K 10:1, Job 6:19 & Jr 6:20).

⁹ The literal translation of ‘prepare for war’ is ‘sanctify war’; war was regarded as a sacred undertaking (cf. 2:16, Is 13:3, Jr 6:4, 22:7).

¹⁰ The picture here, of turning farm instruments to weapons of war, is that of Is 2:4 and Mi 4:3 reversed.

¹¹ ‘Hurry’ is a conjectural translation (הוֹשִׁי); the MT has an unknown word (עוֹשׂוּ); some prefer the emendation to עוֹרוּ (‘arouse’). ‘Assemble’ follows the LXX (συνάχθητε); the MT has ‘they will assemble’ (וְנִקְבְּצוּ). The last line, parenthesised in the NJB, is probably a gloss.

¹² In place of ‘surrounding’, the NRSV has ‘neighbouring’.

<p>שְׁלַחוּ מַגֵּל כִּי בִשְׁל קָצִיר יג בָּאוּ רְדוּ כִּי־מְלֵאָה גֵּת הַשִּׁיקוּ הַיְקָבִים כִּי רַבָּה רָעַתְם: הַמוֹנִים הַמוֹנִים יד בְּעֵמֶק הַחֲרוֹץ כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה בְּעֵמֶק הַחֲרוֹץ: שֶׁמֶשׁ וַיֵּרַח קִדְרוּ טו וְכּוֹכְבִים אֶסְפוּ נִגְהָם: וַיְהוֶה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג טז וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ וְרָעְשׁוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ וַיְהוֶה מַחֲסֵה לְעַמּוֹ וּמְעוֹז לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֵּדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם ז שֹׁכֵן בְּצִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁ וְהִיְתָה יְרוּשָׁלַם קֹדֶשׁ וְזָרִים לֹא־יַעֲבְרוּ־בָּה עוֹד: {ס}</p>	<p>13 “Ply the sickle; for, the harvest is ripe. Come and tread; for, the winepress is full. The vats are overflowing, so great is their wickedness!”</p> <p>14 Multitude on multitude in the Valley of Decision! For the Day of Yahweh is near in the Valley of the Verdict!</p> <p>15 Sun and moon grow dark, the stars lose their brilliance.</p> <p>16 Yahweh roars from Zion, he thunders from Jerusalem; heaven and earth tremble. But Yahweh will be a shelter for his people, a stronghold for the Israelites.</p> <p>17 “Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God residing on Zion, my holy mountain. Jerusalem will then be a sanctuary, no foreigners will overrun it ever again.”</p>
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13 The inordinate wickedness of the Gentiles is compared to the harvest that is ripe and vats that overflow (Is 63:1–6, Mt 3:10–12, Mk 4:29).

14 ‘Verdict’ and ‘Decision’ settle a matter. The word(s) can also mean the sledge under-set with sharp stones used for threshing (cf. Is 28:27, 41:15, Am 1:3); the figure is here suggested by the ‘harvest’ in v. 13, in which case we can read ‘Valley of the Sledge’.

15 The literal translation of ‘lose’ is ‘gather in’.

16 In place of ‘Israelites’, some read ‘sons of Israel’ or ‘citizens of Israel’.

17 A ‘sanctuary’ is inviolable (see Is 51:23, 52:1, Jr 31:40, Ob 17, Na 2:1, Zc 9:8, 14:21).

יח וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם
 הַהוּא יִטְפוּ הַהָרִים עֲטִים
 וְהַגְּבְעוֹת תִּלְכְּנָה חֶלֶב
 וְכָל־אֲפִיקֵי יְהוּדָה
 יִלְכוּ מַיִם
 וּמַעַיִן מִבַּיִת יְהוָה יֵצֵא וְהִשְׁקָה
 אֶת־נַחַל הַשְּׁטִים:
 ט מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁמְמָה תִּהְיֶה
 וְאֵדוֹם לְמִדְבָּר שִׁמְמָה תִּהְיֶה
 מִחֲמַס בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה
 אֲשֶׁר־שָׁפְכוּ דַם־נַקִּיָּא בָאָרֶץ:
 כ וִיהוּדָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב
 וִירוּשָׁלַם לְדוֹר וָדוֹר:
 כא וְנִקִּיתִי דָמָם לֹא־נִקִּיתִי
 וִיהוּהָ שָׁכֵן בְּצִיּוֹן:
 {ש}

- 18 When that Day comes,
 the mountains will run with new wine
 and the hills will flow with milk,
 and all the streambeds of Judah
 will run with water.
 A fountain will spring from Yahweh's Temple
 and water the Gorge of the Acacias.
- 19 Egypt will become a desolation,
 and Edom a desert waste
 on account of the violence done to the children of Judah
 whose innocent blood they shed in their country.
- 20 But Judah will be inhabited forever,
 and Jerusalem from generation to generation!
- 21 "I shall avenge their blood and let none go unpunished,"
 and Yahweh will dwell in Zion.

18 The language used in the 2nd/3rd lines is a hyperbolic way of describing both a bountiful grape harvest and an abundance of cattle. The location of the 'Gorge of the Acacias' is uncertain in the context of a renewed Holy Land.

19 The literal translation of 'done to' is 'of'; the phrase is an objective genitive: it refers to injustices committed against the Judaeans, not violence that the Judaeans themselves had committed against others.

20 After 'Jerusalem', some add 'will be secure', to improve style and clarity.

21 The 1st line here follows the LXX (καὶ ἐκδικήσω τὸ αἷμα αὐτῶν καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀφώσω) and Peshitta; the MT has 'I will hold innocent their blood that I have not held innocent'.