
יְאוֹל • 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 The majority of historical references in his book, the absence of any mention of the Assyrians or Babylonians, and the heavy borrowing from earlier prophets point to the period from about 400 to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

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

ב שְׁמַעוּ־זֹאת הַזְקֵנִים וְהָאֲזִינוּ

כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ

הֲהִיְתָה זֹאת בְּיָמֵיכֶם

וְאִם בְּיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם:

ג עֲלִיָּה לְבָנֵיכֶם סִפְרוּ

וּבְנֵיכֶם לְבָנֵיהֶם

וּבְנֵיהֶם לְדֹר אַחֵר:

ד יֵתֵר הַגִּזְם אֲכָל הָאֲרָבָה

וְיֵתֵר הָאֲרָבָה אֲכָל הַיֵּלֶק

וְיֵתֵר הַיֵּלֶק אֲכָל הַחֲסִיל:

ה הִקִּיצוּ שֹׁכְרִים וּבָכוּ

וְהִלְלוּ כָּל־שְׁתֵּי יָיִן

עַל־עֲסִים כִּי נִכְרַת מִפִּיכֶם:

ו כִּי־גָזַל 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 ancestors' days?

³ Tell your children about it

and let your children tell their children,
and their children 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 literal translation of 'children' is 'sons' (4 times in this verse).

⁴ Of the 4 terms used here for locust, 'grown locust' (אֲרָבָה) 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' (חֲסִיל) & 'nibbler' (גִּזְם).

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.

עֲצוֹם וְאֵין מִסְפָּר שְׁנֵי שָׁנִי אֲרִיָּה וּמִתְלַעֲזוֹת לְבִיא לֹו: שֵׁם גַּפְנִי לְשֹׁמֵה ז	mighty and innumerable, with teeth like a lion's teeth, with the fangs of a lioness.
וּתְאֲנֹתִי לְקִצְפָּה חֲשֹׁף חֲשֹׁפָה וְהַשְׁלִיךְ הַלְבִּינוּ שְׂרִיגֶיהָ: אֵלֵי כְּבִתּוּלָה חֲגֶרֶת־שֹׁק ח	7 It has reduced my vines to desolation and my fig trees to splinters, stripped them and broken them down, leaving their branches white.
עַל־בֶּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ: הַכֶּרֶת מִנַּחֶה וְנִסְךְ ט מִבֵּית יְהוָה אֲבָלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים מִשְׁרָתִי יְהוָה: שָׂדֵד שָׂדֵה י אֲבָלָה אֲדָמָה כִּי שָׂדֵד דָּגֵן הוֹבִישׁ תִּירוֹשׁ אֲמָלָל יִצְהָר: הַבִּישׁוּ אֲכָרִים הִלְלִילוּ כְּרָמִים יא	8 Mourn, as a virgin bride in sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth! 9 Cereal offering and libation are lost to Yahweh's Temple. The priests are in mourning, the ministers of Yahweh.
עַל־חֹטֵה וְעַל־שְׂעֵרָה	10 The fields are ruined, the land is in mourning, for the grain has been ruined, the new wine has failed, and of olive oil, there is only a trickle.
	11 Stand dismayed, you farmers, wail, you vinedressers, 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'.

כִּי אֲבַד קִצִּיר שָׂדֶה:
 יב הַגֶּפֶן הוֹבִישָׁה וְהַתְּאֵנָה אִמְלָלָה
 רְמוֹן גַּם-תְּמָר וְתַפּוּחַ
 כָּל-עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה יִבְשׁוּ
 כִּי-הִבִּישׁ שְׂשׂוֹן מִן-בְּנֵי אָדָם: {ס}
 יג חֲגֹרוּ וְסַפְדּוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים
 הַלֵּילֹל מִשְׁרַתִּי מִזְבֵּחַ
 בָּאוּ לִינִי בְשָׁקִים
 מִשְׁרַתִּי אֱלֹהִי
 כִּי נִמְנַע מִבַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 מִנְחָה וְנִסָּךְ:
 יד קִדְשׁוּ-צוּם קְרָאוּ
 עֲצֹרָה אִסְפוּ זִקְנִים כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
 בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְזַעְקוּ
 אֶל-יְהוָה:
 טו אָהֵה לַיּוֹם
 כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה
 וְכָשֶׁד מִשְׁדֵּי יָבוֹא:

The harvest of the fields has been lost!
 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.
 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.
 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:
 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.

טז	הֲלֹא נִגְדַּ עֵינֵינוּ אֶכֶל נִכְרַת מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ שִׂמְחָה וְגִיל: עֲבָשׁוּ פִרְדּוֹת תַּחַת מְגֻרְפְּתֵיהֶם נִשְׁמּוּ אֶצְרוֹת נִהְרָסוּ מִמְּגֻרֹת כִּי הִבִּישׁ דָּגָן: מִה־נִּנְאֲנָחָה בְּהֵמָה נִבְכּוּ עֲדָרֵי בָקָר כִּי אִין מִרְעָה לָהֶם גַּם־עֲדָרֵי הַצֹּאן נִאֲשָׁמוּ: אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא כִּי אֵשׁ אָכְלָה נְאוֹת מִדְבָּר וְלֹהֶבָה לִהְטָה כָּל־עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה: גַּם־בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֶה תִּעְרֹג אֵלֶיךָ כִּי יִבְשׁוּ אַפִּיקֵי מַיִם וְאֵשׁ אָכְלָה נְאוֹת הַמִּדְבָּר: {ס}
יז	
יח	
יט	
כ	

16	Has not the food disappeared before our very eyes? Have not joy and gladness vanished from the Temple of our God?
17	The seeds shrivel under their clods; the granaries are deserted, the barns are in ruins, because the harvest has dried out.
18	Loudly the cattle groan! The herds of oxen are bewildered because they have no pasture. The flocks of sheep bear the punishment too.
19	Yahweh, to you I cry: for the fire has devoured the desert pastures, flame has burnt up all the trees in the countryside.
20	Even the wild animals pant loudly for you, for the watercourses have run dry and fire has devoured the desert pastures.

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 קֹדֶשׁי
יִרְגְּזוּ כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
כִּי־בֹא יוֹם־יְהוָה כִּי קָרוֹב:
ב יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וְאֹפֶלָה
יוֹם עָנָן וְעָרָפֶל
כְּשַׁחַר פֶּרֶשׁ
עַל־הַהָרִים עִם רֶב וְעֶצוֹם כְּמֹהוּ
לֹא נִהְיָה מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְאַחֲרָיו
לֹא יוֹסֵף עַד־שְׁנֵי דוֹר וָדוֹר:
ג לִפְנֵיו אֲכָלָה אֵשׁ
וְאַחֲרָיו תִּלְהַט לֶהָבָה
כְּגֹן־עֵדֶן הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵיו
וְאַחֲרָיו מִדְּבַר שְׁמָמָה
וְגַם־פְּלִיטָה לֹא־הִיטָה לוֹ:
ד כְּמֵרָאָה סוֹסִים מֵרָאָהוּ
וּכְפָרָשִׁים בֵּן יְרוּצוֹן:

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.

ה	בְּקוֹל מְרַכְּבוֹת עַל־רָאשֵׁי הַהָרִים יִרְקְדּוּן בְּקוֹל לֶהֱבֹאֵשׁ אֲכָלָה קֶשׁ בָּעַם עֲצוּם עֲרוּךְ מִלְחָמָה: ו	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.
ז	מִפְּנֵי יַחֲלוּ עַמִּים כָּל־פָּנִים קִבְּצוּ פָּאֲרוֹר: ח	6	At the sight of them, people are appalled and every face grows pale.
ט	כְּגִבּוֹרִים יִרְצֹן כְּאֲנָשֵׁי מִלְחָמָה יַעֲלוּ חוֹמָה וְאִישׁ בְּדַרְכּוֹ יִלְכֹן וְלֹא יַעֲבֹטוּן אֶרְחוֹתָם: י	7	Like fighting men, they press forward; like warriors, they scale the walls, each marching straight ahead, not turning from his path.
כ	וְאִישׁ אֶחָיו לֹא יִדְחָקוֹן גִּבּוֹר בְּמַסְלָתוֹ יִלְכֹן וּבַעַד הַשֵּׁלַח יִפְּלוּ לֹא יִבְצְעוּ: יא	8	They never jostle each other; each marches straight ahead; arrows fly – they still press forward, never breaking ranks.
יב	בְּעִיר יִשְׁקוּ בַּחוֹמָה יִרְצֹן	9	They hurl themselves at the city; they leap on to the walls,

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 פָּאֲר (*pale*) is found in the OT only here and in Na 2:11; its meaning is very uncertain.

⁷ ‘Turning from’ follows the LXX (ἐκκλίνωσι), 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.”

בַּבַּתִּים יַעֲלוּ
בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹנִים יָבֹאוּ
כַּגִּנָּב:
לִפְנֵי רִגְזָהּ אֶרֶץ י
רַעְשׁוּ שָׁמַיִם
שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ קִדְרוּ
וְכּוֹכְבִּים אֲסָפוּ נִגְהִם:
וַיהוָה נָתַן קוֹלוֹ לִפְנֵי חֵילוֹ יא
כִּי רַב מְאֹד מַחְנֵהוּ
כִּי עֲצוֹם עֹשֶׂה דְבָרוֹ
כִּי־גָדוֹל יוֹם־יְהוָה וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד
וּמִי יִכַּלֵּנוּ:
וְגַם־עַתָּה נֹאמֶ־יְהוָה יב
שׁוּבוּ עָדֵי בְּכָל־לִבְבְּכֶם
וּבְצֹם וּבְבִכּי וּבְמִסְפָּד:
וְקַרְעוּ לִבְבְּכֶם וְאַל־בְּגְדֵיכֶם יג
וּשׁוּבוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
כִּי־חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם הוּא
אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד
וְנָחֵם עַל־הָרָעָה:

swarm up the houses,
getting in through the windows
like thieves.

- 10 As they come on, the earth quakes,
the skies tremble,
sun and moon grow dark
and the stars lose their brilliance.
- 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?
- 12 "But now – declares Yahweh –
come back to me with all your heart,
fasting, weeping, mourning."
- 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.

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.

יְד מי יודע ישוב וְנָחַם
וְהִשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה
מִנְחָה וְנִסֵּךְ
לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: {פ}

טו תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִיּוֹן
קְדָשׁו־צֹם קְרָאוּ עֲצֵרָה:
טז אֲסַפּוּ-עִם קְדָשׁוֹ קְהָל
קִבְּצוּ זִקְנִים אֲסַפּוּ עוֹלָלִים
וַיִּגְקִי שָׂדִים
יֵצֵא חֲתָן מִחֲדָרֹו
וְכֻלָּה מִחֲפָתָה:
יז בֵּין הָאוּלָם
וְלִמְזִבַּח יִבְכוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים מִשְׁרָתִי יְהוָה
וַיֹּאמְרוּ חוֹסֶה
יְהוָה עַל-עַמּוֹךְ
וְאַל-תִּתֵּן נַחֲלָתְךָ
לְחִרְפָּה לְמִשְׁלַבֵּם גּוֹיִם

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?

15 Blow the ram's horn in Zion!
Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly!

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!

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!

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 לְמִשְׁלַבֵּם (an infinitive, 'to rule'), one should instead read לְמִשְׁלַבֵּם (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 בְּעַמִּים
 אֵיךְ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:
 יח וַיִּקְנֵא יְהוָה לְאַרְצוֹ
 וַיַּחַמֵּל עַל־עַמּוֹ:
 יט וַיַּעַן יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר לְעַמּוֹ
 הִנְנִי שֹׁלַח לָכֶם אֶת־הַדָּגָן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיִּצְהָר
 וּשְׂבַעְתֶּם אֹתוֹ
 וְלֹא־אֶתֶן אֶתְכֶם עוֹד חֶרֶפָה בְּגוֹיִם:
 כ וְאֶת־הַצֹּפוֹנִי אֶרְחִיק מֵעַלְיֶכֶם
 וְהַדְּחִיתִיו אֶל־אֶרֶץ צִיָּה וּשְׁמָמָה
 אֶת־פָּנָיו אֶל־הַיָּם הַקִּדְמוֹנִי
 וְסָפוּ אֶל־הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרוֹן
 וְעָלָה בָאֲשׁוּ
 וְתָעַל 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 נֹאוֹת מִדְּבַר
 כִּי־עַל נֶשֶׂא פִרְיוֹ
 תֵּאֲנֶה וּגְפֶן נִתְּנוּ חֵילָם:
 כג וּבְנֵי צִיּוֹן גִּילוּ
 וְשִׂמְחוּ בִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 כִּי־נָתַן לָכֶם אֶת־הַמּוֹרָה לְצִדְקָה
 וַיֹּרֶד לָכֶם גֶּשֶׁם
 מוֹרָה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ בְּרֹאשׁוֹן:
 כד וּמָלְאוּ הַגִּרְנוֹת בַּר
 וְהִשְׁקוּ הַיְקָבִים תִּירוֹשׁ וַיִּצְהָר:
 כה וְשִׁלַּמְתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־הַשָּׁנִים
 אֲשֶׁר אָכַל הָאֲרֶבֶה
 הַיֶּלֶק וְהַחֲסִיל וְהַגֹּזֵם
 חִילִי 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 וְאַכַּלְתֶּם אֶכּוֹל וְשָׂבוּעַ
 וְהִלַּלְתֶּם אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה עִמָּכֶם לְהַפְלִיא
 וְלֹא־יִבְשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם:
 כז וידעתם כי בקרב ישראל אני
 ואני יהוה אלהיכם ואין
 עוד ולא־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* parentheses the last line.

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

יואל פרק ג

א וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן

אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר

וּנְבָאוּ בְנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיכֶם

זְקֵנֵיכֶם חֲלֻמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוּן

בַּחֲוִירֵיכֶם חֲזִיּוֹת יֵרְאוּ:

ב וגם על־הַעֲבָדִים וְעַל־הַשִּׁפְחוֹת

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ אֶת־רוּחִי:

ג וְנָתַתִּי מוֹפְתִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ דָּם וָאֵשׁ וְתִמְרוֹת

עָשָׁן: ד' הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לְחָשֶׁךְ וְהַיָּרֵחַ לְדָם לִפְנֵי בּוֹא

יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא: ה' וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא

בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִמָּלֵט כִּי בַּהֲרָצִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּהְיֶה

פְּלִיטָה כָּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה וּבְשָׂרִידִים אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה

קְרָא:

JOEL 3

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 הָהֵמָּה וּבַעֲתָהּ הִיא אֲשֶׁר אֶשׁוּב
אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם: ב וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶת־
כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וְהוֹרְדֹתִים אֶל־עִמְקֵי יְהוֹשָׁפָט וְנִשְׁפָּטוּ
עִמָּם שָׁם עַל־עַמִּי וְנַחֲלֹתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר פָּזְרוּ
בְּגוֹיִם וְאֶת־אֶרֶצִי חָלְקוּ: ג וְאֶל־עַמִּי יָדוּ גֹרֶל וַיִּתְּנוּ
הַיֵּלֶד בַּזֹּנָה וְהַיִּלְדָּה מָכְרוּ בֵּין וַיִּשְׁתּוּ: ד וְגַם מִה־
אַתָּם לִי צָר וְצִידוֹן וְכָל־גְּלִילוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּי הַגָּמוּל אֶתָּם
מִשְׁלָמִים עָלַי וְאִם־גְּמֻלִים אֶתָּם עָלַי קֹל מִהֶרָה
אָשִׁיב גְּמֻלָּכֶם בְּרֹאשְׁכֶם: ה אֲשֶׁר־כִּסְפִי וְזָהָבִי
לְקַחְתֶּם וּמַחְמְדֵי הַטְּבִים הִבַּאתֶם לְהִכְלִיכֶם:
ו וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם מְכַרְתֶּם לְבָנֵי הַיּוֹנִים
לְמַעַן הִרְחִיקֵם מֵעַל גְּבוּלָם: ז הִנְנִי מַעֲיָרִם 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’ (אֶשׁוּב).
- 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.

הַמִּקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתָם שָׁמָּה וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי
גְּמִלְכֶם בְּרָאשֵׁיכֶם: ^ח וּמָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם וְאֶת־
בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם בְּיַד בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה וּמָכְרוּם לְשָׂבָאִים אֶל־גּוֹי
רְחוֹק כִּי יִהְיֶה דְבָר: {פ}

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!”

ט קְרֹאוּ־זֹאת בְּגוֹיִם
קִדְּשׁוּ מִלְחָמָה
הַעֲרִירוּ הַגִּבּוֹרִים
יִגְשׁוּ יַעֲלוּ כָל אַנְשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה:
י פָּתוּ אֹתֵיכֶם לַחֲרָבוֹת
וּמִזְמֶרְתֵיכֶם לְרִמְחִים הַחֲלָשׁ
יֹאמֶר גִּבּוֹר אֲנִי:
יא עוֹשׂוּ וּבֹאוּ כָל־הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב וְנִקְבְּצוּ
שָׁמָּה הַנִּחַת יְהוָה גִּבּוֹרֵיךָ:
יב יַעֲזְרוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ הַגּוֹיִם
אֶל־עֶמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט
כִּי שָׁם אֲשַׁב לִשְׁפֹט
אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב:

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 עוֹרִי (‘arouse’). ‘Assemble’ follows the LXX (συνάγειν); 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’.

ג' שִׁלְחוּ מַגֵּל בִּי בִשְׁל קָצִיר
 בָּאוּ רִדּוֹ בִּי־מִלְאָה גֹת
 הַשִּׁיקוּ הַיִּקְבִּים בִּי רַבָּה רַעְתָּם:
 יד' הַמוֹנִים הַמוֹנִים
 בְּעֶמֶק הַחֲרוֹץ
 בִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה
 בְּעֶמֶק הַחֲרוֹץ:
 טו' שֶׁמֶשׁ וִירַח קִדְרוּ
 וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲסָפוּ נִגְהָם:
 טז' וַיְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג
 וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ
 וְרָעְשׁוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ
 וַיְהוָה מַחֲסֵה לְעַמּוֹ
 וּמַעֲזוֹ לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 ז' וַיֵּדְעוּתָם בִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 שֹׁכֵן בְּצִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁ
 וְהִיטָה יְרוּשָׁלַם קֹדֶשׁ
 וְזָרִים לֹא־יַעֲבֹרוּבָה עוֹד: {ס}

- 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!"
- 14 Multitude on multitude
in the Valley of Decision!
For the Day of Yahweh is near
in the Valley of the Verdict!
- 15 Sun and moon grow dark,
the stars lose their brilliance.
- 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.
- 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."

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 בַּיּוֹם
 הַהוּא יִטְפוּ הַהָרִים עֲסִים
 וְהַגְּבְעוֹת תִּלְכְּנָה חֶלֶב
 וְכָל־אֲפִיקֵי יְהוּדָה
 יִלְכוּ מַיִם
 וּמַעַיִן מִבֵּית יְהוָה יֵצֵא וְהִשְׁקָה
 אֶת־נַחַל הַשְּׁטִים:
 ט מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁמְמָה תִּהְיֶה
 וְאֱדוֹם לְמִדְבָּר שִׁמְמָה תִּהְיֶה
 מִחֲמַס בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה
 אֲשֶׁר־שָׁפְכוּ דָם־נָקִיָּא בָאָרֶץ:
 כ וִיהוּדָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב
 וִירוּשָׁלַם לְדוֹר וָדוֹר:
 כא וְנָקִיתִי דָמָם לֹא־נָקִיתִי
 וִיהוָה שֹׁכֵן 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'.