Joel

Chapter 1

1 This is the word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Petuel:[[1]](#footnote-1)

2 Listen, oh elders;[[2]](#footnote-2)

 take heed, all those who live on the land.

Has there been anything like this in your lifetimes

 or in the lifetimes of your parents?

3 You will tell your children of this,

and your children will tell their children of this,

 and their children will tell a different generation of this:

 4 “What remains after the chewer-locusts

will be eaten by the locusts,

what remains after the locusts

will be eaten by the springing-locusts,

what remains after the springing-locusts

 will be eaten by the finisher[[3]](#footnote-3)-locusts.[[4]](#footnote-4)

5 Wake, oh drunkards, and weep,

 wail, oh drinkers of wine

over the sweet wine you are denied drinking.

6 For a nation has risen up against My land –

 innumerable, mighty,

with lion’s teeth –

 its fangs the fangs of a lioness.

7 It has laid My vines to waste,

 and splintered My fig trees.

 It has stripped them bare

 and cast them down, their cuttings bleached.

8  Wail like a young woman donning sackcloth

 for her husband in her youth.

9 Grain offerings and libations have been cut off

 from the House of the Lord.

The priests, attendants of the Lord,

 Are in mourning.

10 The field has been devastated,

 the earth is in mourning .

The grain is devastated,

 the young wine has dried up,

and the oil languishes.

11 Farmers, be ashamed,

 vintners, bewail

the wheat, the barley,

 the harvest of the field – destroyed.

12 The vine has withered,

 and the fig tree languishes;

the pomegranate;

also the date.

The apple

and all the orchard trees wither.

Truly man is parched of joy.”

13 Don sackcloth ––mourn, O priests.

Wail, oh attendants of the altar.

Come sleep in sackcloth, attendants of my God,[[5]](#footnote-5)

for grain offerings and libations have been cut off

from the House of your God.

14 Sanctify a fast day,

convene an assembly,

gather the elders

 and all those who live on the land

to the House of the Lord, your God, and cry out to the Lord.

15 Oh, for the day,

 the Day of the Lord is nigh;

like havoc from the Almighty[[6]](#footnote-6) it will come.

16 Is not food cut off

in front of our very eyes;[[7]](#footnote-7)

happiness and joy[[8]](#footnote-8)

from the House of our God?

17 The seeds have shriveled

under the clods.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The storehouses

 are desolate.

The granaries

have been destroyed;

 the grain has dried up.

18 Oh the animals, how they moan.

Herds of cattle are in confusion,

for they are without pasturage;

even the flocks of sheep suffer.[[10]](#footnote-10)

19 To You, my Lord, I cry out.

 Fire has consumed the desert pasture,

and flame has been ignited all the orchard trees.

20  Even the animals of the fields

long for You –

for the river-beds are dry,

and fire has consumed the desert pasture.

Joel Chapter 2

1 “Blow a shofar in Zion;

sound a horn on My holy mountain.

Let all those who live on the land

tremble,[[11]](#footnote-11)

for the Day of the Lord is coming,

it is nigh.

2 It is a day of darkness and blinding black,

a day of clouds and mist[[12]](#footnote-12)

like dawn spread over the mountains.[[13]](#footnote-13)

There will be a great and mighty[[14]](#footnote-14) nation

the likes of which has never been before

nor will ever be again

 until the end of time.

3 Before it, the consuming fire,

 after it, a burning flame.

The land, like Eden, before it,

after it, a barren desert.

It leaves not one survivor.

4 Its resemblance is to horses –

Like war-horses, so they run.

5 Theirs is the pounding of chariots

dancing over the mountain peaks;

theirs is the crackle of a flame

as it consumes straw;

theirs is the shout

of a vast nation ready for battle.

6 Nations tremble before them;

every face grows white.[[15]](#footnote-15)

7 They race like warriors;

like soldiers they ascend the wall:

Every soldier moving forward in position,

not one strays[[16]](#footnote-16) from the route.

8 They advance untouching,

every warrior moving forward in position along the track.

They fall on the sword

but are not wounded.[[17]](#footnote-17)

9 They rush[[18]](#footnote-18) into the city,

race over the wall,

ascend into the houses

like thieves through the windows.”

10 The earth trembles before Him,[[19]](#footnote-19)

the skies thunder,

the sun and the moon go dark,

and the stars draw in their light .[[20]](#footnote-20)

11 Then the Lord raises His voice before His troops –

for His camp is vast,

 and mighty are the ones who carry out His words.

For great and terrifying is the day of the Lord –

who could withstand it?[[21]](#footnote-21)

12 “Even now

so says the Lord,

“return to Me[[22]](#footnote-22) wholeheartedly,

with fasting, weeping and grief.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

13 Rend your hearts,

not your clothing,

and come back to the Lord your God.

For He is gracious and compassionate,

slow to anger and abounding in -kindness,[[24]](#footnote-24) He may well relent and forswear the evil.

14 Who knows? Maybe He will reconsider and relent[[25]](#footnote-25)

and leave behind blessings:

offer grain offerings and libations

to the Lord, your God.

15 Blow a shofar in Zion,

sanctify a fast day,

convene an assembly,

16  gather the people,

sanctify the masses,

convene the old, and

gather the children and infants.

Let the groom come from his room

and the bride from her wedding chamber.[[26]](#footnote-26)

17 Let the priests, attendants of the Lord, weep

between the hallway and the altar.

Let them say:

“Have compassion, oh Lord, upon Your people,

and do not allow Your possession to become a reproach –

ruled by nations.”

Why should it be said among the peoples, “Where is their God?”

18 Then the Lord will be fiercely zealous toward[[27]](#footnote-27) His land,

and He will have mercy upon His nation.

19 He will reply and say to His nation:

“So, I will send to you grain

and sweet wine, and young oil.

You will be sated with it.

I will no longer allow you to become a reproach among the nations.

20 I will drive the Northerner[[28]](#footnote-28) away from you –

I will banish them to a dry and desolate land;

their vanguard to the east sea,

their rearguard to the west sea.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Their foul smell will ascend,

their stench will rise,

for they have done terrible things.

21 Fear not, oh earth.

Rejoice. Be glad.

For the Lord has done great things.

22  Fear not, animals of My fields,

for the desert pasture is green with grass;[[30]](#footnote-30)

the tree has borne fruit:

the fig and vine have blossomed.”

23 Rejoice and be glad in the Lord, your God, Children of Zion.[[31]](#footnote-31)

For He has given you the first rain[[32]](#footnote-32) out of generosity.[[33]](#footnote-33)

He will rain down for you the first and last rain

as it was in the beginning.

24 The granaries will fill with grain,

and the press will overflow[[34]](#footnote-34)

with sweet wine and young oil.

25 “I will repay you for all the seasons

consumed by the locusts, the springing-locusts, the finisher-locusts and the chewer-locusts –

My great army, which I sent among you.

26 You will eat, eat and be sated,

and you will praise the name of the Lord, your God,

who has done wonders for you.

For My nation will never be ashamed.

27  You will know that I am among Israel,

and I am the Lord your God;

there is no other.[[35]](#footnote-35)

“My nation will never be ashamed.”

Joel Chapter 3

1 “Afterward, this is what will be:

I will pour My spirit out over Humankind:[[36]](#footnote-36)

your sons and your daughters

will speak prophecy,

your elders

will dream dreams,

your young men

will see visions.

 2 In those days,

even over the slaves and bondswomen

 I will pour My spirit out.

3 I will turn the skies and land into omens:

blood and fire and pillars of smoke.[[37]](#footnote-37)

4 The sun will go dark,

the moon bloody

before the coming great and terrifying]day of the Lord.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

5 And all those who call on the name of the Lord will escape,

for there will be a remnant on Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem

as the Lord has said;

even among the survivors called by the Lord[[39]](#footnote-39)

there will be a remnant.[[40]](#footnote-40)[[41]](#footnote-41)

Chapter 4

1  “For it will be in those days and at that time[[42]](#footnote-42)

that I will restore those held captive

from Judah and Jerusalem.

2 I will gather all the nations

 and bring them down to the Valley of Yehoshafat.[[43]](#footnote-43)

There I will carry out judgment against them

for the sake of My people,

My possession Israel,

whom they scattered among the nations,

and for the sake of My land,

which they divided among themselves.

3 They cast lots for[[44]](#footnote-44) My nation

and handed over young boys for the hire of a harlot

and sold young girls for wine,

and they drank.

4 But what are you to me,

Tyre and Sidon,

all the Philistine regions?[[45]](#footnote-45)

Do you deign to retaliate against me?

And if you retaliate,

how quickly and easily I will repay your deeds upon your head.[[46]](#footnote-46)

 5 You took My silver and gold

and carried My precious things away to your temples.

 6 You sold the Judeans and Jerusalemites to the Ionians

to cast them far from their borders.

 7 But I will rouse them from the place to which you sold them,

and I will repay your deeds upon your head.

 8 I will sell your sons and daughters

into the hands of the Judeans,

who will sell them to the Sabeans – a far off nation.”

For the Lord has spoken.

9  Call this out to the nations:

Sanctify a war[[47]](#footnote-47) and

let the warriors stir .

Let all the men of war

approach, ascend.

10 Beat your plowshares into swords

and your pruning hooks into spears.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Let the weak say, “I am mighty.”

11 Come swiftly, all you surrounding nations,[[49]](#footnote-49)

and gather together there.

Oh, Lord, let Your warriors descend.

12  “Let the nations stir and go up

 to the Valley of Yehoshafat,

for it is there that I will sit and judge

all the surrounding nations.

13 Hoist the sickle;[[50]](#footnote-50)

the harvest is ripe.

Come trample;

 the wine press is full.

The vats of wine overflow,

so great is the evil they have done.

14 Masses upon masses

in the Valley of Decision,[[51]](#footnote-51)

for the Day of the Lord is nigh

in the Valley of Decision.

15 The sun and moon go dark

and the stars draw in their light.”

16 The Lord roars from Zion;[[52]](#footnote-52)

from Jerusalem He raises His voice.

The heavens and the earth tremble.

But the Lord will be a shelter

 for His people,

a stronghold[[53]](#footnote-53)

for the Children of Israel.

 17 ”So you will know that I am the Lord, your God –

the One who resides in Zion, My holy mountain,

Jerusalem will be sacred;

strangers will pass through her no longer.[[54]](#footnote-54)

18 On that day,

the mountains will sprinkle sweet wine.[[55]](#footnote-55)

the hills will flow with milk,

and all of Judah’s rivers will flow, full of water.

A spring will surge forth from the House of the Lord

and irrigate the Valley of Acacias.

19 Egypt will be desolate,

Edom a barren desert[[56]](#footnote-56)

because of the violence they have perpetrated against Judah[[57]](#footnote-57) –

because of the innocent blood they spilled in their land.

20 But Judah will be forever settled,[[58]](#footnote-58)

Jerusalem to the end of time.

21 I will avenge their blood,

not yet avenged.”[[59]](#footnote-59)

For the Lord resides in Zion.

1. Cf Jonah 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Some translators opt to translate this literally, your elderly, however, it seems to me that the lion’s share of cases where the term זקנים is used in the Tanakh, it is used to refer to elders. In any case for this phrase, cf Hos. 5:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Deut 28:38 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Many a article has been written on the various names for locusts that are mentioned in these verses. Some see them as one species of locust in various states of development. Others see them as different types of locust. I have relied on Crenshaw for this interpretation. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. 2 Sam 12:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. Isaiah 13:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In this funny little verse there is one verb נכרת , for both parts of the sentence. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Deut 12:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This is the only place in the Tanakh where this word appears. Per the BDB it’s meaning is gleaned from the Aramaic מגרופיתא and the Arabic. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Per Prof. Assis (email correspondence) the root of this word could either be אשם or שממ. It is most likely אשם and refers not to guilt, but to punishment. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Per Crenshaw this verb is imperfect or jussive- i.e. either a command or a description of their current state- [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Cf. Zeph 1:15, Exo 10:15 and Amos 5:18-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. פרש can refer to either the day, or the nation. As Crenshaw points out though, the טעמים indicate that it refers to the day. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Cf. Exodus 10:6, 14- referring, of course, to the Plague of the Locusts. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Nah. 2:11. According to Prof. Assis (email correspondence) the root of this very puzzling word comes from פאר-glory, and the phrase means, every face gathers in its glory. I have taken the general idea of that translation and rendered it in an idiom perhaps more familiar to the reader [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This is the only place this word appears in the Tanakh and its meaning is uncertain. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. This interpretation is based on Radak and Metzudat David’s reading. Crenshaw, however, reads this differently. He interprets this scene as soldiers infiltrating a city via the aqueducts- שלח here meaning aqueduct and יבצעו, attack. I chose to go with the Rabbinic interpretation. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Cf. Isa.33:4, Nah 2:5 Prov. 28:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. As Crenshaw points out, the subject here could be God, or the swarm of locusts. But given, the fact that it is in singular, it is more likely that this verse is connected to the following verses and refers to God. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Cf. Isa 13: 10, 13:13, Ezek 32:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Cf. Mal. 3:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Per Crenshaw, the term עד or עדי is slightly more forceful than the more common term אל. Cf. Deut 4:30, Amos 4: 6-11 and Hos 14:2. This nuance is a bit difficult to express in English. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Cf. Esther 4:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Cf. Lev. 5:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Cf. Jonah 3: 6-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The general consensus here is that the word חפה here refers to the room where the bride and groom would retire to to be alone and not the wedding canopy. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Per Crenshaw, ויקנא can either be understood as prophetic perfect or promissory: the MT opts for the former. Cf. Deut 5:9-10, Isa 9:6, 37:32, Zech 1:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The general consensus here is that the Northerners refers to the locusts. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Cf. Crenshaw [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cf. Gen 1:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Cf. Lam 4:2, Psalms 149:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This is an unusual term for the יורה, the first rain. Cf. Psalms 84:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Per Metzudat David. Crenshaw interprets this in almost opposite fashion. He reads צדקה here as related to צדק- the way the world should run. The people are being given rain so that the earth can return to its natural order. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Cf. Psa lms 65:10. These are the only two places that this word appears with this meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Cf. Isa 45:5 see also Deut 5;6, Ex 20:2, Deut 4:35,39, 32:39 1 Kings 8:60 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cf. Isa. 32:15, and Ezek. 39: 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Cf. Ezek 38:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The idea of darkness as an act of God is a theme that runs through a number of books in the Tanakh. Cf. Amos 8:9, Isa 13:10, 34:4, Ezek 32:7-8, Jer 4:23 and of course Exod 10:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Cf. Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Cf. Ob. 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The syntax of this verse is a little bit tricky. However, as Crenshaw points out, it is not unintelligible if we understand the word פליטה to carry over to the clause ובשרידים. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The phrase בימים ההמה ובעת ההיא only occurs here and in Jer. 33:15, 50:4, 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Nobody knows the geographical location of this valley. It is possible that it was chosen simply for the play on words- יהושפט and משפט [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Per Radak and Metzudat David, the אל here should be read as על [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. This phrase only occurs here and in Josh. 13:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Cf. Ob. 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. cf. Isa 13:3, Mic 3:5 Jer 6:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. This is an inversion of the famous passages in Isaiah and Micah Cf. Isa 2:2-4, Mic 4:1-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The meaning of the Hebrew here is uncertain. I have based my translation on Crenshaw and the NRSV [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. This word for sickle only occurs here and in Jer 50:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. This is probably another reference to the Valley of Yehoshafat [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Cf. Amos 1:2 and Jer. 25:30 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. cf. Ps. 46:2, Isa. 25:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Cf. Isa. 52:1, Zech 14: 20-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Cf. Amos 9:11-15 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. As Metzudat David points out, historically these are the first and last enemies of the people of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Cf. Ob. 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Cf. Zech 12:6. This is in contrast to Isa 13:20, Jer 17:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. This is one of the more famous and difficult passages in Joel. Many of the translations deal with it by relying on the Septuagint’s reading of the first נקה as נקם. I am relying on Prof. Assis’s translation (email correspondence.) [↑](#footnote-ref-59)