

# JOEL

**1** The word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Pethuel.

<sup>2</sup>Listen to this, O elders,  
Give ear, all inhabitants of the land.  
Has the like of this happened in your days  
Or in the days of your fathers?  
<sup>3</sup>Tell your children about it,  
And let your children tell theirs,  
And their children the next generation!  
<sup>4</sup>What the cutter<sup>a</sup> has left, the locust has de-  
voured;  
What the locust has left, the grub has de-  
voured;  
And what the grub has left, the hopper has  
devoured.  
<sup>5</sup>Wake up, you drunkards, and weep,  
Wail, all you swillers of wine—  
For the new wine that is <sup>b</sup>denied you!  
<sup>6</sup>For a nation has invaded my land,  
Vast beyond counting,  
With teeth like the teeth of a lion,  
With the fangs of a lion's breed.  
<sup>7</sup>They have laid my vines waste  
And splintered my fig trees:  
They have stripped off their bark and thrown  
[it] away;  
Their runners have turned white.  
<sup>8</sup>Lament—like a maiden girl with sackcloth  
For the husband of her youth!

<sup>a</sup> The Heb. terms translated "cutter, locust, grub, and hopper" are of uncertain meaning; they probably designate stages in the development of the locust.

<sup>b-b</sup> Lit. "cut off from your mouth."

# יואל

**א** דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־יֹאֵל בֶּן־פֶּתוּאֵל:

<sup>2</sup> שְׁמַעְזֹאת הַזְקֵנִים  
וְהָאֲזִינוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ  
הֲהִיְתָה זֹאת בְּיָמֵיכֶם  
וְאִם בְּיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם:  
<sup>3</sup> עֲלִיָּה לְבָנֵיכֶם סִפְרוּ  
וּבְנֵיכֶם לְבָנֵיהֶם  
וּבְנֵיהֶם לְדֹר אַחֵר:  
<sup>4</sup> וְיֵתֵר הַגֶּזֶם אָכַל הָאַרְבֶּה  
וְיֵתֵר הָאַרְבֶּה אָכַל הַיִּלֶּק  
וְיֵתֵר הַיִּלֶּק אָכַל הַחֲסִיל:  
<sup>5</sup> הִקְיָצוּ שְׂפוּרִים וּבָכוּ  
וְהִילְלוּ כָּל־שְׁתֵּי יָיִן  
עַל־עֹסִים כִּי נִכְרַת מִפִּיכֶם:  
<sup>6</sup> כִּי־גוֹי עָלָה עַל־אַרְצִי  
עָצוּם וְאִין מִסְפָּר  
שָׁנָיו שְׁנֵי אֲרִיָּה  
וּמִתְלַעוֹת לְבִיא לוֹ:  
<sup>7</sup> שֵׁם גִּפְנֵי לְשֹׁמֵה  
וְתֹאנְתִי לְקַצֶּפָּה  
חֲשֹׁף חֲשֹׁפָהּ וְהַשְׁלִיךְ  
הַלְבִּינוּ שְׂרִיגֶיהָ:

<sup>8</sup> אֶלֹּי כְּבַתּוּלָה חֲגַרְתִּי־שֵׁק  
עַל־בָּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ:

<sup>9</sup>Offering and libation have ceased

From the House of the LORD;

The priests must mourn

Who minister to the LORD.

<sup>10</sup>The country is ravaged,

The ground must mourn;

For the new grain is ravaged,

The new wine is dried up,

The new oil has failed.

<sup>11</sup>Farmers are dismayed

And vine dressers wail

Over wheat and barley;

For the crops of the field are lost.

<sup>12</sup>The vine has dried up,

The fig tree withers,

Pomegranate, palm, and apple—

All the trees of the field are sear.

And joy has dried up

Among men.

<sup>13</sup>Gird yourselves and lament, O priests,

Wail, O ministers of the altar;

Come, spend the night in sackcloth,

O ministers of my God.

For offering and libation are withheld

From the House of your God.

<sup>14</sup>Solemnize a fast,

Proclaim an assembly;

Gather the elders—all the inhabitants of the  
land—

In the House of the LORD your God,

And cry out to the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>Alas for the day!

For the day of the LORD is near;

It shall come like havoc from Shaddai.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>16</sup>For food is cut off

Before our very eyes,

<sup>9</sup>הַכֶּרֶת מִנִּחָה וְנִסָּךְ

מִבֵּית יְהוָה

אֲבָלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים

מִשְׁרָתִי יְהוָה:

<sup>10</sup>שָׂדֶד שָׂדֶה

אֲבָלָה אֲדָמָה

בִּי שָׂדֶד דָּגָן

הוֹבִישׁ תִּירוֹשׁ

אֲמָלַל יִצְהָר:

<sup>11</sup>הַבִּישׁוּ אֲפָרִים

הִילִילוּ כְרָמִים

עַל-חֹטֶה וְעַל-שַׁעֲרָה

כִּי אֲבָד קִצִּיר שָׂדֶה:

<sup>12</sup>הַגֶּפֶן הוֹבִישָׁה

וְהַתְּאֵנָה אֲמָלְלָה

רִמּוֹן גַּם-תְּמָר וְתַפּוּחַ

כָּל-עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה יִבְשׁוּ

כִּי-הִבִּישׁ שָׁשׂוֹן

מִן-בְּנֵי אָדָם: וְסִ

<sup>13</sup>חֲגִרוּ וְסִפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים

הִילִילוּ מִשְׁרָתִי מִזִּבְחַ

בָּאוּ לִינוּ בְּשָׂקִים

מִשְׁרָתִי אֱלֹהֵי

כִּי נִמְנַע מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

מִנִּחָה וְנִסָּךְ:

<sup>14</sup>קִדְשׁוּ-צוּם

קִרְאוּ עֲצָרָה

אִסְפוּ זָקֵנִים כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ

בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

וְזַעֲקוּ אֶל-יְהוָה:

<sup>15</sup>אֲהֵה לַיּוֹם

כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה

וּכְשׁוֹד מִשְׁדֵּי יָבוֹא:

<sup>16</sup>הָלֹא נִגַּד עֵינֵינוּ

אֲכָל נִכְרַת

<sup>c</sup> Traditionally "the Almighty"; see Gen. 17.1.

And joy and gladness  
From the House of our God.  
<sup>17d</sup>The seeds have shriveled  
Under their clods.<sup>d</sup>  
The granaries are desolate,  
Barns are in ruins,  
For the new grain has failed.  
<sup>18</sup>How the beasts groan!  
The herds of cattle are bewildered  
Because they have no pasture,  
And the flocks of sheep are dazed.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>19</sup>To You, O LORD, I call.  
For fire<sup>e</sup> has consumed  
The pastures in the wilderness,  
And flame<sup>e</sup> has devoured  
All the trees of the countryside.  
<sup>20</sup>The very beasts of the field  
Cry out to You;  
For the watercourses are dried up,  
And fire has consumed  
The pastures in the wilderness.

**2** Blow a horn in Zion,  
Sound an alarm on My holy mount!  
Let all dwellers on earth tremble,  
For the day of the LORD has come!  
It is close—  
<sup>2</sup>A day of darkness and gloom,  
A day of densest cloud  
Spread like soot over the hills.  
A vast, enormous horde—  
Nothing like it has ever happened,  
And it shall never happen again  
Through the years and ages.

<sup>d-d</sup> Meaning of Heb. uncertain.  
<sup>e</sup> I.e., scorching heat.

מבית אלהינו  
שמחה וגיל:  
<sup>17</sup> עבשו פרדות  
תחת מגרפתיהם  
נשמו אצרות  
נהרסו ממגרות  
כי הביש דגן:  
<sup>18</sup> מה נאנחה בהמה  
נבכו עדרי בקר  
כי אין מרעה להם  
גם עדרי הצאן נאשמו:

<sup>19</sup> אליך יהוה אקרא  
כי אש אכלה  
נאות מדבר  
ולחבה להטה  
כל-עצי השדה:  
<sup>20</sup> גם-בהמות שדה  
תערוג אליך  
כי יבשו אפיקי מים  
ואש אכלה  
נאות המדבר: פ

**ב** תקעו שופר בציון  
והריעו בהר קדשי  
ירגזו כל ישבי הארץ  
כי-בא יום-יהוה  
כי קרוב:  
<sup>2</sup> יום חשך ואפלה  
יום ענן וערפל  
כשחר פרש על-ההרים  
עם רב ועצום  
כמהו לא נהיה מן-העולם  
ואחריו לא יוסף  
עד-שני דור ודור:



<sup>3</sup>Their vanguard is a consuming fire,  
 Their rear guard a devouring flame.  
 Before them the land was like the Garden of Eden,  
 Behind them, a desolate waste:  
 Nothing has escaped them.  
<sup>4</sup>They have the appearance of horses,  
 They gallop just like steeds.  
<sup>5</sup>With a clatter as of chariots  
 They bound on the hilltops,  
 With a noise like a blazing fire  
 Consuming straw;  
 Like an enormous horde  
 Arrayed for battle.  
<sup>6</sup>Peoples tremble before them,  
 All faces <sup>a</sup>turn ashen.<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>7</sup>They rush like warriors,  
 They scale a wall like fighters.  
 And each keeps to his own track.  
 Their paths never cross;<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>8</sup>No one jostles another,  
 Each keeps to his own course.  
<sup>b</sup>And should they fall through a loophole,  
 They do not get hurt.<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>9</sup>They rush up the wall,  
 They dash about in the city;  
 They climb into the houses,  
 They enter like thieves  
 By way of the windows.  
<sup>10</sup>Before them earth trembles,  
 Heaven shakes,  
 Sun and moon are darkened,  
 And stars withdraw their brightness.  
<sup>11</sup>And the LORD roars aloud  
 At the head of His army;  
 For vast indeed is His host,  
 Numberless are those that do His bidding.  
 For great is the day of the LORD,

<sup>a-a</sup> Meaning of Heb. uncertain; cf. Nah. 2.11.

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

<sup>3</sup>לפניו אכלה אש  
 ואחריו תלהט להבה  
 כגן-עדן הארץ לפניו  
 ואחריו מדבר שממה  
 וגם-פליטה לא-היתה לו:  
<sup>4</sup>כמראה סוסים מראהו  
 וכפרשים כן ירוצין:  
<sup>5</sup>כקול מרפבות  
 על-ראשי ההרים ירקדון  
 כקול להב אש  
 אכלה קש  
 כעם עצום  
 ערוה מלחמה:  
<sup>6</sup>מפניו יחילו עמים  
 כל-פנים קבצו פאור:  
<sup>7</sup>כגבורים ירצון  
 כאנשי מלחמה יעלו חומה  
 ואיש בדרכיו ילכון  
 ולא יעבטון ארחותם:  
<sup>8</sup>ואיש אחיו לא ידחקון  
 גבר במסלתו ילכון  
 ובעד השלח יפלו  
 לא יבצעו:  
<sup>9</sup>בעיר ישקו  
 בחומה ירצון  
 בבתים יעלו  
 בעד החלונות  
 יבאו כגנב:  
<sup>10</sup>לפניו רגזה ארץ  
 רעשו שמים  
 שמש וירח קדרו  
 וכוכבים אספו נגהם:  
<sup>11</sup>ויהוה נתן קולו  
 לפני חילו  
 כי רב מאד מחנהו  
 כי עצום עשה דברו  
 כי-גדול יום-יהוה

Most terrible—who can endure it?

<sup>12</sup>“Yet even now”—says the LORD—

“Turn back to Me with all your hearts,  
And with fasting, weeping, and lamenting.”

<sup>13</sup>Rend your hearts

Rather than your garments,

And turn back to the LORD your God.

For He is gracious and compassionate,  
Slow to anger, abounding in kindness,  
And renouncing punishment.

<sup>14</sup>Who knows but He may turn and relent,  
And leave a blessing behind

For meal offering and drink offering  
To the LORD your God?<sup>c</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Blow a horn in Zion,

Solemnize a fast,

Proclaim an assembly!

<sup>16</sup>Gather the people,

Bid the congregation purify themselves.<sup>d</sup>

Bring together the old,

Gather the babes

And the sucklings at the breast;

Let the bridegroom come out of his chamber,

The bride from her canopied couch.

<sup>17</sup>Between the portico and the altar,

Let the priests, the LORD's ministers, weep

And say:

“Oh, spare Your people, LORD!

Let not Your possession become a mockery,

To be taunted by nations!

Let not the peoples say,

‘Where is their God?’”

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD was roused

On behalf of His land

And had compassion

וְנִרְאָה מְאֹד וּמִי יִכְלֶנּוּ:

<sup>12</sup> וְגַם-עַתָּה נֹאמֵר יְהוָה

שׁוּבוּ עָדִי בְכָל-לִבְבְּכֶם

וּבְצוֹם וּבִבְכֻי וּבְמִסְפָּד:

<sup>13</sup> וְקַרְעוּ לִבְבְּכֶם

וְאַל-בְּגְדֵיכֶם

וּשׁוּבוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

כִּי-חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם הוּא

אֶרֶץ אֲפִים וְרַב-חֶסֶד

וְנָחָם עַל-הָרָעָה:

<sup>14</sup> מִי יֹדַע יֵשׁוּב וְנָחָם

וְהַשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה

מִנְחָה וְנִסֵּךְ

לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: פ

<sup>15</sup> תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִיּוֹן

קְדַשׁוּצוֹם

קִרְאוּ עֲצָרָה:

<sup>16</sup> אִסְפוּ-עַם

קִדְשׁוּ קָהָל

קִבְצוּ זָקְנִים

אִסְפוּ עוֹלָלִים

וַיִּנְקִי שָׂדִים

יֵצֵא חַתָּן מִחֲדָרוֹ

וְכֻלָּה מִחֻפְתָּהּ:

<sup>17</sup> בֵּין הָאוֹלָם וּלְמִזְבֵּחַ

יִבְכוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים מִשְׁרַתִּי יְהוָה

וַיֹּאמְרוּ

חֲסֵסָה יְהוָה עַל-עַמּוּךְ

וְאַל-תִּתֵּן נַחֲלֶתְךָ לַחֲרֻפָּה

לְמִשְׁלַבָּם גּוֹיִם

לִמָּה יֹאמְרוּ בְּעַמִּים

אֵיָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

<sup>18</sup> וַיִּקְנֵא יְהוָה

לְאַרְצוֹ

וַיַּחֲמַל

<sup>c</sup> When the locusts depart, there will again be yield enough for offerings; see 1.9.

<sup>d</sup> Cf. Exod. 19.10; Zeph. 1.7.

Upon His people.

<sup>19</sup>In response to His people

The LORD declared:

"I will grant you the new grain,

The new wine, and the new oil,

And you shall have them in abundance.

Nevermore will I let you be

A mockery among the nations.

<sup>20</sup>I will drive the northerner<sup>e</sup> far from you,

I will thrust it into a parched and desolate  
land—

Its van to the Eastern Sea<sup>f</sup>

And its rear to the Western Sea;<sup>g</sup>

And the stench of it shall go up,

And the foul smell rise."

For [the LORD] shall work great deeds.

<sup>21</sup>Fear not, O soil, rejoice and be glad;

For the LORD has wrought great deeds.

<sup>22</sup>Fear not, O beasts of the field,

For the pastures in the wilderness

Are clothed with grass.

The trees have borne their fruit;

Fig tree and vine

Have yielded their strength.

<sup>23</sup>O children of Zion, be glad,

Rejoice in the LORD your God.

For He has given you the early rain in [His]  
kindness,

Now He makes the rain fall [as] formerly—

The early rain and the late—

<sup>24</sup>And threshing floors shall be piled with  
grain,

And vats shall overflow with new wine and  
oil.

<sup>25</sup>"I will repay you <sup>h</sup>for the years-<sup>h</sup>

Consumed by swarms and hoppers,

<sup>e</sup> I.e., the locusts. Emendation yields "My multitude"; cf. "nation" (1.6), "horde," "army," and "host" (2.2, 5, 11, and 25).

<sup>f</sup> The Dead Sea.

<sup>g</sup> The Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>h-h</sup> Emendation yields "double what was."

על-עמו:

<sup>19</sup> ויען יהוה

ויאמר לעמו

הנני שלח לכם את-הדגן

והתירוש והיצהר

ושבעתם אתו

ולא-אתן אתכם עוד

חרפה בגוים:

<sup>20</sup> ואת-הצפוני ארחיק מעליכם

והדחתיו אל-ארץ ציה ושממה

את-פניו אל-הים הקדמני

וספו אל-הים האחרון

ועלה באשו

ותעל צחנתו

כי הגדיל לעשות:

<sup>21</sup> אל-תיראי אדמה גילי ושמחי

כי-הגדיל יהוה לעשות:

<sup>22</sup> אל-תיראו בהמות שדי

כי דשאו נאות מדבר

כי-עץ נשא פריו

תאנה וגפן

נתנו חילם:

<sup>23</sup> ובני ציון גילו

ושמחו ביהוה אלהיכם

כי-נתן לכם את-המורה לצדקה

ויוור לכם גשם

מורה ומלקוש בראשון:

<sup>24</sup> ומלאו הגרנות בר

והשיקו היקבים תירוש ויצהר:

<sup>25</sup> ושלמתי לכם את-השנים

אשר אכל הארפה הילק



By grubs and locusts,  
The great army I let loose against you.  
26 And you shall eat your fill  
And praise the name of the LORD your God  
Who dealt so wondrously with you—  
My people shall be shamed no more.  
27 And you shall know  
That I am in the midst of Israel:  
That I the LORD am your God  
And there is no other.  
And My people shall be shamed no more.”

והחֲסִיל וְהַגִּזֵּם  
חֵילִי הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּי בְכֶם:  
26 וְאָכַלְתֶּם אָכּוֹל וְשָׂבוּעַ  
וְהִלַּלְתֶּם אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה עִמָּכֶם לְהַפְלִיא  
וְלֹא־יִבְשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם:  
27 וַיֵּדְעֻתֶם  
כִּי בִקְרֹב יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי  
וְאֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
וְאֵין עוֹד  
וְלֹא־יִבְשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם: ס

3 After that,  
I will pour out My spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy;  
Your old men shall dream dreams,  
And your young men shall see visions.  
2 I will even pour out My spirit  
Upon male and female slaves in those days.  
3a-Before the great and terrible day of the  
LORD comes,<sup>a</sup>  
I will set portents in the sky and on earth:  
Blood and fire and pillars of smoke;  
4 The sun shall turn into darkness  
And the moon into blood.  
5 But everyone who invokes the name of the  
LORD shall escape; for there shall be a remnant  
on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, as the LORD  
promised. <sup>b</sup>Anyone who invokes the LORD will  
be among the survivors.<sup>b</sup>

ג וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן  
אֲשַׁפּוּף אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר  
וּבָנָאֻ בְּנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיכֶם  
זְקֵנֵיכֶם חֲלֻמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוּן  
בָּחוּרֵיכֶם חֲזִיוֹת יֵרְאוּ:  
2 וְגַם עַל־הַעֲבָדִים וְעַל־הַשִּׁפְחוֹת  
בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה  
אֲשַׁפּוּף אֶת־רוּחִי:  
3 וְנָתַתִּי מוֹפְתִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ  
דָּם וָאֵשׁ וְתִימְרוֹת עָשָׁן:  
4 הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לְחָשֶׁךְ  
וְהַיָּרֵחַ לְדָם  
לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא:  
5 וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִמָּלֵט  
כִּי בְהִרְצִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּהְיֶה פְּלִיטָה  
כָּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה וּבְשָׂרִידִים אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה  
קָרָא:

4 For lo! in those days  
And in that time,  
When I restore the fortunes  
Of Judah and Jerusalem,

ד כִּי הִנֵּה בַיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה  
וּבְעֵת הַהִיא  
אֲשֶׁר אֲשׁוּב אֲשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוֹת  
יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם:

a-a Brought up from v. 4 for clarity.  
b-b Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

# Joel

The following verses, rather than the selection from Micah, are added to the reading from Hosea when Shabbat Shuvah falls on a day when the weekly sidra is Ha'azinu and not Vayeilech, in which case the verses of Micah are added.

Joel uses a terrible plague of locusts (which may have devastated the land in his time) as a metaphor for God's punishment; and he speaks of a Day of Judgment that is to come—a theme to which the Ten Days of Repentance are devoted.

For more on Joel and his time, see our *General Introduction*.

2:15. Sound the shofar in Zion,

sanctify a fast-day,

call a sacred assembly!

16. Gather the people,

sanctify the congregation;

assemble the elders;

gather the children and babes at the breast.

Let the bridegroom come out of his chamber,

the bride from her canopy.

2:15 תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִיּוֹן

קִדְשׁוּ צוֹם

קִרְאוּ עֲצֻרָה:

16 אִסְפוּ-עָם

קִדְשׁוּ קִהְל'

קִבְצוּ זָקֵנִים

אִסְפוּ עוֹלָלִים וַיִּנְקִי שָׂדִים

יֵצֵא חַתָּן מִחֲדָרֹו

וְכַלָּה מִחֲפָתָהּ:

*The message:*

1. Assembling the people to call on God. (15-17)

2. God's response. (19-20)

3. Joel's joyous response to God's promise. (21-24)

4. The Eternal's promise affirmed. (25-27)

5. Thus, the selection speaks not of the need for repentance; rather, it paints the glorious picture of a people whose return to God will cause God to return to Israel.

## Commentary

16. *Bridegroom ... bride.* The Torah<sup>6</sup> exempts the newlywed man for one year from military service; but here, both groom and bride are summoned to participate in the act of national supplication.



17. Between the vestibule and the altar,  
let the priests, the ministers of the Eternal,  
weep and say:

Have pity on Your people, Eternal One!  
Let not Your heritage be mocked,  
be a byword among the nations.  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
*Where is their God?*

18. Then the Eternal showed zeal for this  
land,  
and compassion for God's people.

19. The Eternal answered God's people,  
saying:

Behold, I will send you grain, wine, and oil,  
and it will satisfy you,  
and I will no longer let you be put to  
shame among the nations.

20. I will remove the northerner far from  
you,  
and drive it to a land parched and  
desolate,  
facing the eastern sea,  
with the western sea at its rear.

17 בין האולם ולמזבח

יבכו הכהנים משרתי יהוה ויאמרו

חוסה יהוה על-עמך

ואל-תתן נחלתך לחרפה

למשל-בם גוים

למה יאמרו בעמים

איזה אלהיהם:

18 ויקנא יהוה לארצו

ויחמל על-עמו:

19 ויען יהוה ויאמר לעמו

הנני שלח לכם את-הדגן והתירוש והיצחק

ושבעתם אותו

ולא-אתן אתכם עוד חרפה בגוים:

20 ואת-הצפוני ארחיק מעליכם

והדחתיו אל-ארץ ציה ושקמה

את-פניו אל-הים הקדמני

וספו אל-הים האחרון

### Commentary

17. *Let the priests ... weep.* Shedding tears of supplication. The priests represent the whole people's urgent appeal.

*A byword.* For mockery and contempt.

18. *God's people.* Literally, "His people."

20. *The northerner.* Traditionally believed to refer to a plague of locusts that devastated the land,<sup>7</sup> but more likely a reference to Israel's historic enemies coming from the north who—like the real locusts—devastated the land. There was also a folk belief that the north was infested with evil spirits, and such mythic thinking underlies the expulsion of the "northerner" into the western and eastern seas.<sup>8</sup>

*Eastern sea ... western sea.* The Dead Sea<sup>9</sup> and the Mediterranean.

Its stench shall rise up, its foul smell shall  
ascend,  
for [God] is doing great things.

21. Fear not, O soil, rejoice and be glad,  
for the Eternal is doing great things.

22. Fear not, O beasts of the field;  
for the pastures of the wilderness are green.  
Every tree bears its fruit,  
the fig-tree and the vine give their yield.

23. O children of Zion, rejoice  
and be glad in the Eternal your God,  
who in kindness is giving you the early  
rain,  
pouring rain down for you,  
the early rain and the later rain of the first  
month.

24. The threshing floors shall be heaped  
with grain,  
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil;

ועלה באשׁו ותעל צחנתו  
כי הגדיל לעשות:

21 אל־תיראִי אֲדָמָה גִילִי ושמְחִי  
כִי־הגדיל יְהוָה לעֲשׂוֹת:

22 אל־תיראִו בְּהֵמַת שָׂדֵי  
כִי דָשְׁאוּ נְאוֹת מִדְבָּר

כִי־עץ נָשָׂא פֵרִיו

תִּאֲנֶה וְגִפֶּן נָתַן חֵילָם:

23 וּבְנֵי צִיּוֹן גִּילוּ

וְשִׂמְחוּ בִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

כִּי־נָתַן לָכֶם אֶת־הַמּוֹרָה לְצֶדֶקָה

וַיּוֹרֵד לָכֶם גֶּשֶׁם

מוֹרָה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ בְּרֹאשׁוֹן:

24 וּמִלְאוּ הַתְּרֹנוֹת בָּר

וְהַשִּׁיקוּ הַיְקָבִים תִּירוֹשׁ וַיִּצְהָר:

### Commentary

[God]. Literally, "He."

23. *In kindness..* Or, "in vindication."<sup>10</sup>

*Pouring rain down.* מוֹרָה (*moreh*) can mean "early rain" as in the next line, or it can mean "teacher." Our translation follows the Talmud rather than most traditional commentators, who consider "teacher" a reference to the Messiah.<sup>11</sup> The heavy emphasis on rain underscores its crucial nature for the country's well-being, the early rain falling usually in October and the late rain in April.

25. I will repay you for what [you lost in]  
the years when the swarmer ate your crops,  
the hopper, the grub, the locust—  
My great army that I sent against you.

26. You shall eat and be satisfied,  
and praise the name of the Eternal your  
God,  
who has done wondrous things for you.  
My people shall never again be put to  
shame.

27. Then you shall know that I am in the  
midst of Israel,  
and that I, the Eternal, am your God,  
and there is no other.  
My people shall never again be put to  
shame.

### Commentary

25. The fourfold sequence of pests appears only in Joel. It is unclear whether they are species of locust or different stages in the locust's life. The terrible damage done by these insects inspired deep fears among the peoples of the Near East. An Assyrian king wrote of his enemies: "One and all they were risen against me to offer battle like a spring invasion of countless locusts."

25 וְשָׁלַמְתִּי לָכֶם

אֶת־הַשָּׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אָכַל הָאֲרָבָה

הַיֵּלֶק וְהַחֲסִיל וְהַגִּגִּים

חֵילִי הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחְתִּי בָכֶם:

26 וְאָכַלְתֶּם אֱכֹל וְשָׂבוֹעַ

וְהִלַּלְתֶּם אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה עִמָּכֶם לְהַפְלִיא

וְלֹא־יָבֹשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם:

27 וַיֵּדְעוּתָם כִּי בְּקִרְבִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי

וְאֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

וְאֵין עוֹד

וְלֹא־יָבֹשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם:



Through Hosea, the image influenced the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 2:2; 3:1). The topic of covenantal love between God and Israel came to celebrated expression in the classical rabbinic interpretations of the Song of Songs.

In addition to his bold and daring use of human images and metaphors, Hosea was also cognizant of the early historical traditions of the nation—of the Exodus (Hos. 2:17; 12:10; 13:4), the desert wandering (9:10; 13:5), the conquest (2:17; 12:14; 13:4), the apostasies at Baal-peor (9:10; cf. Num. 25:1–9) and Gibeah (Hos. 9:9; cf. Judg. 19), and the deceit and adventures of the patriarch Jacob (Hos. 12:3–5). These historical references pervade Hosea's oracles and show how major historical motifs were conveyed to the people at large, although it is often uncertain whether the prophet's version of such episodes is derived from the traditions as we know them from Genesis through Judges or whether they reflect popular variations or adaptations. The striking use of historical motifs to dramatize past and future behavior is a recurrent feature of Hosea's prophecies.

Viewed overall, the Book of Hosea reflects a spiritually weak and inconstant Israel, seduced by the local Canaanite deities and diverse historical-political currents. Perversions of the national cult are threatened with divine punishment (Hos. 9:1–5). The doomsday is forewarned, when the spurned words of the prophet will be vindicated. In all this, the hope for Israel's repentance is never foreclosed as a religious option—though it is realistically tempered by the awareness of Israel's spiritual deceit and inconstancy (6:1–4; 11:5). Nevertheless, this hope is valiantly extended to Israel in the final chapter, in a remarkable closing appeal for a return to God (14:2–9). The book thus begins with doom oracles and is dominated by them up to the final chapter. This arrangement recalls the prophecies of Amos, Hosea's contemporary, where also a succession of doom prophecies are concluded with a vision of hope (Amos 9:11–15). The two works do much to describe and dramatize a bleak religious and spiritual reality for Israel in the mid-eighth century B.C.E.

## THE BOOK OF JOEL

The Book of Joel is the second work in the collection of the Minor Prophets known as *Trei Asar*, or "The Twelve," and is ascribed in the superscription to Joel son of Pethuel. There is no further information either in the superscription or from indications in the text regarding the time or place of the prophet. Overall, the sequence of books in "The Twelve" conforms to the historical periods of the prophets, beginning with Hosea and Amos from the mid-eighth century B.C.E. (as the first and third in the list) and concluding with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi from the late sixth to early fifth centuries B.C.E.<sup>1</sup> The occurrence of Joel between Hosea and Amos puts this prophet earlier than any scholarly reckoning (see below), and many have suggested that his place in the sequence may be due to verbal and thematic considerations. First, some of the final words of Joel (Joel 4:16) tally with the opening words of Amos (Amos 1:1), and an arranger might have brought them into conjunction. Second, the Book of Joel refers repeatedly to the "day of the LORD" as a time of doom and terror (Joel 1:15; 2:11), as does Amos (Amos 5:18, 20). And finally, one may observe that the central horror of the Book of Joel is a plague of locusts, one type of which is called the *gazam* (cutter [Joel 1:4]), whereas the prophet Amos reports how God brought

about a plague of *gazam* (Amos 4:9), among other disasters, in order to bring the people to repentance—all to no avail.

The Book of Joel is composed of four chapters, and these fall into two parts (Joel 1–2 and 3–4).

Part 1 (Joel 1–2) presents a detailed and graphic depiction of an unprecedented locust plague, which attacks like a raving enemy that wipes out the food supply of the people (1:2–7, 10–12, 16–19). The prophet exhorts the people, the elders, and the priests to don sackcloth and beseech God's mercy through repentance, fasting, and prayer. He tells the people to rend their hearts and "turn back" to their gracious Lord—for out of compassion He may "turn and relent" (2:12–14). For their part, the priests are urged to weep and cry out a liturgy of anguish, that the Lord may "spare" His people (2:17).

The turning point comes in response: "Then the LORD was roused on behalf of His land and had compassion upon His people," and in a great word of promise, He tells them that He will provide new grain, wine, and oil in abundance (2:18–19). The liturgies of penitence are now replaced by divine assurances and joyful proclamations by the ravished soil. Rains will come; the threshing floors will fill to overflowing (2:23–24). Thus will God manifest His presence "in the midst of Israel" (2:27).

Part 2 (Joel 3–4) goes on to speak of the end of days: there will be a renewal of prophecy (3:1–2), but soon a "great and terrible day of the LORD comes" (v. 3), when "the sun shall turn into darkness and the moon into blood" (v. 4). Only those who invoke the name of the Lord shall escape (v. 5).

And then there is a report of the restored fortunes of Israel and a judgment of the nations for all that they have done to the people (Joel 4:1–8). In a rousing call, the nations are told to "prepare for battle" (v. 9)—and, in an eerie reversal of Isaiah's ancient oracle of peace, told to beat their plowshares into swords (v. 10)! The multitudes will be judged on a day when the "sun and moon are darkened" (v. 15). The nations of Egypt and Edom will become a desolate waste; but as for Israel, the Lord Himself will be their shelter. He will dwell in Zion, and the earth will flow with wine and milk (vv. 17–18, 21).

Clearly a different scene and language move in the two parts. Nevertheless, there is much verbal and thematic continuity—for example, the dark and devastating day of the Lord (Joel 2:2 and 3:4) and the eventual divine gifts to Israel of natural bounty (2:24 and 4:13).<sup>2</sup> What the first part portrays in terms of a natural disaster, caused by withdrawal of the divine presence, the second part presents as God's supernatural presence in terms of active judgment against Israel's enemies and active grace for His people. And what the first part presents as an event affecting Israel alone becomes in the second part a decision of judgment against the nations.

The leitmotif of disaster in both parts is a day when the land's bounty is laid waste and the lights of heaven go out. By contrast, God's grace is a time of flowing water and healthy fields. The poles of death and life are starkly registered: the dependence of human life upon divine care for existence is manifest.

Finally, one is left to ponder the two parts of the composition: whether the book divides into preexilic and postexilic strands,<sup>3</sup> whether the work is a unity and the locusts are a symbol of the judgment of the Lord,<sup>4</sup> or even whether some natural event stimulated visions of an apocalyptic moment.<sup>5</sup> As to its date, in addition to liturgical practices and language,<sup>6</sup> the whole tone of the book suggests that we are dealing with a period sometime after the restoration of the Second Temple. Note in particular that the imagery of God dwelling in Zion and the Temple as a fount of blessing recalls the exilic and postexilic ideology of the prophets Ezekiel (47:1–12) and Zechariah (chapter 14). Moreover, the latter