

# Joel

## Introduction

1:1 This<sup>1</sup> is the LORD's message<sup>2</sup> that was given<sup>3</sup> to Joel<sup>4</sup> the son of Pethuel:

*A Locust Plague Foreshadows the Day of the Lord*

1:2 Listen to this, you elders;<sup>5</sup> pay attention,<sup>6</sup> all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your whole life<sup>7</sup> or in the lifetime<sup>8</sup> of your ancestors?<sup>9</sup> 1:3 Tell your children<sup>10</sup> about it, have your children tell their children, and their children the following generation.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **sn** The dating of the book of Joel is a matter of dispute. Some scholars date the book as early as the ninth century B.C., during the reign of the boy-king Joash. This view is largely based on the following factors: an argument from silence (e.g., the book of Joel does not mention a king, perhaps because other officials *de facto* carried out his responsibilities, and there is no direct mention in the book of such later Israelite enemies as the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians); inconclusive literary assumptions (e.g., the eighth-century prophet Amos in Amos 9:13 alludes to Joel 3:18); the canonical position of the book (i.e., it is the second book of the Minor Prophets); and literary style (i.e., the book is thought to differ in style from the postexilic prophetic writings). While such an early date for the book is not impossible, none of the arguments used to support it is compelling. Later dates for the book that have been defended by various scholars are, for example, the late seventh century or early sixth century or sometime in the postexilic period (anytime from late sixth century to late fourth century). Most modern scholars seem to date the book of Joel sometime between 400 and 350 B.C. For a helpful discussion of date see J. A. Thompson, "The Date of the Book of Joel," *A Light unto My Path*, 453-64. Related to the question of date is a major exegetical issue: Is the army of chapter two to be understood figuratively as describing the locust invasion of chapter one, or is the topic of chapter two an invasion of *human* armies, either the Babylonians or an eschatological foe? If the enemy could be conclusively identified as the Babylonians, for example, this would support a sixth-century date for the book.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the word of the LORD."

<sup>3</sup> **tn** *Heb* "that was." The term "given" does not appear in the Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity and smoothness.

<sup>4</sup> **sn** The name *Joel* means in Hebrew "the LORD is God." There are a dozen or so individuals with this name in the OT.

<sup>5</sup> **sn** *Elders* here refers not necessarily to men advanced in years, but to leaders within the community.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** *Heb* "give ear."

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* "days." The term "days" functions here as a synecdoche for one's lifespan.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* "days."

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* "fathers."

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* "sons." This word occurs several times in this verse.

<sup>11</sup> **sn** The circumstances that precipitated the book of Joel surrounded a locust invasion in Palestine that was of unprecedented proportions. The locusts had devastated the coun-

1:4 What the *gazam*-locust left the '*arbeh*-locust consumed,<sup>12</sup> what the '*arbeh*-locust left the *yeleq*-locust consumed, and what the *yeleq*-locust left the *hasil*-locust consumed!<sup>13</sup> 1:5 Wake up, you drunkards,<sup>14</sup> and weep!

try's agrarian economy, with the unwelcome consequences extending to every important aspect of commercial, religious, and national life. To further complicate matters, a severe drought had exhausted water supplies, causing life-threatening shortages for animal and human life (cf. v. 20). Locust invasions occasionally present significant problems in Palestine in modern times. The year 1865 was commonly known among Arabic-speaking peoples of the Near East as *sent el jarad*, "year of the locust." The years 1892, 1899, and 1904 witnessed significant locust invasions in Palestine. But in modern times there has been nothing equal in magnitude to the great locust invasion that began in Palestine in February of 1915. This modern parallel provides valuable insight into the locust plague the prophet Joel points to as a foreshadowing of the day of the Lord. For an eyewitness account of the 1915 locust invasion of Palestine see J. D. Whiting, "Jerusalem's Locust Plague," *National Geographic* 28 (December 1915): 511-50.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* "eaten." This verb is repeated three times in v. 4 to emphasize the total devastation of the crops by this locust invasion.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** The four Hebrew terms used in this verse are of uncertain meaning. English translations show a great deal of variation in dealing with these: (1) For גָּזָם (*gazam*) KJV has "palm-worm," NEB "locust," NAB "cutter," NASB "gnawing locust," NIV "locust swarm," NKJV "chewing locust," NRSV, NLT "cutting locust(s)," Nlrv "giant locusts"; (2) for אֲרֵבָה (*'arbeh*) KJV has "locust," NEB "swarm," NAB "locust swarm," NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NLT "swarming locust(s)," NIV "great locusts," Nlrv "common locusts"; (3) for יֵלֵק (*yeleq*) KJV has "cankerworm," NEB "hopper," NAB "grasshopper," NASB "creeping locust," NIV, Nlrv "young locusts," NKJV "crawling locust," NRSV, NLT "hopping locust(s)"; (4) for חַסִּיל (*hasil*) KJV has "caterpillar," NEB "grub," NAB "devourer," NASB, NLT "stripping locust(s)," NIV, Nlrv "other locusts," NKJV "consuming locust," NRSV "destroying locust." It is debated whether the Hebrew terms describe different species of locusts or similar insects or different developmental stages of the same species, or are virtual synonyms. While the last seems more likely, given the uncertainty over their exact meaning, the present translation has transliterated the Hebrew terms in combination with the word "locust."

<sup>14</sup> **sn** Four different words for "locust" are used in this verse. Whether these words represent different life-stages of the locusts, or whether virtual synonyms are being used to underscore the severity of damage caused by the relentless waves of locust invasion, is not entirely certain. The latter seems more likely. Many interpreters have understood the locust plagues described here to be symbolic of invading armies that will devastate the land, but the symbolism could also work the other way, with real plagues of locusts described in the following verses as an invading army.

<sup>15</sup> **sn** The word *drunkards* has a double edge here. Those accustomed to drinking too much must now lament the unavailability of wine. It also may hint that the people in general have become religiously inebriated and are unresponsive to the Lord. They are, as it were, drunkards from a spiritual standpoint.

Wail, all you wine drinkers,<sup>1</sup>  
because the sweet wine<sup>2</sup> has been taken  
away<sup>3</sup> from you.<sup>4</sup>

1:6 For a nation<sup>5</sup> has invaded<sup>6</sup> our<sup>7</sup> land.  
There are so many of them they are too  
numerous to count.<sup>8</sup>

Their teeth are like those<sup>9</sup> of a lion;  
they tear apart their prey like a lioness.<sup>10</sup>

1:7 They<sup>11</sup> have destroyed our<sup>12</sup> vines;<sup>13</sup>  
they have turned our<sup>14</sup> fig trees into mere  
splinters.

They have completely stripped off the  
bark<sup>15</sup> and thrown them aside;  
the<sup>16</sup> twigs are stripped bare.<sup>17</sup>

### A Call to Lament

1:8 Wail<sup>18</sup> like a young virgin<sup>19</sup> clothed in

<sup>1</sup> **sn** Joel addresses the first of three groups particularly affected by the locust plague. In v. 5 he describes the effects on the drunkards, who no longer have a ready supply of intoxicating wine; in vv. 11-12 he describes the effects on the farmers, who have watched their labors come to naught because of the insect infestation; and in vv. 13-14 he describes the effects on the priests, who are no longer able to offer grain sacrifices and libations in the temple.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "over the sweet wine, because it." Cf. KJV, NIV, TEV, NLT "new wine."

<sup>3</sup> **tn** *Heb* "cut off" (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV); NAB "will be withheld."

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* "your mouth." This is a synecdoche of part (the mouth) for whole (the person).

<sup>5</sup> **sn** As becomes increasingly clear in what follows, this nation is to be understood figuratively. It refers to the locust invasion as viewed from the standpoint of its methodical, destructive advance across the land (BDB 156 s.v. נִי 2). This term is used figuratively to refer to animals one other time (Zeph 2:14).

<sup>6</sup> **tn** *Heb* "has come up against."

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* "my."

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* "[It] is huge and there is not number."

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* "its teeth are the teeth of a lion."

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* "its incisors are those of a lioness." The sharp, cutting teeth are metonymical for the action of tearing apart and eating prey. The language is clearly hyperbolic. Neither locusts nor human invaders literally have teeth of this size. The prophet is using exaggerated and picturesque language to portray in vivid terms the enormity of the calamity. English versions vary greatly on the specifics: KJV "cheek teeth"; ASV "jaw-teeth"; NAB "molars"; NASB, NIV, NRSV "fangs."

<sup>11</sup> **tn** *Heb* "it." Throughout vv. 6-7 the Hebrew uses singular forms to describe the locust swarm, but the translation uses plural forms because several details of the text make more sense in English as if they are describing the appearance and effects of individual locusts.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* "my."

<sup>13</sup> **tn** Both "vines" and "fig trees" are singular in the Hebrew text, but are regarded as collective singulars.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* "my."

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* "it has completely stripped her."

<sup>16</sup> **tn** *Heb* "her."

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* "grow white."

**sn** Once choice leafy vegetation is no longer available to them, locusts have been known to consume the bark of small tree limbs, leaving them in an exposed and vulnerable condition. It is apparently this whitened condition of limbs that Joel is referring to here.

<sup>18</sup> **sn** The verb is feminine singular, raising a question concerning its intended antecedent. A plural verb would be expected here, the idea being that all the inhabitants of the land should grieve. Perhaps Joel is thinking specifically of the city of Jerusalem, albeit in a representative sense. The choice of the feminine singular verb form has probably been influenced to some extent by the allusion to the young widow in the simile of v. 8.

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Or "a young woman" (TEV, CEV). See the note on the

sackcloth,  
lamenting the death of<sup>20</sup> her husband-to-be.<sup>21</sup>

1:9 No one brings grain offerings or drink offerings

to the temple<sup>22</sup> of the LORD anymore.<sup>23</sup>  
So the priests, those who serve the LORD,  
are in mourning.

1:10 The crops of the fields<sup>24</sup> have been  
destroyed.<sup>25</sup>

The ground is in mourning because the  
grain has perished.

The fresh wine has dried up;  
the olive oil languishes.

1:11 Be distressed,<sup>26</sup> farmers;  
wail, vinedressers, over the wheat and the  
barley.

For the harvest of the field has perished.

1:12 The vine has dried up;  
the fig tree languishes –  
the pomegranate, date, and apple<sup>27</sup> as well.  
In fact,<sup>28</sup> all the trees of the field have  
dried up.

Indeed, the joy of the people<sup>29</sup> has dried  
up!

1:13 Get dressed<sup>30</sup> and lament, you  
priests!

Wail, you who minister at the altar!  
Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you  
servants of my God,  
because no one brings grain offerings or  
drink offerings

phrase "husband-to-be" in the next line.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Heb* "over the death of." The term "lamenting" does not appear in the Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for smoothness.

<sup>21</sup> **sn** *Heb* "the husband of her youth." The woman described here may already be married, so the reference is to the death of a husband rather than a fiancé (a *husband-to-be*). Either way, the simile describes a painful and unexpected loss to which the national tragedy Joel is describing may be compared.

<sup>22</sup> **tn** *Heb* "house." So also in vv. 13, 14, 16.

<sup>23</sup> **tn** *Heb* "grain offering and drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD."

<sup>24</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the field has been utterly destroyed." The term "field," a collective singular for "fields," is a metonymy for crops produced by the fields.

<sup>25</sup> **tn** Joel uses intentionally alliterative language in the phrases שָׁדַד יִשְׂרָאֵל (*shuddad sadeh*, "the field is destroyed") and אֲפֵלָה אֲדַמָּה (*avlah adamah*, "the ground is in mourning").

<sup>26</sup> **tn** *Heb* "embarrassed"; or "be ashamed."

<sup>27</sup> **tn** This Hebrew word תַּפְּחוּךְ (*tappuakh*) probably refers to the apple tree (so most English versions), but other suggestions that scholars have offered include the apricot, citron, or quince.

<sup>28</sup> **tn** These words are not in the Hebrew text but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

<sup>29</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the sons of man."

<sup>30</sup> **tn** *Heb* "put on." There is no object present in the Hebrew text, but many translations assume "sackcloth" to be the understood object of the verb "put on." Its absence in the Hebrew text of v. 13 is probably due to metrical considerations. The meter here is 3 + 3, and that has probably influenced the prophet's choice of words.

to the temple of your God anymore.<sup>1</sup>  
**1:14** Announce a holy fast;<sup>2</sup>  
 proclaim a sacred assembly.  
 Gather the elders and<sup>3</sup> all the inhabitants  
 of the land  
 to the temple of the LORD your God,  
 and cry out to the LORD.

**1:15** How awful that day will be!<sup>4</sup>  
 For the day of the LORD is near;  
 it will come as destruction from the Di-  
 vine Destroyer.<sup>5</sup>

**1:16** Our food has been cut off right be-  
 fore our eyes!<sup>6</sup>  
 There is no longer any joy or gladness in  
 the temple of our God!<sup>7</sup>

**1:17** The grains of seed<sup>8</sup> have shriveled  
 beneath their shovels.<sup>9</sup>  
 Storehouses have been decimated

and granaries have been torn down, for  
 the grain has dried up.  
**1:18** Listen to the cattle groan!<sup>10</sup>  
 The herds of livestock wander around in  
 confusion<sup>11</sup>  
 because they have no pasture.  
 Even the flocks of sheep are suffering.

**1:19** To you, O LORD, I call out for help,<sup>12</sup>  
 for fire<sup>13</sup> has burned up<sup>14</sup> the grassy  
 pastures,<sup>15</sup>  
 flames have razed<sup>16</sup> all the trees in the  
 fields.

**1:20** Even the wild animals<sup>17</sup> cry out to  
 you,<sup>18</sup>  
 for the river beds<sup>19</sup> have dried up;  
 fire has destroyed<sup>20</sup> the grassy pastures.<sup>21</sup>

### The Locusts' Devastation

**2:1** Blow the trumpet<sup>22</sup> in Zion;  
 sound the alarm signal on my holy moun-  
 tain!  
 Let all the inhabitants of the land shake  
 with fear,  
 for the day of the LORD is about to come.  
 Indeed,<sup>23</sup> it is near!<sup>24</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Heb "for grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God."

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Heb "consecrate a fast" (so NASB).

<sup>3</sup> **tc** The conjunction "and" does not appear in MT or LXX, but does appear in some Qumran texts (4QXII<sup>c</sup> and 4QXII<sup>f</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> **tn** Heb "Alas for the day!"

<sup>5</sup> **tn** There is a wordplay in Hebrew here with the word used for "destruction" (שָׂדֵי, *shod*) and the term used for God (שֵׁדִי, *shaddai*). The exact meaning of "Shaddai" in the OT is somewhat uncertain, although the ancient versions and many modern English versions tend to translate it as "Almighty" (e.g., Greek παντοκράτωρ [*pantokrator*], Latin *omnipotens*). Here it might be rendered "Destroyer," with the thought being that "destruction will come from the Divine Destroyer," which should not be misunderstood as a reference to the destroying angel. The name "Shaddai" (outside Genesis and without the element "El" ["God"]) is normally used when God is viewed as the sovereign king who blesses/protects or curses/brings judgment. The name appears in the introduction to two of Balaam's oracles (Num 24:4, 16) of blessing upon Israel. Naomi employs the name when accusing the Lord of treating her bitterly by taking the lives of her husband and sons (Ruth 1:20-21). In Ps 68:14, Isa 13:6, and the present passage, Shaddai judges his enemies through warfare, while Ps 91:1 depicts him as the protector of his people. In Ezek 1:24 and 10:5 the sound of the cherubs' wings is compared to Shaddai's powerful voice. The reference may be to the mighty divine warrior's battle cry which accompanies his angry judgment.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Heb "Has not the food been cut off right before our eyes?" This rhetorical question expects an affirmative answer; the question has been translated as an affirmation for the sake of clarity and emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** Heb "joy and gladness from the house of our God?" Verse 16b is a continuation of the rhetorical question begun in v. 16a, but has been translated as an affirmative statement to make the meaning clear. The words "There is no longer any" are not in the Hebrew text, but have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** Heb "seed." The phrase "the grains of" does not appear in the Hebrew, but has been supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity and smoothness.

<sup>9</sup> **tc** This line is textually uncertain. The MT reads "the seed shrivels in their shovels/clods." One Qumran manuscript (4QXII<sup>f</sup>) reads "the heifers decay in [their] s[ta]lls." LXX reads "the heifers leap in their stalls."

**tn** These two lines of v. 17 comprise only four words in the Hebrew; three of the four are found only here in the OT. The translation and meaning are rather uncertain. A number of English versions render the word translated "shovels" as "clods," referring to lumps of soil (e.g., KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV).

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Heb "how the cattle groan!"

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Heb "the herds of cattle are confused." The verb בָּוּךְ (*bukh*, "be confused") sometimes refers to wandering aimlessly in confusion (cf. Exod 14:3).

<sup>12</sup> **tn** The phrase "for help" does not appear in the Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.

<sup>13</sup> **sn** Fire here and in v. 20 is probably not to be understood in a literal sense. The locust plague, accompanied by conditions of extreme drought, has left the countryside looking as though everything has been burned up (so also in Joel 2:3).

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Heb "consumed." This entire line is restated at the end of v. 20.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** Heb "the pastures of the wilderness."

<sup>16</sup> **tn** Heb "a flame has set ablaze." This fire was one of the effects of the drought.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** Heb "beasts of the field."

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Heb "long for you." Animals of course do not have religious sensibilities as such; they do not in any literal sense long for Yahweh. Rather, the language here is figurative (metonymy of cause for effect). The animals long for food and water (so BDB 788 s.v. צָבִי), the ultimate source of which is Yahweh.

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Heb "sources of water."

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Heb "consumed."

<sup>21</sup> **tn** Heb "the pastures of the wilderness."

<sup>22</sup> **tn** The word translated "trumpet" here (so most English versions) is the Hebrew שׁוֹפָר (*shofar*). The shofar was a wind instrument made from a cow or ram's horn and used as a military instrument for calling people to attention in the face of danger or as a religious instrument for calling people to occasions of communal celebration.

<sup>23</sup> **tn** Or "for."

<sup>24</sup> **sn** The interpretation of 2:1-11 is very difficult. Four views may be mentioned here. (1) Some commentators understand this section to be describing a human invasion of Judah on the part of an ancient army. The exact identity of this army (e.g., Assyrian or Babylonian) varies among interpreters depending upon issues of dating for the book of Joel. (2) Some commentators take the section to describe an eschatological scene in which the army according to some is human, or according to others is nonhuman (i.e., angelic). (3) Some interpreters argue for taking the section to refer to the potential advent in the fall season of a severe east wind (i.e., Sirocco) that would further exacerbate the conditions of the

2:2 It will be<sup>4</sup> a day of dreadful darkness,<sup>2</sup> a day of foreboding storm clouds,<sup>3</sup> like blackness<sup>4</sup> spread over the mountains.

It is a huge and powerful army<sup>5</sup> – there has never been anything like it ever before,

and there will not be anything like it for many generations to come!<sup>6</sup>

2:3 Like fire they devour everything in their path;<sup>7</sup>

a flame blazes behind them.

The land looks like the Garden of Eden<sup>8</sup> before them,

but behind them there is only a desolate wilderness –

for nothing escapes them!<sup>9</sup>

2:4 They look like horses;<sup>10</sup>

land described in chapter one. (4) Finally, some interpreters understand the section to continue the discussion of locust invasion and drought described in chapter one, partly on the basis that there is no clear exegetical evidence in 2:1-11 to suggest a shift of referent from that of chapter one.

**1 tn** The phrase “it will be” does not appear in the Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for the sake of smoothness and style.

**2 tn** Heb “darkness and gloom.” These two terms probably form a hendiadys here. This picture recalls the imagery of the supernatural darkness in Egypt during the judgments of the exodus (Exod 10:22). These terms are also frequently used as figures (metonymy of association) for calamity and divine judgment (Isa 8:22; 59:9; Jer 23:12; Zeph 1:15). Darkness is often a figure (metonymy of association) for death, dread, distress and judgment (BDB 365 s.v. חֹשֶׁךְ 3).

**3 tn** Heb “a day of cloud and darkness.”

**4 tc** The present translation here follows the proposed reading שִׁחֹר (sh<sup>h</sup>chor, “blackness”) rather than the MT שִׁחֹר (shakhar, “morning”). The change affects only the vocalization; the Hebrew consonants remain unchanged. Here the context calls for a word describing darkness. The idea of morning or dawn speaks instead of approaching light, which does not seem to fit here. The other words in the verse (e.g., “darkness,” “gloominess,” “cloud,” “heavy overcast”) all emphasize the negative aspects of the matter at hand and lead the reader to expect a word like “blackness” rather than “dawn.” However, NirV paraphrases the MT nicely: “A huge army of locusts is coming. They will spread across the mountains like the sun when it rises.”

**5 tn** Heb “A huge and powerful people”; KJV, ASV “a great people and a strong.” Many interpreters understand Joel 2 to describe an invasion of human armies, either in past history (e.g., the Babylonian invasion of Palestine in the sixth century b.c.) or in an eschatological setting. More probably, however, the language of this chapter referring to “people” and “armies” is a hypocatastic description of the locusts of chapter one. Cf. TEV “The great army of locusts advances like darkness.”

**6 tn** Heb “it will not be repeated for years of generation and generation.”

**7 tn** Heb “a fire devours before it.”

**8 tn** Heb “like the garden of Eden, the land is before them.”

**9 tn** Heb “and surely a survivor there is not for it.” The antecedent of the pronoun “it” is apparently עַם (am, “people”) of v. 2, which seems to be a figurative way of referring to the locusts. K&D 26:191-92 thought that the antecedent of this pronoun was “land,” but the masculine gender of the pronoun does not support this.

**10 tn** Heb “Like the appearance of horses [is] its appearance.”

**sn** The fact that a locust’s head resembles a miniature replica of a horse’s head has often been noticed. For example, the German word for locust (*Heupferd*, “hay horse”) and the

they charge ahead like war horses.

2:5 They sound like<sup>11</sup> chariots rumbling<sup>12</sup> over mountain tops,

like the crackling<sup>13</sup> of blazing fire consuming stubble,

like the noise of<sup>14</sup> a mighty army<sup>15</sup> being drawn up for battle.<sup>16</sup>

2:6 People<sup>17</sup> writhe in fear when they see them.<sup>18</sup>

All of their faces turn pale with fright.<sup>19</sup>

2:7 They<sup>20</sup> charge<sup>21</sup> like warriors;

they scale walls like soldiers.<sup>22</sup>

Each one proceeds on his course; they do not alter<sup>23</sup> their path.

Italian word as well (*cavaletta*, “little horse”) are based on this similarity in appearance.

**11 tn** Heb “like the sound of.”

**sn** The repetition of the word of comparison (“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. In other words, locusts are being likened to human armies, but human armies are not actually present. On the other hand, this Hebrew preposition is also on occasion used to indicate exactitude, a function described by grammarians as *kaph veritatis*.

**12 tn** Heb “jostling” or “leaping.” There is question whether this pictures chariots rumbling over the mountains (e.g., 2 Sam 6:14,16; 1 Chr 15:29; Nah 3:2) or the locusts flying – or “leaping” – over the mountains (e.g., Job 21:11); see BDB 955 s.v. רָקַד.

**13 tn** Heb “sound.”

**14 tn** The phrase “the noise of” does not appear in the Hebrew, but is implied by the parallelism, so it has been supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.

**15 tn** Heb “people.”

**16 tn** Heb “being arrayed of battle.”

**17 tn** Or “nations.”

**18 tn** Heb “before it.”

**19 tn** Heb “all faces gather beauty”; or “all faces gather a glow.” The Hebrew word פָּאִירוּ (*pa’iru*) is found in the OT only here and in Nah 2:11. Its meaning is very uncertain. Some scholars associate it with a root that signifies “glowing”; hence “all faces gather a glow of dread.” Others associate the word with פָּאִירוּ (*parur*, “pot”); hence “all faces gather blackness.” Still others take the root to signify “beauty”; hence “all faces gather in their beauty” in the sense of growing pale due to fear. This is the view assumed here.

**20 sn** Since the invaders are compared to warriors, this suggests that they are not actually human, but instead an army of locusts.

**21 tn** Heb “run.”

**22 tn** Heb “men of battle.”

**23 tc** The translation reads יַעֲבֹטוּן (y<sup>e</sup>abb<sup>e</sup>tun) for MT יַעֲבֹטוּן (y<sup>e</sup>abb<sup>e</sup>tun). The verb found in MT יַעֲבֹטוּן (*avat*) means “take or give a pledge” (cf. Deut 15:6, 8; 24:10) and does not fit the context. Some scholars have proposed various emendations: (1) יַעֲבֹטוּן (y<sup>e</sup>avv<sup>e</sup>tun, “they make crooked”); (2) יַעֲבֹטוּן (yattun, “they turn aside”); (3) יַעֲבֹטוּן (ya<sup>v</sup>avvun, “they err”); and (4) יַעֲבֹטוּן (adopted in the present translation) from the root יַעֲבֹטוּן (*avat*, “to twist, pervert”) or יַעֲבֹטוּן (*avat*, “to change, abandon”). KBL adopt the latter option, but the only biblical evidence for this is the problematic reference in Joel 2:7. Another option is to view it as a variant of the root יַעֲבֹטוּן (*khavat*, “turn aside from”), a meaning attested for the Arabic cognate. The difference in spelling would be due to the interchange of the guttural letters *khet* (ה) and *ayin* (ע). This may lay behind LXX rendering ἐκκλινῶσιν (*ekklinosin*; cf. Syriac Peshitta *nstwn* and Vg *declinabunt*). See S. F. Whitley, “bt in Joel 2, 7,” *Bib* 65 (1984): 101-2.

2:8 They do not jostle one another;<sup>1</sup>  
each of them marches straight ahead.<sup>2</sup>  
They burst through<sup>3</sup> the city defenses<sup>4</sup>  
and do not break ranks.

2:9 They rush into<sup>5</sup> the city;  
they scale<sup>6</sup> its walls.  
They climb up into the houses;  
they go in through the windows like a  
thief.

2:10 The earth quakes<sup>7</sup> before them;<sup>8</sup>  
the sky reverberates.<sup>9</sup>  
The sun and the moon grow dark;  
the stars refuse to shine.<sup>10</sup>

2:11 The voice of the LORD thunders<sup>11</sup> as he  
leads his army.<sup>12</sup>  
Indeed, his warriors<sup>13</sup> are innumerable;<sup>14</sup>  
Surely his command is carried out!<sup>15</sup>  
Yes, the day of the LORD is awesome<sup>16</sup>  
and very terrifying – who can survive<sup>17</sup>  
it?

### An Appeal for Repentance

2:12 “Yet even now,” the LORD says,  
“return to me with all your heart –  
with fasting, weeping, and mourning.  
Tear your hearts,<sup>18</sup>  
not just your garments!”

2:13 Return to the LORD your God,  
for he is merciful and compassionate,  
slow to anger and boundless in loyal  
love<sup>19</sup> – often relenting from calamitous  
punishment.<sup>20</sup>

2:14 Who knows?

<sup>1</sup> tn “each one does not crowd his brother.”

<sup>2</sup> tn Heb “each warrior walks in his own course.”

<sup>3</sup> tn Heb “they fall upon.” This line has been interpreted in two different ways: (1) although they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded (KJV), or (2) when they “burst through” the city’s defenses, they will not break ranks (RSV, NASB, NIV, NIV).  
<sup>4</sup> tn Heb “missile” or “javelin.” This term appears to function as a synecdoche for the city’s defenses as a whole (cf. NASB, NIV, TEV). Some scholars instead understand the reference to be an aqueduct by which the locusts (or armies) entered the city.

<sup>5</sup> tn Heb “dart about in.”

<sup>6</sup> tn Or “they run upon its wall.”

<sup>7</sup> sn Witnesses of locust invasions have described the visual effect of large numbers of these creatures crawling over one another on the ground. At such times the ground is said to appear to be in motion, creating a dizzying effect on some observers. The reference in v. 10 to the darkening of the sun and moon probably has to do with the obscuring of visibility due to large numbers of locusts swarming in the sky.  
<sup>8</sup> tn Heb “before it.”  
<sup>9</sup> tn Heb “trembles.”  
<sup>10</sup> tn Heb “gather their brightness.”  
<sup>11</sup> tn Heb “the LORD gives his voice.”  
<sup>12</sup> tn Heb “before his army.”  
<sup>13</sup> tn Heb “military encampment.”  
<sup>14</sup> tn Heb “very large.”  
<sup>15</sup> tn Heb “he makes his word powerful.”  
<sup>16</sup> tn Or “powerful.” Heb “great.”  
<sup>17</sup> tn Heb “endure.” The MT and LXX read “endure,” while one of the Qumran manuscripts (4QXXII\*) has “bear.”  
<sup>18</sup> sn The figurative language calls for genuine repentance, and not merely external ritual that goes through the motions.  
<sup>19</sup> tn Heb “and great of loyal love.”  
<sup>20</sup> tn Heb “and he relents from calamity.”

Perhaps he will be compassionate and  
grant a reprieve,<sup>21</sup>  
and leave blessing in his wake<sup>22</sup> –  
a meal offering and a drink offering for  
you to offer to the LORD your God!<sup>23</sup>

2:15 Blow the trumpet<sup>24</sup> in Zion.

Announce a holy fast;  
proclaim a sacred assembly!

2:16 Gather the people;  
sanctify an assembly!

Gather the elders;  
gather the children and the nursing infants.  
Let the bridegroom come out from his  
bedroom  
and the bride from her private quarters.<sup>25</sup>

2:17 Let the priests, those who serve the  
LORD, weep  
from the vestibule all the way back to the  
altar.<sup>26</sup>

Let them say, “Have pity, O LORD, on  
your people;

please do not turn over your inheritance  
to be mocked,

to become a proverb<sup>27</sup> among the nations.  
Why should it be said<sup>28</sup> among the

peoples,

“Where is their God?”

### The LORD’s Response

2:18 Then the LORD became<sup>29</sup> zealous for  
his land;

<sup>21</sup> tn Heb “turn” or “turn back.”

<sup>22</sup> tn Heb “leave a blessing behind him.”

<sup>23</sup> tn The phrase “for you to offer” does not appear in the Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.

<sup>24</sup> tn See the note on this term in 2:1.

<sup>25</sup> sn Mosaic law allowed men recently married, or about to be married, to be exempt for a year from certain duties that were normally mandatory, such as military obligation (cf. Deut 20:7; 24:5). However, Joel pictures a time of such urgency that normal expectations must give way to higher requirements.

<sup>26</sup> tn Heb “between the vestibule and the altar.” The vestibule was located at the entrance of the temple and the altar was located at the other end of the building. So “between the vestibule and the altar” is a merism referring to the entire structure. The priestly lament permeates the entire house of worship.

<sup>27</sup> tn For the MT reading לְמִשָּׁל (limshal, an infinitive, “to rule”), one should instead read לְמִשָּׁלָה (Pmashal, a noun, “to a byword”). While the consonantal Hebrew text 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 one of concern over potential political subjection of Israel (cf. v. 19). The possibility that the form in the MT is an infinitive construct of the denominative verb II מִשָּׁל (mashal, “to utter a proverb”) does not seem likely because of the following preposition (Hebrew בְּ [bē], rather than בָּ [ʾa]).

<sup>28</sup> tn Heb “Why will they say?”

<sup>29</sup> tn The time-frame entertained by the verbs of v.18 constitutes a *crux interpretum* in this chapter. The Hebrew verb forms used here are preterites with vav consecutive and are most naturally understood as describing a past situation. However, some modern English versions render these verbs as futures (e.g., NIV, NASV), apparently concluding that the context requires a future reference. According to Joüon 2:363 §112.h, n.1 Ibn Ezra explained the verbs of Joel 2:18 as an extension of the so-called prophetic perfect; as such, a future fulfillment was described with a past tense as a rhetori-

he had compassion on his people.

**2:19** The LORD responded<sup>4</sup> to his people,  
“Look! I am about to restore your grain<sup>2</sup>  
as well as fresh wine and olive oil.

You will be fully satisfied.<sup>3</sup>

I will never again make you an object of  
mockery among the nations.

**2:20** I will remove the one from the north<sup>4</sup>  
far from you.

I will drive him out to a dry and desolate  
place.

Those in front will be driven eastward  
into the Dead Sea,<sup>5</sup>

and those in back westward into the  
Mediterranean Sea.<sup>6</sup>

His stench will rise up as a foul smell.<sup>7</sup>  
Indeed, the LORD<sup>8</sup> has accomplished great  
things.

**2:21** Do not fear, my land!

Rejoice and be glad,  
because the LORD has accomplished great  
things!

cal device lending certainty to the fulfillment. But this lacks adequate precedent and is very unlikely from a syntactical standpoint. It seems better to take the verbs in the normal past sense of the preterite. This would require a vantage point for the prophet at some time *after* the people had responded favorably to the Lord's call for repentance and *after* the Lord had shown compassion and forgiveness toward his people, but *before* the full realization of God's promises to restore productivity to the land. In other words, it appears from the verbs of vv. 18-19 that at the time of Joel's writing this book the events of successive waves of locust invasion and conditions of drought had almost run their course and the people had now begun to turn to the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Heb “answered and said.”

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Heb “Look! I am sending grain to you.” The participle used in the Hebrew text seems to suggest imminent action.

<sup>3</sup> **tc** One of the Qumran manuscripts (4QXII<sup>a</sup>) inserts “and you will eat” before “and you will be fully satisfied” (the reading of the MT, LXX).

<sup>4</sup> **sn** The allusion to *the one from the north* is best understood as having locusts in view. It is not correct to say that this reference to the enemy who came from the north excludes the possibility of a reference to locusts and must be understood as human armies. Although locust plagues usually approached Palestine from the east or southeast, the severe plague of 1915, for example, came from the northeast.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Heb “his face to the eastern sea.” In this context the eastern sea is probably the Dead Sea.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Heb “and his rear to the western sea.” The western sea refers to the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>7</sup> **sn** Heb “and his foul smell will ascend.” The *foul smell* probably refers to the unpleasant odor of decayed masses of dead locusts. The Hebrew word for “foul smell” is found only here in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word for “stench” appears only here and in Isa 34:3 and Amos 4:10. In the latter references it refers to the stench of dead corpses on a field of battle.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** The Hebrew text does not have “the LORD.” Two interpretations are possible. This clause may refer to the enemy described in the immediately preceding verses, in which case it would have a negative sense: “he has acted in a high-handed manner.” Or it may refer to the LORD, in which case it would have a positive sense: “the LORD has acted in a marvelous manner.” This is clearly the sense of the same expression in v. 21, where in fact “the LORD” appears as the subject of the verb. It seems best to understand the clause the same way in both verses.

**2:22** Do not fear, wild animals!<sup>9</sup>

For the pastures of the wilderness are  
again green with grass.

Indeed, the trees bear their fruit;  
the fig tree and the vine yield to their full-  
est.<sup>10</sup>

**2:23** Citizens of Zion,<sup>11</sup> rejoice!

Be glad because of what the LORD your  
God has done!<sup>12</sup>

For he has given to you the early rains<sup>13</sup>  
as vindication.

He has sent<sup>14</sup> to you the rains –  
both the early and the late rains<sup>15</sup> as for-  
merly.

**2:24** The threshing floors are full of grain;  
the vats overflow with fresh wine and  
olive oil.

**2:25** I will make up for the years<sup>16</sup>  
that the *‘arbeh*-locust<sup>17</sup> consumed your  
crops<sup>18</sup> –

the *yeleq*-locust, the *hasil*-locust, and the  
*gazam*-locust –  
my great army<sup>19</sup> that I sent against you.

**2:26** You will have plenty to eat,  
and your hunger will be fully satisfied;<sup>20</sup>  
you will praise the name of the LORD your  
God,

who has acted wondrously in your behalf.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Heb “beasts of the field.”

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Heb “their strength.” The trees and vines will produce a maximum harvest, in contrast to the failed agricultural conditions previously described.

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Heb “sons of Zion.”

<sup>12</sup> **tn** Heb “be glad in the LORD your God.”

<sup>13</sup> **tn** Normally the Hebrew word *הַמּוֹרֵה* (*hammoreh*) means “the teacher,” but here and in Ps 84:7 it refers to “early rains.” Elsewhere the word for “early rains” is *יורה* (*yoreh*). The phrase here *הַמּוֹרֵה לַצִּדִּיקָה* (*hammoreh litsdaqah*) is similar to the expression “teacher of righteousness” (Heb., *מוֹרֵה הַצֶּדִּיק*, *moreh hatsedeq*) found in the Dead Sea Scrolls referring to a particular charismatic leader, although the Qumran community seems not to have invoked this text in support of that notion.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Heb “caused to come down.”

<sup>15</sup> **sn** For half the year Palestine is generally dry. The rainy season begins with the early rains usually in late October to early December, followed by the latter rains in March and April. Without these rains productive farming would not be possible, as Joel's original readers knew only too well.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** Heb “I will restore to you the years.”

**sn** The plural years suggests that the plague to which Joel refers was not limited to a single season. Apparently the locusts were a major problem over several successive years. One season of drought and locust invasion would have been bad enough. Several such years would have been devastating.

<sup>17</sup> **sn** The same four terms for locust are used here as in 1:4, but in a different order. This fact creates some difficulty for the notion that the four words refer to four distinct stages of locust development.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** The term “your crops” does not appear in the Hebrew, but has been supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity and smoothness.

<sup>19</sup> **sn** Here Joel employs military language to describe the locusts. In the prophet's thinking this invasion was far from being a freak accident. Rather, the Lord is pictured here as a divine warrior who leads his army into the land as a punishment for past sin and as a means of bringing about spiritual renewal on the part of the people.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Heb “you will surely eat and be satisfied.”

My people will never again be put to shame.

**2:27** You will be convinced that I am in the midst of Israel.

I am the LORD your God; there is no other. My people will never again be put to shame.

### *An Outpouring of the Spirit*

**2:28** (3:1)<sup>4</sup> After all of this<sup>2</sup> I will pour out my Spirit<sup>3</sup> on all kinds of people.<sup>4</sup>

Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your elderly will have revelatory dreams;<sup>5</sup> your young men will see prophetic visions.

**2:29** Even on male and female servants I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

**2:30** I will produce portents both in the sky<sup>6</sup> and on the earth – blood, fire, and columns of smoke.

**2:31** The sunlight will be turned to darkness

and the moon to the color of blood,<sup>7</sup> before the day of the LORD comes – that great and terrible day!

**2:32** It will so happen that

everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered.<sup>8</sup>

For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem<sup>9</sup> there will be those who survive,<sup>10</sup>

just as the LORD has promised; the remnant<sup>11</sup> will be those whom the LORD will call.<sup>12</sup>

### *The LORD Plans to Judge the Nations*

**3:1** (4:1)<sup>13</sup> For look! In those<sup>14</sup> days and at that time

I will return the exiles<sup>15</sup> to Judah and Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup>

**3:2** Then I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.<sup>17</sup>

I will enter into judgment<sup>18</sup> against them there

concerning my people Israel who are my inheritance,<sup>19</sup> whom they scattered among the nations.

<sup>1</sup> **sn** Beginning with **2:28**, the verse numbers through **3:21** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with **2:28** ET = **3:1** HT, **2:29** ET = **3:2** HT, **2:30** ET = **3:3** HT, **2:31** ET = **3:4** HT, **2:32** ET = **3:5** HT, **3:1** ET = **4:1** HT, etc., through **3:21** ET = **4:21** HT. Thus Joel in the Hebrew Bible has 4 chapters, the 5 verses of ch. 3 being included at the end of ch. 2 in the English Bible.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "Now it will be after this."

<sup>3</sup> **sn** This passage plays a key role in the apostolic explanation of the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2:17-21. Peter introduces his quotation of this passage with "this is that spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16; cf. the similar *pesher* formula used at Qumran). The New Testament experience at Pentecost is thus seen in some sense as a fulfillment of this Old Testament passage, even though that experience did not exhaustively fulfill Joel's words. Some portions of Joel's prophecy have no precise counterpart in that experience. For example, there is nothing in the experience recorded in Acts 2 that exactly corresponds to the earthly and heavenly signs described in Joel 3:3-4. But inasmuch as the messianic age had already begun and the "last days" had already commenced with the coming of the Messiah (cf. Heb 1:1-2), Peter was able to point to Joel 3:1-5 as a text that was relevant to the advent of Jesus and the bestowal of the Spirit. The equative language that Peter employs ("this is that") stresses an incipient fulfillment of the Joel passage without precluding or minimizing a yet future and more exhaustive fulfillment in events associated with the return of Christ.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* "all flesh." As a term for humanity, "flesh" 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 (cf. NAB, NASB "all mankind"; NLT "all people"), but to all classes of human beings without distinction (cf. NCV).

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* "your old men will dream dreams."

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Or "in the heavens." The Hebrew term שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) may be translated "heavens" or "sky" depending on the context.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* "to blood," but no doubt this is intended to indicate by metonymy the color of blood rather than the substance itself. The blood red color suggests a visual impression here – something that could be caused by fires, volcanic dust, sandstorms, or other atmospheric phenomena.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** While a number of English versions render this as "saved" (e.g., NIV, NRSV, NLT), this can suggest a "spiritual" or "theological" salvation rather than the physical deliverance from the cataclysmic events of the day of the Lord described in the context.

<sup>9</sup> **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* "deliverance"; or "escape." The abstract noun "deliverance" or "escape" probably functions here as an example of antimetonymy, referring to those who experience deliverance or escape with their lives: "escaped remnant" or "surviving remnant" (Gen 32:8; 45:7; Judg 21:17; 2 Kgs 19:30, 31; Isa 4:2; 10:20; 15:9; 37:31, 32; Ezek 14:22; Obad 1:17; Ezra 9:8, 13-15; Neh 1:2; 1 Chr 4:43; 2 Chr 30:6).

<sup>11</sup> **tn** *Heb* "and among the remnant."

<sup>12</sup> **tn** The participle used in the Hebrew text seems to indicate action in the imminent future.

<sup>13</sup> **sn** Joel **3:1** in the English Bible is **4:1** in the Hebrew text (BHS). See also the note at **2:28**.

<sup>14</sup> **tc** The MT and LXX read "in those days," while MurXII reads "in that day."

<sup>15</sup> **tc** The *Kethib* reads אָשִׁיב (*ashiv*, "return the captivity [captives]"), while the *Qere* is אָשִׁיב (*ashuv*, "restore the fortunes"). Many modern English versions follow the *Qere* reading. Either reading seems to fit the context. Joel refers to an exile of the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem in 3:2-6 and their return from exile in 3:7. On the other hand, 2:25-26 describes the reversal of judgment and restoration of the covenant blessings. However, the former seems to be the concern of the immediate context.

<sup>16</sup> **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

<sup>17</sup> **sn** There is a play on words here. *Jehoshaphat* in Hebrew means "the Lord has judged," and the next line in v. 2 further explicates this thought. The location of this valley is uncertain (cf. v. 12). Many interpreters have understood the Valley of Jehoshaphat to be the Kidron Valley, located on the east side of old Jerusalem. Since this is described as a scene of future messianic activity and judgment, many Jews and Muslims have desired to be buried in the vicinity, a fact attested to in modern times by the presence of many graves in the area. A variation of this view is mentioned by Eusebius, *Onomasticon* 1:10. According to this view, the Valley of Jehoshaphat is located in the Hinnom Valley, on the south side of the old city. Yet another view is held by many modern scholars, who understand the reference to this valley to be one of an idealized and nonliteral scene of judgment.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will execute judgment."

<sup>19</sup> **tn** *Heb* "concerning my people and my inheritance Israel."

They partitioned my land,  
**3:3** and they cast lots for my people.  
 They traded<sup>1</sup> a boy for a prostitute;  
 they sold a little girl for wine so they  
 could drink.<sup>2</sup>

**3:4** Why are you doing these things to me,  
 Tyre and Sidon?<sup>3</sup>  
 Are you trying to get even with me, land  
 of Philistia?<sup>4</sup>  
 I will very quickly repay you for what  
 you have done!<sup>5</sup>  
**3:5** For you took my silver and my gold  
 and brought my precious valuables to  
 your own palaces.<sup>6</sup>  
**3:6** You sold Judeans and Jerusalemites to  
 the Greeks,  
 removing them far from their own coun-  
 try.<sup>7</sup>  
**3:7** Look! I am rousing them from that  
 place to which you sold them.  
 I will repay you for what you have done!<sup>8</sup>  
**3:8** I will sell your sons and daughters to<sup>9</sup>  
 the people of Judah.<sup>10</sup>  
 They will sell them to the Sabeans,<sup>11</sup> a  
 nation far away.  
 Indeed, the LORD has spoken!

#### *Judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat*

**3:9** Proclaim this among the nations:  
 "Prepare for a holy war!  
 Call out the warriors!  
 Let all these fighting men approach and  
 attack!<sup>12</sup>  
**3:10** Beat your plowshares<sup>13</sup> into swords,  
 and your pruning hooks<sup>14</sup> into spears!<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Heb "gave."

<sup>2</sup> **sn** Heb "and they drank." 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. Amos 2:6 and 8:6).

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Heb "What [are] you [doing] to me, O Tyre and Sidon?"

<sup>4</sup> **tn** Or "districts."

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Heb "quickly, speedily, I will return your recompense on your head." This is an idiom for retributive justice and an equitable reversal of situation.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Or perhaps, "temples."

<sup>7</sup> **tn** Heb "border."

<sup>8</sup> **tn** Heb "I will return your recompense on your head."

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Heb "into the hand of."

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Heb "the sons of Judah."

<sup>11</sup> **sn** The Sabeans were Arabian merchants who were influential along the ancient caravan routes that traveled through Arabia. See also Job 1:15; Isa 43:3; 45:14; Ps 72:10.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** Heb "draw near and go up."

<sup>13</sup> **sn** Instead of referring to the large plow as a whole, the plowshare is simply the metal tip which actually breaks the earth and cuts the furrow.

<sup>14</sup> **sn** This implement was used to prune the vines, i.e., to cut off extra leaves and young shoots (M. Klingbeil, *NIDOTTE* 1:1117-18). It was a short knife with a curved hook at the end sharpened on the inside like a sickle.

<sup>15</sup> **sn** This conversion of farming instruments to instruments of war is the reverse of Isa 2:4 (cf. Mic 4:3), where military weapons are transformed into tools for farming. Isaiah describes a time of kingdom blessing and prosperity, whereas Joel describes a time of eschatological conflict and judgment.

Let the weak say, 'I too am a warrior!'<sup>16</sup>  
**3:11** Lend your aid<sup>17</sup> and come,  
 all you surrounding nations,  
 and gather yourselves<sup>18</sup> to that place."  
 Bring down, O LORD, your warriors!<sup>19</sup>  
**3:12** Let the nations be roused and let  
 them go up  
 to the valley of Jehoshaphat,  
 for there I will sit in judgment on all the  
 surrounding nations.  
**3:13** Rush forth with<sup>20</sup> the sickle, for the  
 harvest is ripe!  
 Come, stomp the grapes,<sup>21</sup> for the wine-  
 press is full!  
 The vats overflow.  
 Indeed, their evil is great!<sup>22</sup>  
**3:14** Crowds, great crowds are in the val-  
 ley of decision,  
 for the day of the LORD is near in the val-  
 ley of decision!<sup>23</sup>  
**3:15** The sun and moon are darkened;  
 the stars withhold<sup>24</sup> their brightness.

<sup>16</sup> **sn** The "weak" individual mentioned here is apparently the farmer who has little or no military prowess or prior fighting experience. Under ordinary circumstances such a person would be ill-prepared for assuming the role of a soldier. However, in the scene that Joel is describing here even the most unlikely candidate will become a participant to be reckoned with in this final conflict.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** This Hebrew verb is found only here in the OT; its meaning is uncertain. Some scholars prefer to read here יורו (*uru*, "arouse") or חישו (*khushu*, "hasten").

<sup>18</sup> **tc** The present translation follows the reading of the imperative הִקְבְּצוּ (*hiqqav'atsu*) rather than the perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive וַיִּקְבְּצוּ (*v<sup>e</sup>niqbbatsu*) of the MT.

<sup>19</sup> **tc** Some commentators prefer to delete the line "Bring down, O LORD, your warriors," understanding it to be a later addition. But this is unnecessary. Contrary to what some have suggested, a prayer for the LORD's intervention is not out of place here.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Heb "send."

<sup>21</sup> **tn** Heb "go down" or "tread." The Hebrew term דָּרָו (*r<sup>e</sup>du*) may be from יָרַד (*yarad*, "to go down") or from רָדָה (*radah*, "have dominion," here in the sense of "to tread"). If it means "go down," the reference would be to entering the vat to squash the grapes. If it means "tread," the verb would refer specifically to the action of those who walk over the grapes to press out their juice. The phrase "the grapes" is supplied in the translation for clarity.

<sup>22</sup> **sn** The immediacy of judgment upon wickedness is likened to the urgency required for a harvest that has reached its pinnacle of development. When the harvest is completely ripe, there can be no delay by the reapers in gathering the harvest. In a similar way, Joel envisions a time when human wickedness will reach such a heightened degree that there can be no further stay of divine judgment (cf. the "fullness of time" language in Gal 4:4).

<sup>23</sup> **sn** The decision referred to here is not a response on the part of the crowd, but the verdict handed out by the divine judge.

<sup>24</sup> **tn** Heb "gather in."



**3:16** The LORD roars from Zion;  
from Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> his voice bellows out.<sup>2</sup>  
The heavens<sup>3</sup> and the earth shake.  
But the LORD is a refuge for his people;  
he is a stronghold for the citizens<sup>4</sup> of  
Israel.

*The LORD's Presence in Zion*

**3:17** You will be convinced<sup>5</sup> that I the LORD  
am your God,  
dwelling on Zion, my holy mountain.  
Jerusalem<sup>6</sup> will be holy –  
conquering armies<sup>7</sup> will no longer pass  
through it.

**3:18** On that day<sup>8</sup> the mountains will drip  
with sweet wine,<sup>9</sup>  
and the hills will flow with milk.<sup>10</sup>  
All the dry stream beds<sup>11</sup> of Judah will  
flow with water.

A spring will flow out from the temple<sup>12</sup>  
of the LORD,  
watering the Valley of Acacia Trees.<sup>13</sup>  
**3:19** Egypt will be desolate  
and Edom will be a desolate wilderness,  
because of the violence they did to the  
people of Judah,<sup>14</sup>  
in whose land they shed innocent blood.  
**3:20** But Judah will reside securely for-  
ever,  
and Jerusalem will be secure<sup>15</sup> from one  
generation to the next.  
**3:21** I will avenge<sup>16</sup> their blood which I  
had not previously acquitted.  
It is the LORD who dwells in Zion!

<sup>1</sup> **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "he sounds forth his voice."

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Or "the sky." See the note on "sky" in 2:30.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* "sons."

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* "know."

<sup>6</sup> **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* "strangers" or "foreigners." In context, this refers to invasions by conquering armies.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* "and it will come about in that day."

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Many English translations read "new wine" or "sweet wine," meaning unfermented wine, i.e., grape juice.

<sup>10</sup> **sn** The language used here is a hyperbolic way of describing both a bountiful grape harvest ("the mountains will drip with juice") and an abundance of cattle ("the hills will flow with milk"). In addition to being hyperbolic, the language is also metonymical (effect for cause).

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Or "seasonal streams."

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* "house."

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* "valley of Shittim." The exact location of the Valley of Acacia Trees is uncertain. The Hebrew word שִׁטִּים (*shittim*) refers to a place where the acacia trees grow, which would be a very arid and dry place. The acacia tree can survive in such locations, whereas most other trees require more advantageous conditions. Joel's point is that the stream that has been mentioned will proceed to the most dry and barren of locations in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* "violence of the sons of Judah." The phrase "of the sons of Judah" is an objective genitive (cf. KJV "the violence against the children of Judah"; NAB, NIV, NRSV "violence done to the people of Judah"). It refers to injustices committed against the Judeans, not violence that the Judeans themselves had committed against others.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** The phrase "will be secure" does not appear in the Hebrew, but are supplied in the translation for the sake of smoothness.

<sup>16</sup> **tc** The present translation follows the reading וְנִקַּמְתִּי (v<sup>e</sup>*niqqamti*, "I will avenge") rather than וְנִקַּמְתִּי (v<sup>e</sup>*niqqeti*, "I will acquit") of the MT.