

Drought and Locust Plague in Joel 1–2

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For Joel Giegold

1. Lamentation about Drought

Other than in the river oases of Egypt and Mesopotamia, life in Syria and Palestine depends on rain. The vegetation period lasts from October to March, whereas the summer is completely rainless. The beginning of the winter rains is longingly awaited. In the ancient world, the return of the water was celebrated in the cult. In mythology, it was held to be the victory of the weather god over chaos.

The return of the rain was uncertain from year to year. It could arrive too late, or there could be too little, or it could fail to materialize at all. In the conditions of the ancient world this meant the threat of famine. Drought was the classic reason for leaving the land in order to seek a living somewhere else. This is what we are told about Abraham (Gen 12:10), Isaac (Gen 26:2), Joseph's brothers (Gen 45:10–11), Elijah (1 Kgs 17:10) and Elimelech (Ruth 1:1). We know the story of how, under King Ahab, Elijah proclaims that for a number of years there is going to be neither dew nor rain (1 Kgs 17:1). Elijah also prophesies the end of the drought to the king (18:42), before it breaks in a dramatic thunderstorm over Carmel (18:42–45).

Like war and pestilence, drought was a public emergency. "Sword, hunger, and pestilence" (Jer 14:12 and *passim*) constitute the classic triad of plagues. As a matter of course, the attempt was made to master the drought by religious means. The people hoped that their rescue would come from the God Yahweh. The cultic ceremonies which were put on for this purpose were public acts. They were one of the typical occasions for the people's hymn of lamentation. An example of this genre has been preserved, embedded in Jer 14:1–9.¹ In its description of the people's plight, it is a moving document, even though we may assume that prayers of this kind were not written for a particular occasion but had already acquired their conventional form.

1 See also Jer 4:23–26, and Isa 24:4–11 which is near to Joel 1.

We find similarly impressive descriptions of distress in the book of Joel. In the book's first chapter, there are several calls for collective lament. In Joel 2:18–27 this lament is answered by Yahweh—in the form among other things of the salvation oracle. It would seem that in the book of Joel we can detect the elements of a lamentation liturgy.² However, these elements emerge only if the book is subjected to a detailed analysis.

In the form that we currently have, the book of Joel presents itself in bewildering diversity. On the one hand locusts are made responsible for the distress, on the other hand an extreme drought is described. The causes for the situation have to be distinguished—indeed they are actually contradictory. The description of the locusts passes into the description of a devastating military attack. The drought acquires a dimension which turns into an eschatological catastrophe for the human race, comparable to the Isaiah apocalypse in Isa 24. This merges with the traditional motif about the Day of Yahweh, here already in the modified form of the prophecy of disaster which it has been given in the books of Amos (Amos 5:18–20)³ and Zephaniah (Zeph 1:14–16a).⁴

The trend of the recent exegesis is to see the book—apart from some glosses—as a unity,⁵ precisely because of this confusion, which presents considerable impediments to the analysis, and to assume that the text as we have it has a meaningful structure which we only have to detect.⁶

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- 2 See esp. Walter Baumgartner, "Joel 1 und 2," in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft: Karl Budde zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. K. Marti; BZAW 34; Gießen: Töpelmann, 1920), 10–19.
 - 3 See esp. Reinhard Müller, "Der finstere Tag Jahwes: Zum kultischen Hintergrund von Am 5,18–20," *ZAW* 122 (2010): 576–92.
 - 4 See Christoph Levin, "Zephaniah: How this Book Became Prophecy," in *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former and Latter Prophets and Other Texts* (ed. L. L. Grabbe and M. Nissinen; Ancient Near East Monographs 4; Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 117–39, esp. 131–36, repr. in *Re-Reading the Scriptures: Essays in the Literary History of the Old Testament* (FAT 87; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 263–81, esp. 275–79.
 - 5 Wilhelm Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten* (HKAT 3/4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897), 86–87, and Karl Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton* (KHC 13; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1904), 111–26, maintained the unity of the book against Vernes and Rothstein (see below n. 7). More recently Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (trans. W. Janzen, S. D. McBride, Jr., and C. A. Muenchow; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977; German original 1969), 6–8; Willem S. Prinsloo, "The Unity of the Book of Joel," *ZAW* 104 (1992): 66–81; Jörg Jeremias, "Joel/Joelbuch," *TRE* 17 (1988): 91–97, esp. 92–94.
 - 6 James L. Crenshaw, *Joel* (AB; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 30–34, presents an overview over some of the proposals. An example is the analysis by Barbara Schlenke and Peter Weimar, "'Hab Mitleid, Jahwe, mit deinem Volk!' (Joel 2,17). Zu Struktur und Komposition von Joel (Teil 1)," *BZ* 53 (2009): 1–28; Barbara Schlenke, and Peter Weimar, "'Und JHWH eiferte für sein Land und erbarmte sich

Less subtle, but harmonizing with the biblical findings otherwise, is the hypothesis that the book of Joel, too, is a literary structure which has grown up by way of several strata, and that its present form can most readily be understood if we assume that different aspects have gradually come to overly one another.⁷

The heading says that the book is to be understood as “the word of Yahweh,” that is to say as a prophetic writing. But this does not mean that prophecy is an adequate definition of the book’s genre, at least as far as the first two chapters are concerned. Bernhard Duhm observed about 2:12–13: “The יְהוָה of the first verse, v. 12 and the first sentence in v. 13, is the only sign that in these poems a prophet is speaking.”⁸ It is only in chs. 3–4 that this alters. “Only here does the prophecy begin for the first time—a description of the Day of Yahweh and the new era which will dawn with it.”⁹

In the following we shall be confining ourselves to Joel 1–2. The caesura after these two chapters is deep enough so that we may be allowed to take the first two chapters as a unity for its own. This does not exclude that Joel 3–4 are to some degree prepared in the first part of the book. The editors who attached the last two chapters did not leave unchanged what was transmitted to them but added their motives and subjects too.

seines Volkes’ (Joel 2,18). Zu Struktur und Komposition von Joel (Teil 2),” *BZ* 53 (2009): 212–37.

7 Maurice Vernes, *Le peuple d’Israel et ses espérances relatives à son avenir depuis les origines jusqu’à l’époque persane* (Paris: Sandoz, 1872), 46–58, called the unity of the book into question, ascribing Joel 1–2 and Joel 3–4 to two different authors. Johann Wilhelm Rothstein in his German translation of Samuel R. Driver, *Einleitung in die Litteratur des alten Testaments* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1896), 333–34, n. 1, took the same position without mentioning Vernes. Later Bernhard Duhm, *Anmerkungen zu den zwölf Propheten* (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1911), 96, moved the division of the book to 2:17/18. See also, for instance, Julius A. Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911), 49–56; Gustav Hölscher, *Die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte Israels* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914), 430–34; Baumgartner, “Joel 1 und 2”; Theodore H. Robinson (and Friedrich Horst), *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten* (HAT 1/14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1938), 55; Siegfried Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret* (BEATAJ 16; Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1988). Most recently Jörg Jeremias, *Die Propheten Joel, Obadja, Jona. Micha* (ATD 24/3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), VII, who changed his mind, compared with his article in *TRE*.

8 Duhm, *Anmerkungen*, 98.

9 Julius Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten* (4th ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963), 219.

2. The Day of Yahweh (2:1–11)

“From its beginning to its end the book of Joel focuses on one single topic that was common for classical prophecy ever since its beginnings: the ‘Day of Yahweh.’”¹⁰ The core of this topic is to be found in 2:1–11. This is so at least seen from the aspect of tradition history. Here we read a classic theophany description of the kind found similarly at the heart of the book of Zephaniah.¹¹ It is cultic in origin, as becomes clear from the striking parallels in the theophany psalms (Ps 18:8–15; 29:1–5a, 7–8a, 9–10; 77:17–20; 93:1a, 3a, 4, 5b; 97:2a, 3–5; 98:4–6).¹²

¹Blow the horn in Zion; shout on my holy mountain!

All the inhabitants of the earth shall tremble. (cf. v. 10)

For “the Day of Yahweh” is coming, “it is near,” (← Zeph 1:14)

²“a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!”
(← Zeph 1:15)

Like dawn, spread upon the mountains, there is a great and powerful people;
its like has never been from of old,
nor will be again “after it” (← v. 3) through the years of all generations.

³Fire devours before it, (cf. Ps 97:3) **and after it a flame burns.**

The land is like the garden of Eden “before it,
and after it” (← v. a) a desolate steppe.

There is even no escape from it.

**⁴Its appearance is like the appearance of horses,
and like war horses they run.**

⁵As with the sound of chariots on the tops of the mountains **they leap.**

“As with the sound” (← v. aα) of a flame of “fire devouring” (← v. 3)
the stubble,
like a mighty people drawn up for battle.

⁶Before it peoples are in anguish, “all faces grow pale.” (← Nah 2:11)

⁷Like warriors “they run,” (← v. 4) like men of war they climb up the wall.

10 Jeremias, “Joel/Joelbuch,” 94; also idem, “The Function of the Book of Joel for Reading the Twelve,” in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve* (ed. R. Albertz, James D. Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 77–87, esp. 78: “The one and only subject of the book of Joel is the ‘Day of the Lord.’”

11 See Levin, “Zephaniah,” 137–39 (= 280–81).

12 See for short Christoph Levin, “Old Testament Religion: Conflict and Peace,” *AJBI*, vol. 34–36 (Tokyo: The Japanese Biblical Institute, 2008–10), 29–54, esp. 33–42, repr. in *Re-Reading the Scriptures: Essays in the Literary History of the Old Testament* (FAT 87; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 165–81, esp. 168–73. A detailed outline is to be found in Reinhard Müller, *Jahwe als Wettergott: Studien zur althebräischen Kultlyrik anhand ausgewählter Psalmen* (BZAW 387; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

They march each on his way, they do not change their courses.

⁸They do not jostle "each" (← v. 7) one another,
each in his path "they march." (← v. 7)

Through the midst of the missiles they attack, they are not halted.

⁹They leap upon the city, "they run" "upon the walls;" (← v. 7)
"they climb up" into the houses, (← v. 7)

through the windows they enter like a thief.

¹⁰**The earth quakes before it, the heavens tremble,** (cf. Ps 77:19)

the sun and the moon are darkened,

and the stars withdraw their shining. (cf. Amos 5:20)

¹¹**Yahweh utters his voice** (cf. Ps 29:3; 68:34; Amos 1:2)

before his army, for his host is exceedingly great;

for he that executes his word is powerful.

"For" the Day of "Yahweh is great and very terrible." (← Ps 96:4)

And who can endure it?

At the beginning is the call to blow the horn at the cultic place in Zion and to raise the battle cry (רוע *hi.*) with which the troops extol the victorious king. Other than in the most immediate parallels Jer 4:5; 6:1, and Hos 5:8, the horn here is neither a warning signal (as it is in Amos 3:6) nor the signal to attack (as in Judg 3:2; 6:34; Jer 51:27 and *passim*); here שופר "horn" and תרועה "battle cry" are the phenomena accompanying the theophany on the Day of Yahweh, this day therefore being called the "day of horn-blast and battle cry," יום שופר ותרועה (Zeph 1:16). The military noise of שופר and תרועה is part of the royal ceremonial which is transferred to the divine king Yahweh on the God's accession to the throne.

The reason for the tumult is the coming of the Day of Yahweh, כִּי־בָּא "for the Day of Yahweh is coming, it is near" (v. 1b). This phrase corresponds almost word for word with the announcement in Zeph 1:14, קָרוֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל קָרוֹב וּמָהֵר מְאֹד "The great Day of Yahweh is near, near and coming very fast." The description of the coming day as it is given in v. 2aα coincides with Zeph 1:15, יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וְאֶפְלָה יוֹם עָנָן וְעֶרְפָּל "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness." It is generally considered that these phrases have been taken over from the book of Zephaniah.¹³ What speaks especially in favour of this explanation is that Zeph 1:15, for its part, presupposes the interpretation of the Day of Yahweh given to it in the book of Amos, where it is seen as a disastrous event. The phrase יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וְאֶפְלָה "a day of darkness and

13 Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, 216; Marti, *Dodekapropheten*, 126; Duhm, *Anmerkungen*, 97; Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 50, 95; Alfred Jepsen, "Kleine Beiträge zum Zwölfprophetenbuch," *ZAW* 56 (1938): 85–100, esp. 87; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 44; Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 23–24.

gloom" in Zeph 1:15 repeats Amos 5:18.¹⁴ This means that in Joel 2:1a α , b–2a α we are confronted with the third stage of a sequence in tradition history which can be elucidated only in this way and no other. The word for word borrowing also explains why the divine speech is not continued in v. 1b but that it changes into to a speech *about* Yahweh.

Verses 2a β –3 contain obvious doublets. וְאַחֲרָיו "after it" occurs three times, in twice of them paired with לְפָנָיו "before it." The great and strong army which spread out over the land like the dawn (v. 2a β b), is nothing other than the locust swarm. That becomes clear when v. 3b α establishes: "The land is like the garden of Eden before it, and after it a desolate steppe." In between, it is stated in v. 3a, as follows, אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו אֶכְלָה אֹתוֹ וְאַחֲרָיו תִּלְהַט לְהִבָּה "fire devours before it, and after it a flame burns." It has been observed that this last detail does not fit the locusts. What are being described are rather the flashes of lightning which accompany the theophany of the weather god.¹⁵ Ps 97:2a, 3a offers a particularly close parallel: עָנָן וְעָרְפֶּל סְבִיבָיו אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תִּלְהַט "clouds and thick darkness are around him, fire goes before him." At the same time this parallel is evidence that Joel 2:2a α and 3a form a direct sequence: "A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. ... Fire devours before it, and after it a flame burns." When the results of the locust swarm are also described in v. 3b α on the pattern of לְפָנָיו "before it" and וְאַחֲרָיו "after it," the way they are described depends on the theophany description. This is an important corrective over against previous research, which considered that the experience of the locust swarm was being interpreted by way of the Day of Yahweh.¹⁶ The reverse is the case: the Day of Yahweh is being illustrated by way of the swarm of locusts

The same can be observed in the text that follows. Between vv. 9 and 10 there is a marked breach. First of all "the preposition with sing. suffix ('before it') at the beginning of the verse has no preceding antecedent, since the verbs in vv. 7–9 are in the plural."¹⁷ Moreover, the tense changes. The description of the locust swarm in vv. 4–9 is largely governed by verbs in the imperfect, whereas in vv. 10–11a the verbs are in the perfect. Wellhausen points out: "The preterites should be not-

14 Levin, "Zephaniah," 132–33 (= 275–76). For the tradition history see Hermann Spieckermann, "Dies irae: Der alttestamentliche Befund und seine Vorgeschichte," in *Gottes Liebe zu Israel* (FAT 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 34–46.

15 Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 45.

16 Duhm, *Anmerkungen*, 97–98; Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 50–51; Jepsen, "Kleine Beiträge," 85–87; Otto Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie* (WMANT 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959), 119.

17 Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 26.

ed.”¹⁸ What is more, is the substance. “The locusts are partly described in a way which—however much we allow for the poet’s fantasy—excludes the idea that these are real locusts (e.g. 2:10).”¹⁹ “The worldwide horizon, heaven and earth, sun, moon and stars, hardly fits as the original continuation of the description of the locust swarm.”²⁰

Instead, in vv. 10–11 we again have to deal with a classic theophany description. The earthquake, which here even includes the quaking of the heavens, is one of the circumstances accompanying the appearance of the deity in the thunderstorm. This time we find the closest parallel in Ps 77:19: *הָאֵירוּ בְּרָקִים תְּבַל רְגֵזָה וַתִּרְעַשׂ הָאָרֶץ* “lightnings lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook.” This again finds a correspondence in Ps 97:4: *הָאֵירוּ בְּרָקָיו תְּבַל רְאֲתָהּ וַתִּהַל הָאָרֶץ* “his lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles.” These parallels are evidence of what is already suggested by the tenses: that there is a direct connection between the description of the lightning in v. 3a and the earthquake in v. 10. Apparently there was a firmly established pattern of cause and effect in the theophany descriptions.

Originally the effect was related only to the earth, which rises up towards the coming weather god, in order to receive its fertility through the rain, just as only the earthquake is a real experience. When v. 10aβb expands this appearance to embrace the whole cosmos, the heavens, sun, moon and stars, the original dimensions are overstepped. The fact that the stars lose their shining (*נָגַה*) is again reminiscent of Amos 5:20, and shows once more that here we have to do with a form of the Day of Yahweh theophany, in which it is developed into a disaster.

Verse 11 adds the thunder to the lightning: *וַיְהוֹה נָתַן קוֹלוֹ* “Yahweh utters his voice.” This corresponds to the natural sequence, just as does the rest of the theophany staging. The well-known parallel text is Ps 29:3–9, but Ps 18:14 and 68:34 should also be mentioned. The following sentences, beginning with *לִפְנֵי חַיְלוֹ* “before his army,” again switch over to the warriors, but in v. 11b the theophany theme finds its end: *כִּי־גָדוֹל יוֹם־יְהוָה וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד* “for the Day of Yahweh is great and very terrible.” This sentence has been taken over from Ps 96:4 and has been applied to the Day of Yahweh: *כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נוֹרָא הוּא עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים* “for Yahweh is great and very much to be praised, he is terrible above all gods.” Since

18 Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 217.

19 Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, 430.

20 Jepsen, “Kleine Beiträge,” 86.

Ps 96:4 is itself a secondary variation on Ps 48:2,²¹ there can be no doubt about the literary dependence.

As the result of this first examination, the following text emerges:

תקעו שופר בציון והריעו בהר קדשי¹
 כִּי־בא יום־יהוה כי קרוב:
 יום־חשך ואפלה יום ענן וערפל²
 לִפְנֵי אֵלֶּה אש ואחריי תלהט להבה³
 לִפְנֵי רָגְזָה אֶרֶץ רָעֲשׂוּ שָׁמַיִם¹⁰
 שָׁמַשׁ וְיָרֵחַ קָדְרוּ וְכּוֹכְבִים אָסְפוּ נְגִהָם:
 ויהוה נִתַּן קוֹלוֹ¹¹
 כִּי־גָדוֹל יום־יהוה וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד

¹Blow the horn in Zion; shout on my holy mountain! [...]

for the Day of Yahweh is coming, it is near,

²a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! [...]

³Fire devours before it, and after it a flame burns. [...]

¹⁰The earth quakes before it, the heavens tremble,

the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

¹¹Yahweh utters his voice. [...]

For the Day of Yahweh is great and very terrible. [...]

It is evident that essential elements of its wording have been borrowed from the book of Zephaniah. About that scholars have long agreed.²² What is new is that on the basis of the parallels in the psalms it is possible to arrive at a coherent description of the theophany which once formed the literary basis for the section. The dependence on Zephaniah goes together with a reinterpretation of the Day of Yahweh theophany in the sense of an event which is threatening rather than full of blessing; this can first be seen in Amos 5:18–20 and it has visibly influenced Zeph 1:15. In Joel 2, seen in this light, we already find ourselves on a third stage in tradition history. The cosmic dimension has markedly expanded, although here, too, the original form of the presentation can still

21 See Charles A. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 2 (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), 300; Jörg Jeremias, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen* (FRLANT 141; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 125 ("The quotations of Ps 93:1 in v. 10 and of Ps 48:2 in v. 4a are evident."); and many others.

22 See above n. 13. Over and above Zephaniah (and Amos), scholars see the book of Joel dependent on Isa 13, see esp. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 47; Jörg Jeremias, "Der 'Tag Jahwes' in Jes 13 und Joel 2," in *Schriftauslegung in der Schrift: Festschrift für Odil Hannes Steck* (ed. R. G. Kratz, Thomas Krüger, and Konrad Schmid; BZAW 300; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 129–38. However, I could not find any positive argument brought forward in favor of it. Because the book of Joel is evidently late it seems to be taken as a matter of course that literary identities and similarities are quotations on Joel's side. But Isaiah 13 is also very late and, moreover, a composite text.

very well be seen. The coming of the deity at his day counts still as a salvific event for which people are yearning. The parallels to the theophany psalms are striking.

3. Locusts and Warriors (2:2aβb, 3bα, 5aβγb, 7)

The connection between the Day of Yahweh theophany and the description of a catastrophe caused by locusts should not be interpreted to mean that the details of the natural event have derived from the theophany description. In this respect the conclusion of earlier research, namely that the description of the locusts provides the basis of the text, remains valid.²³ There are signs that the account of the locusts rests on a *Vorlage* of its own. However this has not been preserved in complete form, and the individual fragments which can be isolated on the grounds of their poetical form do not cohere convincingly.

In the context of 2:1–11, we can detect a fragment of this kind in v. 4–5αα:

כַּמְרָאָה סוּסִים מְרָאָהוּ
וּכְפָרְשִׁים כּוֹ יִרְצוּן
כְּקוֹל מְרַכְבוֹת [עַל־רָאשֵׁי הַהָרִים] יִרְקְדוּן

Its appearance is like the appearance of horses,
and like war horses they run.

As with the sound of chariots [on the tops of the mountains] they leap.

The three lines (except the obvious expansion in the last line) constitute a poetical fragment which can be read in the metre 3+3+3. The first line is a nominal clause, the second and third lines are verbal clauses in the imperfect which form a synonymous *parallelismus membrorum*. Taken together, the three lines provide a threefold comparison for the locusts; their appearance, their speed, and the noise they make are compared with an army of chariots.

Since the reference in the first line is only suggested by way of suffixes, something must have preceded. But judging by the poetical form, this cannot have been the text that precedes today. Moreover, it would seem that the expansions to be observed in vv. 2aβb und 3bα were added at the same time when the fragment vv. 4–5αα came in:

23 See esp. Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 50–51; Duhm, *Anmerkungen*, 97; Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, 433; Jepsen, "Kleine Beiträge," 86; Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie*, 119.

Like dawn, spread upon the mountains, there is a great and powerful people; its like has never been from of old, nor will be again after it through the years of all generations. ...

The land is like the garden of Eden before it, and after it a desolate steppe.

The storm of the locusts is now equated with the coming of the Day of Yahweh. In v. 5a α the expansion עַל־רֵאשֵׁי הַהָרִים “on the tops of the mountains” was probably added by the same hand, as in v. 2b the locusts spread עַל־הַהָרִים “upon the mountains.” The addition disturbs the parallelism, and stands in the wrong position in the sentence. According to Duhm, the verb יִרְקְדוּן “should follow מַרְכָּבוֹת.”²⁴

Having been connected with the theophany, the description of the locusts was thoroughly changed. The image of the comparison, i.e., the army of chariots, changed its role, now becoming the subject. The locusts depart from the scene. Instead the hostile army is described in ever greater detail.

As with the sound of a flame of fire devouring the stubble (קָוֹל לְהַב אֵשׁ (אֲכָלָה קָשׁ), like a mighty people drawn up for battle. ... Like warriors they run, like men of war they climb up the wall. They march each on his way, they do not change their courses.

The link in v. 5a β b by which the expansion is attached to the former text provides a synthesis of the theophany in v. 3a (לְפָנָיו אֲכָלָה אֵשׁ וְאֶחָרָיו (תִּלְהַט לְהַבָּה (בְּקוֹל). This forms no appropriate combination. Noise is not a characteristic of fire. Duhm supposes that קוֹל “sound” has been “repeated by mistake.”²⁵ But even if the catchword קָוֹל does not fit the devouring flames, it is essential for the link. Verse 7 develops the description further. Instead of the locusts we now have warriors who storm the walls.

4. The Locust Storm (1:1–20)

The conclusion that the fragment in 2:4–5a α derives from an already existing context which has today been either overlaid or lost, finds its confirmation in Joel 1. Here we find fragments of a similar artistic and poetical form which describe a plague of locusts, too.

24 Duhm, *Anmerkungen*, 98.

25 Ibid.

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

²Hear this, you aged men, give ear, all inhabitants of the land!

Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers?

³Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children,
and their children another generation.

⁴*What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten.*

*What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten,
and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.*²⁶

⁵Awake, you drunkards, and weep;
and wail, all you drinkers of wine,

because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.

⁶For a nation "has come up" against my "land," (← Jer 4:7)
powerful and without number;
its teeth are the teeth of a "lion" (← Jer 4:7),
and it has the fangs of a lioness.

⁷"It has laid waste" (← Jer 4:7) my "vine," (← v. 12)
and splintered my "fig tree;" (← v. 12)
it has stripped it bare and cast it away;
its twigs are made white.

⁸<Lament> like a virgin girded with sackcloth because of the husband of
her youth.

⁹The cereal offering and the drink offering
"are cut off from" (← v. 5) the house of Yahweh.
"<Mourn>," (← v. 10) O priests, the ministers of Yahweh.

¹⁰*The fields are laid waste, the ground mourns;*

because "the grain" (← Deut 11:14) "is laid waste," (← v. a) the wine
(← Deut 11:14) "withers," (← v. 12) the oil (← Deut 11:14) "languishes."
(← v. 12)

¹¹Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil, wail, O vinedressers,
for the wheat and the barley;
because the harvest of the "field" (← v. 10) has perished.

¹²*The vine withers, the fig tree languishes.*

Pomegranate, even palm, and apple

all the trees of the field

are withered.

For joy "withers" (← v. 12a) away from the sons of men.

¹³Gird on sackcloth and lament, O priests, wail, O ministers of the
altar.

Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God!

For cereal offering and drink offering are withheld from the house
of your God.

¹⁴Sanctify a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly.

26 There is an exhaustive debate on the different designations of the locusts, which does not matter here, see Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 27–28.

Gather the elders

all the inhabitants of the land
to the house of Yahweh your God;
and cry out to Yahweh.

¹⁵Alas for the day! "For the Day of Yahweh is near," (← Zeph 1:7)

and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.

¹⁶Is not the food cut off before our eyes,
joy and rejoicing from the house of our God?

¹⁷*The seed shrivels under their clods,*

the storehouses are desolate; the granaries are ruined

because "the grain" (← Deut 11:14) "has withered." (← v. 12)

¹⁸*How the beasts groan!*

The herds of cattle stray about because there is no pasture for them.

Even the flocks of sheep <"are desolate">.²⁷ (← v. 17)

¹⁹Unto you, Yahweh, I cry.

For "fire has devoured" (← 2:3) the pastures of the steppe,
and "flame has burned" (← 2:3) all the trees of the field.

²⁰Even the beasts of the field "long for you" (← Ps 42:2)
because "the water brooks" have dried up, (← Ps 42:2)

and "fire has devoured the pastures of the steppe." (← v. 19)

The first of the original fragments is v. 4. In three lines, in four-stress metre (4+4+4), four different kinds of locusts are linked, rising to a climax. The step for step increase of the disaster reminds on sayings such as Isa 24:18a; Amos 5:3, and Amos 5:19. Unlike Joel 2:4–5aα, this time the verbs are in the perfect: the locust swarm has passed, and now there is famine. According to the sequence of events, the verse is in the wrong place. The description of the locust swarm in 2:4–5aα should come first. Apparently the fragments became confused when they were linked with the theophany description.

On the basis of the metre this fragment can be supplemented from parts of the following. Verse 10a can also be read as a double-two or four-stress unit, as can vv. 12a and 12b, provided that the asyndetically added expansion הַשָּׂדֵה כָּל־עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֵה "all the trees of the field" is left out.²⁸ This unit also comprises three lines. The same metre can be found for the last time in v. 17a, although there only in two lines. Finally, on the basis of the content, v. 18a might also be attributed to the original poem. All in all, the following emerges:

27 Read with the Septuagint ἡφανίσθησαν = הַשָּׂדֵה כָּל־עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֵה as in v. 17. MT שָׂדֵה ni. "suffer punishment."

28 Marti, *Dodekapropheton*, 121; Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 82.

וְיָמַר הַחֹרֵב אֲכַל הַחֹרֵב⁴
 וְיָמַר הַחֹרֵב אֲכַל הַחֹרֵב
 וְיָמַר הַחֹרֵב אֲכַל הַחֹרֵב [...]]...
 שָׂדֵד שָׂדֵה אֲבֵלָה אֲדָמָה]...¹¹
 הַגֶּפֶן הַיְבֵשֶׁת וְהַתְּאֵנָה אֲמֵלְלָה¹²
 רְמוֹן גַּם-תְּמָר וְתַפּוּחַ]... [יָבֵשׁוּ]...¹¹
 עֵבְשׁוּ פְּרֻדֹת תַּחַת מְגַרְפְּתֵיהֶם¹¹
 נִשְׁמָו אֲצִרוֹת נְהָרְסוּ מִמְּגָרוֹת]...
 מֵהַיְבֵשֶׁת בְּהֵמָה¹¹
 נִבְכוּ עֲדָרֵי בָקָר כִּי אֵין מְרֻעָה לָהֶם

- ⁴What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten.
 What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten,
 and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten. [...]
- ¹⁰The fields are laid waste, the ground mourns; [...]
- ¹²The vine withers, the fig tree languishes.
 Pomegranate, even palm, and apple [...] are withered. [...]
- ¹⁷The seed shrivels under their clods,
 the storehouses are desolate; the granaries are ruined. [...]
- ¹⁸How the beasts groan!
 The herds of cattle stray about because there is no pasture for them.

This result speaks again for itself: The poem gives a coherent description of the land after it was devastated by a storm of locusts.

Other than in 2:1–11, the basis of 1:4–10 is not the description of the theophany supplemented by the motif of the locust swarm; here, conversely, the description of the locusts is the basis. This has later been related to the theophany, as will be shown below. The contrary direction of the textual levels could be explained by some kind of documentary hypothesis. Two independent poems, the one related to the Day of Yahweh, the other to a storm of locusts, have been linked with each other.

5. Call to Lamentation (1:5, 8, 11, 14*)

On a later level in 1:4–20, we find a new element which is missing in 2:1–11, the call to lamentation. These parts of the text are also poetically formed. What is strange is the addressee of the calls. In v. 5 it is the friends of the wine, who are now supposed to lament:

Awake, you drunkards, and weep;
 and wail, all you drinkers of wine,
 because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.

This motif has perhaps been chosen because wine counted as the quintessence of joy in life. In v. 8, the feminine imperative אָלִי from the Aramaic root אלה II “lament”²⁹ should probably be read as a plural אָלֵי:³⁰

Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth because of the husband of her youth.

Here the marriage ceremony offers a further image: It cannot take place because all joy has disappeared from the land. In v. 11 (where the verbs have to be read as imperatives) it is the tillers of the soil and the wine growers who are called to lament:

Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil, wail, O vinedressers,
for the wheat and the barley;
because the harvest of the field has perished.

Since the reason given touches only on the loss of the grain, we can see that this already presupposes the earlier text stratum, which in v. 12 complains that the vines have withered. The series of these appeals leads on in v. 14 to the call for a ceremony of repentance. Once the additions כל יִשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ “all the inhabitants of the land” and בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם “to the house of Yahweh your God” have been omitted, this can be read as a double-four unit:

קִדְּשׁוּ צוֹם קָרְאוּ עֲצֻרָה
אֶסְפוּ זְקֵנִים וְיִצְקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה

Sanctify a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly.
Gather the elders and cry out to Yahweh.

What the analysis brings to the fore is the initial part of a lamentation ceremony. The question arises whether and where the ceremony continues. Therefore, before we will look still closer at ch. 1 let us observe what happens in 2:21–27. There it is said that the cry to Yahweh was answered.

6. The Salvation Oracle (2:21–27)

“Verse 21–23(24) is generally viewed today as a later addition, because here the rescue seems to be presupposed as having already hap-

29 See Max Wagner, *Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* (BZAW 96; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), 24 (No. 15). The Hebrew equivalent is ילל hi.

30 Thus Duhm, *Anmerkungen*, 96.

pened.”³¹ This is an error, which arises from the fact that later 2:12–20 has been interpolated, as will be shown below. Actually, in 2:21–27 we have the earliest part of the prophecy of salvation in the book of Joel. “Full of light, they are the necessary counter-picture to the call to lament in ch. 1.”³² The salvation oracle did not have an introduction of its own, nor did it require one. In other prophetic books, too, disaster and salvation directly follow one another, without a narrative element such as vv. 18 and 19 being needed.

²¹Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, (cf. Ps 97:1)

for “Yahweh has done great things!” (← Ps 126:3)

²²Fear not, you “beasts of the field,” (1:20)

for “the pastures of the steppe” (1:20) are green;

for the tree bears its fruit,

“the fig tree and vine” (← 1:12) give their full yield.

²³O sons of Zion, “be glad and rejoice” (← v. 21) in Yahweh, your God;

for “he has given” (← Deut 11:14) for you

“the early rain” (← v. b) for vindication,

he has poured down “for you” (← v. a) shower,

“the early and the latter rain,” (← Deut 11:14) as before.

²⁴The threshing floors shall be full of grain,

the vats shall overflow with “wine and oil.” (← Deut 11:14)

²⁵I will restore to you the years

which “the swarming locust has eaten,

the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,” (← 1:4)

my great army, which I sent among you,

²⁶so that you shall eat

eat and be sated, (← Deut 11:15)

and praise the name of Yahweh your God, who has dealt wondrously with you.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁷You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,

and that I, Yahweh, am your God, and no one else.

“And my people shall never again be put to shame.” (← v. 26)

The oracle of salvation begins in typical fashion with the reassurance formula אִל־תִּירָא “fear not.” The addressee is the אֲדָמָה whose grief was described in 1:10a and which is now supposed to be transformed into joy: גִּילִי וְשִׂמְחֵהי “be glad and rejoice.” The verb pair belongs in tradition history to the context of Yahweh’s accession. “The calls to jubilation

31 Baumgartner, “Joel 1 und 2,” 16, referring to Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, 218; Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 108; Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 113; and Karl Budde, “Der Umschwung in Joel 2,” *OLZ* 22 (1919): 104–10, esp. 109.

32 Marti, *Dodekapropheton*, 133.

and joy ... are in accordance with the royal ritual."³³ Yahweh's kingdom is founded on his victory over chaos and distress: "for Yahweh has done great things." That means that here again we are back on the thematic level of the Day of Yahweh—but now seen from its salvific side. The statement is in agreement with Ps 126:3, and not by chance: *הַגִּדְלֵי יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲמָנוּ הֵינּוּ שְׂמֵחִים* "Yahweh has done great things for us, and we rejoice." In Ps 126 too the jubilation is related to the return of the water and the certainty of harvest.

In v. 22a the reassurance formula is repeated and addressed to the wild animals. This is not the original sequence. Nowack has rightly observed: "The reason ... given does not really fit v. 22a, for even if some animals feed from the fruits of the trees, the author is undoubtedly thinking of human beings ...; the final element makes that clear."³⁴ Only humans eat figs and drink wine. It is fairly clear from this that v. 22b is the original continuation of v. 21:

Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice,
for Yahweh has done great things,
for the tree bears its fruit,
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

This promise balances out the lament in 1:12a, which there belongs to the earliest textual level.

Verse 24a shows itself to be continuing the original salvation oracle:³⁵ Whereas vv. 21 and 22b tell that the trees will again give their fruits, now the fruits of the *הַתְּבָאָה* are named, its fertility being renewed: The threshing floors shall again be filled with grain so that the people will be sated. Therefore the tense changes from perfect, as it was in v. 22b, to perf. cons. The logical continuation is to be found in v. 26:

The threshing floors shall be full of grain, [...]
so that you shall eat [...] and praise the name of Yahweh your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.

The people will answer with the praise of Yahweh, whose desire it is to help through his wondrous acts.

33 Müller, *Jahwe als Wettergott*, 99.

34 Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 108.

35 The verse is rightly judged by Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 38, as being "stylistically superfluous." There can be two reasons for: either the verse itself, or its context. As vv. 23 and 25 are later insertions, the latter is the case here.

7. Call to Repentance (2:12–20)

In the sequence of the book in its current form, the salvation oracle is preceded by an emphatic call to repentance on which it answers. As this passage is written in prose, it disrupts the artistic and poetical form of the earlier text. What is noticeable here is the reference to other books in the Dodekapropheton, namely to the books of Amos and Jonah. This is different from the other parts of the book of Joel.

¹²“Yet even” (← Amos 4:6, 7) now, “says Yahweh, return to me” (← Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11) “with all your heart,” (← Deut 10:10) with fasting (cf. Jonah 3:5), with weeping, and with mourning. ¹³Rend your heart and not your garments (cf. Jonah 3:5–6, 8), and return to Yahweh, your God (cf. Jonah 3:8), for he is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil.” (← Jonah 4:2) ¹⁴“Who knows whether he will not turn and repent,” (← Jonah 3:9)

and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal-offering and a drink-offering for Yahweh, your God?

¹⁵“Blow the horn in Zion,” (← 2:1) “sanctify a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly.” (← 1:14) ¹⁶“Gather” the people, “sanctify” the congregation, assemble “the elders.” “Gather” (← 1:14) the children, even those sucking at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, weep.

Let them say, Spare (cf. Jonah 4:11) your people, Yahweh, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations.

“Why should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?” (← Ps 79:10) ¹⁸Then Yahweh became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.

¹⁹Yahweh answered and said to his people, Behold, I am sending to you “grain, wine, and oil,” (← Deut 11:14) and you “will be sated” (← Deut 11:15); and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. (cf. Ezek 36:30)

²⁰I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear-guard into the western sea; his stench shall rise, and his foul smell shall rise, “for he has done great things.” (← v. 21)

The beginning in v. 12 should be taken literally: וְגַם-עַתָּה “yet even now.” It refers to an earlier occasion in which there was also a call to repentance. The phrase “return to me” is not, as is usual (and as in the following v. 13) שָׁבוּ אֵלַי but שָׁבוּ עָדַי. We find the only other instance of this form in the five-fold refrain in Amos 4: וְלֹא-שָׁבַתֶם עָדַי נְאֻם-יְהוָה “yet you did not return to me, says Yahweh” (vv. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). The formula for the divine saying נְאֻם-יְהוָה “says Yahweh,” which we meet here for the only

time in the book of Joel, makes the reference completely unequivocal.³⁶ Yahweh concedes afresh, וְגַם-עַתָּה “yet even now,” the possibility of repentance, an opportunity which the Israelites rejected five times in the time of Amos. We should also note that the first two plagues in Amos 4 are introduced in each case with וְגַם “yet even” (vv. 6, 7). Three of these five plagues consisted of drought and famine. The famine in the book of Joel is now incorporated into this series. In effect it is interpreted as a measure undertaken by Yahweh with the intention of bringing the people back to him.

The repentance shows itself in fasting, weeping, and lamentation. Here another model plays a part: the repentance of the Ninevites in Jonah 3. The formula of grace, חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אָרַךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,”³⁷ which is the basis of the call for repentance, is expanded here by the phrase וְנִחַם עַל-הַרְעָה “and repents of evil,” just as it is a single other time in Jonah 4:2. Since in Jonah 4 Yahweh’s grace and mercy depends on his remorse, which is caused by the repentance of the Ninevites in Jonah 3:10,³⁸ this unequivocally establishes the priority of the book of Jonah.³⁹ This is also confirmed by the consideration of v. 14 מִי יוֹדֵעַ יָשׁוּב וְנִחַם “who knows whether he will not turn and repent,” which has been taken over from the king of Nineveh’s speech in Jonah 3:9. Other than in the book of Jonah, in Joel 2:13 the formula of grace precedes this consideration. This means that Yahweh’s remorse is no longer expected to be the result of his equalizing justice as is the case in Jonah 3:10 (and in its *Vorlage* Jer 18:7–10), but rather to depend on his grace, as in the (later added) objection of the prophet in Jonah 4:2.

36 Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret*, 73; Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 29.

37 Exod 34:6; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8; Neh 9:17, 31; 2 Chr 30:9; cf. Exod 22:26; Deut 4:31; Ps 78:38; 116:5.

38 The core of the book of Jonah which is to be found in Jonah 1:1–2; 3:3a, 4b–5, 10 is no other than a narrative application of the theology of history theorem in Jer 18:7–10, see Christoph Levin, “Jona 1: Bekehrung zum Judentum und ihre Folgen,” in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie für A. Meinhold* (ed. R. Lux and E.-J. Waschke; ABG 23; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 283–99, esp. 283–84, repr. in idem, *Verheißung und Rechtfertigung: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament II* (BZAW 431; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 276–92, esp. 276–77. Jer 18:7–10 is the earliest biblical reference of the motive of Yahweh’s remorse (נִחַם).

39 Jonathan Magonet, *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah* (BBET 2; Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1976), 77–79; Bergler, *Joel als Schriftprophet*, 213–45. More recently most scholars see Jonah depending on Joel, see, e.g., Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 107. But see Hermann Spieckermann, “Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr ...,” in *Gottes Liebe zu Israel*, 3–19, esp. 17 n. 41

Jonah 3 tells about the repentance of non-Jews. This is different in Joel 2:13a. Therefore unlike the inhabitants of Nineveh, the Israelites are not told to return from their evil ways (שוב איש מדרךיו הרעה); they are told to return to Yahweh their God (ושובו אליהוה אלהיכם). The call to repentance was also changed: וקרעו לבבכם ואל-בגדיכם “rend your hearts – and not your garments,” that means: other than the Ninevites did according to Jonah 3:5 who put on sackcloth. The catchword לבבכם is the same as in v. 12: “return to me *with all your heart* (בכל-לבבכם).” This is unmistakably a hint to the *Shema*. What is more: The 2. pers. plural is a literal reference to the variant of the *Shema* to be found in Deut 11:13–15:

If you will obey my commandments which I command you this day, to love Yahweh your God, and to serve him with all your heart (בכל-לבבכם) and with all your soul, I will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain (יורה ומלקוש), that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil (והגנה ותירשך וצהרה); and I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be sated (ושבעת).

The return of the rain depends on the people’s return to Yahweh. The command for love in Deut 11:13 also explains why Yahweh’s first-person address of Joel 2:12 changes over into a speech *about* Yahweh in v. 13.

The interpretation arrived at through these references applies through vv. 15–16 to the ceremony of repentance which was proclaimed in 1:14*. The invitation אקפו זקנים “gather the elders” is repeated from there word for word, but is expanded to אקפו-עם קדשו קהל קבצו זקנים “gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders.” The whole of God’s people is to come together for the ceremony of repentance. As well as the elders, the “children and nursing infants” are also mentioned. The call to bridegroom and bride to emerge from their rooms (v. 16b) underlines with particular emphasis that the situation has brought joy in life to an end (cf. Jer 16, 9; 7:34; 25:10; 33:11); perhaps too sexual abstinence should be included in the penitential rites. “It was really the case that on the day of repentance great importance was attached to as complete an attendance as possible.”⁴⁰ For this, v. 15a takes up the blowing of the shofar from 2:1, which here too is not interpreted as an alarm signal but as a call to the cultic ceremony – rightly so, as we saw above.

The call to repentance itself follows in v. 17ba and is again related to Jonah 4: “Let them say, Spare your people, Yahweh (חוסה יהוה) (על-עמך), and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the

40 Baumgartner, “Joel 1 und 2,” 15.

nations." For in Jonah 4:11 Yahweh asked Jonah: וְאֲנִי לֹא אֶחֱזֵם עַל־יַיִנוּהָ הָעִיר "And I, should I not spare Nineveh, the great city." If Yahweh spares Nineveh but punishes his own people, they will become an object of derision among the non-Jews. We should note that it is the people who come together in v. 16 and who in v. 17b pray that they be spared. The motif of being shamed among the nations is widespread in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 24:9; 29:18; 42:18; 44:8; Ezek 5:14; 22:4), where it is related to the dispersion in the diaspora.

The answer to the plea follows in v. 19, now in narrative style though certainly without a description of the more precise circumstances. Yahweh turns directly to the lamenting people (לְעַמּוֹ). In the *futurum instans* הֲגִנִי שְׁלַח "behold, I am sending," he announces the imminent turn to salvation: He sends again "grain, wine and oil" (הַדֶּגֶן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיֶּצֶקֶה)⁴¹ so that the people will be sated (וַיִּשְׂבְּעוּהֶם). In this way the promise of Deut 11 is fulfilled by word: "If you will obey my commandments ... you will be sated." At the same time, Yahweh proves his power, which the Israelites according to Hos 2:10 have called in question, "that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil" (הַדֶּגֶן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיֶּצֶקֶה). With the demonstration of his power, Yahweh at the same time ends the humiliation of his people among the nations (הַקְרָפָה) (בְּגוֹיִם). The closest parallel is Ezek 36:30: "I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant, so that you may never again suffer the reproach of famine among the nations (תִּקְרַפַּת רָעֵב בְּגוֹיִם)."

8. Salvation Follows Repentance (1:1–3, 10b, 17b; 2:23*, 24b, 26aα*)

The narrative in 2:19: וַיַּעַן יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר לְעַמּוֹ "Yahweh answered and said to his people," makes the description in 1:4–2:11 to be read a cast back to the dire situation which has now been surmounted. The actual lamentation is to become part of a narrative. This being so, today's version can begin in 1:2 with a call to hear and pass on what has been heard, שְׁמַעְנֵי־זֹאת וְהִאֲזִינוּ "hear this and give ear." The rhetorical question: "Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers?" shows that the speaker means to describe an extraordinary event that

41 This triad is to be found Deut 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:33; 18:4; 28:51; Jer 31:12; Hos 2:10, 24; Joel 2:19; Hag 1:11; Neh 5:11; 10:40; 13:5, 12; 2 Chr 31:5; 32:28. For the religion-historical background see Udo Rütterswörden, "Vom Numen zum Nomen," in *Gott – Götter – Götzen: XIV. Europäischer Kongress für Theologie* (ed. Ch. Schwöbel; VWGT 38; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 282–91.

already belongs to the past. At the same time it presupposes that this event has been a saving one, irrespective of the situation described at the beginning of the book. It has become part of salvation history—and an example for future generations.

This again is in accordance with Deut 11, namely with the first part of the chapter (vv. 1–12) which recollects Yahweh's saving deeds in Egypt and on the wandering in the desert which are to be transmitted in order to exhort the people to keep Yahweh's commandments. This is what is meant by the plea in Joel 1:3 that listeners should themselves pass on what they themselves have heard, and make it part of tradition: "Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." Therefore it seems reasonable that the actual beginning of the book of Joel goes back to the same author who also inserted 2:12–20.

This may also include the book's heading "the word of Yahweh that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel." The form of the heading conforms exactly to the headings introducing the books of Hosea, Micah, and Zephaniah, and to some degree the books of Jeremiah and Amos, too. Only the dating is missing. The common form marks the book of Joel as being an integral part of the *corpus propheticum*. Moreover, as the content of the single books is equally characterized as "word of Yahweh,"⁴² this means that the books of the prophets are identical by their very substance. They differ only in regard of the person who proclaims the message. Because 2:12–19 depends to a large degree not only on Deut 11 but also on Amos 4 and Jonah 3–4 it seems highly probable that the heading goes back to the same author, or at least to the same step in the reworking of the book.

Traces of the same editor can also be found in the other parts of the book. The salvation as it is announced in 2:19 meets precisely the distress complained about in 1:10b:

Because the grain is laid waste (שָׁדַד), the wine withers (הִוְבֵישׁ), the oil languishes (אֶמְלֵל).

This statement is not original on its place but was subsequently added to v. 10a. This becomes evident by the repetitive connection כִּי שָׁדַד. The phrase repeats what is said in v. 10a (שָׁדַד) and v. 12 (הַוְבֵישָׁ ... אֶמְלֵלָהּ) in

42 On the history of the term "word of Yahweh" see Christoph Levin, "The 'Word of Yahweh': A Theological Concept in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (ed. M. H. Floyd and R. D. Haak; OTS 427; New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 42–62, repr. in *Re-Reading the Scriptures: Essays in the Literary History of the Old Testament* (FAT 87; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 223–45.

order to apply it to the triad “grain, wine, and oil” (דגן תירוש ויצקה). Deut 11:13–15 is again in the background. This means: the drought goes back to disobedience towards Yahweh, no other as it was threatened by Deut 11:16–17. In Joel 1:17b attention is again drawn to the loss of grain:

Because the grain has withered (הוביש),

thus making disobedience the reason for the complaint of v. 17a.

It was a matter of consequence that the salvation oracle in 2:21–27 was enlarged in the same way in order to make it Yahweh’s salvific reaction to the people’s return to him. Again the additions are to be recognized as they refer to Deut 11:13–15. This is most evident in v. 23:

O sons of Zion, be glad and rejoice (גילו ושמחו) in Yahweh, your God; for he has given for you [...] the early and the latter rain (מורה ומלקוש) [...] as before.

The invitation “be glad and rejoice” takes up what in v. 21 was said to the land and transfers it to the inhabitants of Zion, that means to those who according to 2:15 have repented. Now the salvation is materialized according to the promise in Deut 11:14: “I will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain (יורה ומלקוש).” The return of the rain is said to have been a restoration of the earlier status (“as before”), as it was before the people have turned away from Yahweh. As a result, not only the threshing floors shall be full of grain (קר), i.e., the fruit of the earth, as it was said in v. 24a but also the trees shall give their fruits, so that

the vats shall overflow with wine and oil (תירוש ויצקה, v. 24b),

thus completing the triad of the fruits promised in Deut 11:14. In v. 26 to the promise: “You shall eat ... and praise the name of Yahweh your God, who has dealt wondrously with you,” an allusion to Deut 11:15 was secondarily added: אכול ושבוע “eat and be sated.” The salvation oracle is now in accordance with Yahweh’s answer in 2:19.

9. The Distress of the Priests (1:9, 13, 14aγ, 16; 2:14b, 17a)

On a later level, the appeal to the priests to lament the loss of cereal and drink offerings has joined the call for lamentation. This is clearly an ulterior motive. It refers to a dilemma which evidently weighed heavily on the priesthood of the Second Temple. In order to avert the disaster of the drought, intercession with Yahweh was required, as is ordered in 1:14; and yet the tamid offering must not be interrupted, which now has come true. “How terrible a misfortune the cessation of the daily

sacrifices was considered is plain from Dn. 8¹¹ 11³¹ 12¹¹ and esp. from Josephus who tells us that they were not omitted even in times of siege.⁴³ It is a vicious circle if the very means which was intended to help to avert the distress is destroyed through that very distress itself.

The type of association can best be grasped in 1:9, which in substance joins on to v. 5. If the wine-drinkers are supposed to lament “because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth” (עֲלֵ-עֵסִים כִּי (נִקְרַת מִפִּיכֶם, v. 5), this means for the writer of v. 9 that “the cereal offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of Yahweh” (הַקֶּרֶת מִנֶּחֱהָ (וְנִסְדָּה מִבַּיִת יְהוָה). Consequently the form אָבְלוּ, which the Masorettes vocalized as a perfect because of v. 10, should be read as an imperative אָבְלוּ “mourn,” following the Septuagint.⁴⁴

In 1:13 the call to the priests is emphasized still more. With this addition, the call to the ceremony of lamentation which follows in v. 14 is now especially directed to the priesthood. The priests are not only to fast like everyone else; more: they are told to sleep in sackcloth. In v. 14אָ בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם “to the house of Yahweh your God” is now added. It relates the lamentation ceremony explicitly to the temple. The question in 1:16, introduced by הֲלוֹא “is not” (which rhetorically expects an affirmative answer) justifies the cry of lament with distress over the fact that the sacrificial ceremonies in the temple can no longer take place.

Consequently the call to repentance in 2:12–17 too has been related to the priests. In 2:17a the servants of Yahweh, who perform their services in the forecourt of the temple between vestibule and altar, are called separately to lamentation. As a result the lamentation in v. 17b now becomes the vicarious prayer of the priests, in marked contrast to the considerable emphasis in 2:15–16a that the whole people should come together in penitence. In complete correspondence with this, the expectation in 2:14: “Who knows whether he will not turn and repent” (which has been taken over from Jonah 3:9), is now related to the restoration of the tamid offering (Exod 29:38–41; Lev 6:13; Ezek 46:14–15): “a cereal-offering and a drink-offering for Yahweh, your God?” When the restoration of the land’s fertility is expressed in the phrase שאר אַחֲרָיו שֶׁאֵר אַחֲרָיו *hi*. “leave a blessing behind him,” this is perhaps a way of balancing out 2:3bα: וְאַחֲרָיו מִדְּבַר שְׂמֵמָה “and after him a desolate steppe.”

43 Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 81. See Josephus, *B.J.* VI 2,1.

44 Baumgartner, “Joel 1 und 2,” 11. See also the tentative reconstruction by Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 18 note i.

10. The Enemy from the North ... (1:6–7, 12b α^* , b, 14a β^* , 15, 18b, 19b)

In the present shape of the book of Joel, the drought and famine brought about by the locusts are described in terms of a military attack by a foreign army threatening the land from the north. The lamentation is caused by both, a natural as well as a military catastrophe. The locusts are depicted as the enemy from the north, and vice versa the enemy is given the figure of the storm of locusts.

The first expansion of this kind is to be found in 1:6–7. The link in substance between v. 9 and v. 5 makes evident that the further description of the dire situation has been interpolated later. The double כִּי “for” in vv. 5b and 6 also shows that vv. 6–7 have been added:

For a nation has come up (עָלָה) against my land (אֶרֶץ),
powerful and without number;
its teeth are the teeth of a lion (אֲרִי),
and it has the fangs of a lioness.
It has laid waste (שָׁם לְשָׂמָה) my vine,
and splintered my fig tree;
it has stripped it bar and cast it away;
its twigs branches are made white.

Siegfried Bergler and Jörg Jeremias have convincingly shown that here the songs about the enemy from the north in the book of Jeremiah have been definitive.⁴⁵ The closest parallel is to be found in Jer 4:7:

A lion has gone up (עָלָה אֲרִי) from his thicket,
a destroyer of nations has set out;
he has gone forth from his place
to make your land a waste (לְשׂוֹם אֶרֶץְךָ לְשָׂמָה);
your cities will be ruins without inhabitant.

The sudden and unexpected use of the first-person-speech has also been taken from the prophet’s lament in Jeremiah. The destruction of vine and fig tree which according to v. 12a was caused by the locusts is ascribed to the warlike people (v. 7a). Since it is the deliberate intention of the hostile army to destroy the tree plantations, the transition from the metaphor to the factual description is here a fluid one. The cast back to the songs of the enemy from the north in the book of Jeremiah makes the catastrophe as it is described here a reminder of the conquest and destruction which Judah suffered from the Babylonians in the sixth

⁴⁵ Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret*, 187–211; Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 14.

century (and of any such catastrophe the Jewish community had experienced in history). The thorough use of the Hebrew perfect is noteworthy. Here too, we should say with Wellhausen: “The preterites should be noted.”⁴⁶ This is no prophecy but lament about events that have already taken place.

The military catastrophe suggested in this description has led to all kinds of intensifications in the rest of the chapter too. In v. 12b α the phrase כָּל־עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה “all the trees of the field” has been added to the older poem in order to expand the destruction to all kind of trees, thus irritating the original poetical rhythm. In v. 12b β the loss of joy is applied to all human beings. In a similar way, the call to the ceremony of lamentation in v. 14 is supposed to go out to “all the inhabitants of the land.” Possibly also the suffering of the flocks mentioned in v. 18b should be included here. The additive particle אֵל “even” shows that it is an expansion—probably together with v. 19b. It describes that the flocks of sheep and goats are also affected by the general plight.

Even the flocks of sheep <are desolate>, [...]
for fire has devoured (אֶשׁ אֶכְלָה) the pastures of the steppe,
and flame has burned (וְלִהְבֶּה לְהִטָּה) all the trees of the field.

Here it is not anymore the locusts which provide the model of the catastrophe but the theophany as it is described in 2:3a: “Fire devours (אֶכְלָה אֶשׁ) before him, and after him a flame burns (וְתִלְהֶט לְהִבָּה).” This shows that we are on an advanced level in the tradition history of the book. The storm of the locusts on the one side and the Day of Yahweh on the other are both presupposed and now combined on a third stage.

This becomes even more obvious in 1:15:

Alas for the day! For the Day of Yahweh is near,
and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.

It is commonly held that this verse is an interpolation.⁴⁷ The cry of distress which originally was part of the ceremony of lamentation is defined as a lament over the Day of Yahweh which is imminent. The words are in part borrowed from Zeph 1:7: כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה “for the Day of Yahweh is near.”⁴⁸ Joel 1:15 does not belong to the same level as the

46 See above n. 18.

47 See, for instance, Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 86–87; Duhm, *Anmerkungen*, 97; Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, 433; Robinson, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 61; Jepsen, “Kleine Beiträge,” 86; Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie*, 119.

48 Joel 1:15 is commonly held as depending on Ezek 30:2–3 and Isa 13:6, see, for instance, Marti, *Dodekapropheten*, 123; Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 86; Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, 431; Jepsen, “Kleine Beiträge,” 87; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 35; Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja*,

theophany description in 2:1–11; on the contrary: it establishes a later link with that. Here too as in the expansion of the Day of Yahweh-section 2:1–11—i.e., in vv. 2aβb, 3bα, 5aβγb, 7—the swarm of locusts has passed over into the description of a mighty army (cf. גוי עֲצוּיִם “powerful nation” 1:6 with עַם רַב וְעֲצוּיִם “great and powerful people” 2:2, and with כְּעַם עֲצוּיִם “powerful people” in 2:5).

11. ... has become Yahweh's own Army (2:1aβ, 3bβ, 6, 8–9, 11aβγ, b*)

This transformation of the locusts into a great hostile army in 2:1–11 has been expanded and again modified at a still later stage. In v. 11aβγ the army is now named Yahweh's own mighty host which is to come up in order to fulfill his commands:

before his army, for his host is exceedingly great;
for he that executes his word is powerful.

No one is to withstand this invincible power. In vv. 8–9 the attack is given in still more details.

They do not jostle each one another,
each in his path they march.
Through the midst of missiles they attack, they are not halted.
They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls;
they climb up into the houses,
through the windows they enter like a thief.

The repetitions and resumptions show that this part of the description is an expansion. But now the tenses have changed into the future. What happened in history has become an imminent event. This event takes on the features of a complete and world-wide destruction. We should probably see further dramatizations in this connection. In v. 1aβ the trembling of the earth (גַּגְגָּ, v. 10) has been extended to the inhabitants of the whole world:

Jona, Micha, 18. However, Joel 1:15 is much nearer to Amos 5 and Zephaniah 1 than to Isaiah 13. See Wolff, *ibid.*: “It is noteworthy that the declarations ... from Ezek 30:2–3 and Isa 13:6 are directed there against foreign nations, but here against Jerusalem–Judah, i.e., used in the sense of Am 5:18–20 and Zeph 1:7–18.” The imperative הִיילִלוּ “wail” which introduces Isa 13:6 (other than אַהֲלֵי יוֹם “alas for the day” in Joel 1:15) is taken from Joel 1:5, 11 where it belongs to the earlier layer of the text. From this follows that Isa 13:6 represents a later stage in the tradition historical sequence. Crenshaw, *Joel*, 28, rightly concludes: “Establishing priority in such cases is notoriously difficult, and determining dates for insertions into older prophetic complexes seldom carries much conviction (e.g., Isa 13:6, 16; Amos 9:13).”

All the inhabitants of the earth shall tremble (יִרְגְּזוּ).

By this expansion the cultic noise of שֹׁפָר and תְּרוּעָה of v. 1aα is turned into an alarm signal. Verse 3bβ emphasizes that no one will survive the catastrophe, linked to the former text by the addition-particle וְגַם:⁴⁹

There is even no escape from it.

The rhetorical question added at the end of v. 11 should be interpreted similarly:

Who can endure it? (וּמִי יִכִּילָנוּ)

In v. 6, which is apparently a quotation from Nah 2:11,⁵⁰ the downfall is extended to (all) nations:

Before it peoples are in anguish, all faces grow pale.

“This verse interrupts the description ... which began in v. 5 and is continued in v. 7.”⁵¹ Taken together, all of these additions hint at the eschatological catastrophe which in Joel 3–4 fully dominates the text. They are very probably connected with these later expansions.

12. Yahweh the God of his People (1:19a, 20; 2:17bβγ–18, 20, 22a, 23aβb*, 25, 26b, [27])

When the hostile army turned into Yahweh’s own mighty host, the question arises: What about the fate of Yahweh’s own people? Are they to suffer as it has been so frequent in history, and does this mean the Jewish people to become the victim of their own God?

This problem was addressed on the final stage of the text. In 2:17bβγ the people complain:

Why should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?

The supposed utterance of the non-Jews is an expression of the challenge to faith which the existential adversity meant for the Jewish people, and especially for the devout among them. “That the heathen will otherwise say ‘where is now your God?’ is in the later period the incentive continually used to move Yahweh to helpful intervention on behalf

49 According to BHS (Karl Elliger) the phrase is an addition.

50 See, e.g., Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, 216; Marti, *Dodekapropheten*, 127.

51 Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 99.

of his own.”⁵² The utterance is taken over word for word from Ps 79:10,⁵³ except that הַגּוֹיִם “the nations” has been replaced by בְּעַמִּים “among the nations,” perhaps because of the recollection that at least the Ninevites repented. Yahweh’s salvific reaction is reported directly afterwards in v. 18:

Then Yahweh became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.

This statement constitutes a doublet with the promise proclaimed in v. 19. It probably belongs to the same literary level as v. 17bβγ.

There is another quotation from the Psalms to be found in the book of Joel, namely in 1:20:

Even the beasts of the field (בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵה) long for you (תַּעֲרוֹג אֲלֶיךָ)
because the water brooks (אֶפְיָקֵי מַיִם) have dried up,
and fire has devoured the pastures of the steppe (נְאוֹת מִדְבָּר).

The complaint that the wild beasts suffer from the drought was later added to v. 19b. This is unequivocally shown by the additive וְגַם as well as by the resumptive repetition of v. 19bα. The expansion is based on Ps 42:2:

As a deer longs (תַּעֲרוֹג) for water brooks (אֶפְיָקֵי מַיִם),
so longs my soul for you (תַּעֲרוֹג אֲלֶיךָ).

This time it is not the drought itself which constitutes the plight of the praying person—the thirst of the wild animals is nothing but an image of his own longing for Yahweh’s general assistance, as it is expressed in Joel 1:19a: “Unto you, Yahweh, I cry.” This becomes evident from what follows in Ps 42:4 (and is repeated in 42:11):

My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me continually: Where is your God?

Again the question is raised: “Where is your God?” From this it reveals that the two quotations of Ps 79:10 in Joel 2:17 as well as of Ps 42:2 in Joel 1:20 are linked with each other. Both are addressed by Yahweh’s answer in 2:22a:

Fear not, you beasts of the field (בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵה),
for the pastures of the steppe (נְאוֹת מִדְבָּר) are green.

The saying clearly relates to the lament 1:20. The plight is compensated by word. From the repetition of the reassurance-formula “fear not” it

52 Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 217.

53 See also Exod 32:12 [Exod 32:11–14 have been inserted between vv. 10 and 15, still missing in the *Vorlage* of Deut 9:14–15.]; Ps 115:2 [← 79:10]; 42:4, 11.

becomes obvious that this is a secondary addition to v. 21, too.⁵⁴ The same intention is to be found in what is secondarily added to v. 23:

the early rain for vindication (הַמְיֹרֶה לְצִדְקָה), he has poured down for you
shower

The catchword “early rain” (מְיֹרֶה) is taken up from the earlier text.⁵⁵ The repetition shows that this is an addition.⁵⁶ The return of the rain is to balance the former distress and thus re-establishing justice (צִדְקָה) for Yahweh’s people.

The same idea determines v. 25: Yahweh promises to compensate for the damage caused by the locust swarm of 1:4.

I will restore (וְשִׁלַּמְתִּי) to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army (חֵיָלֵי הַגְּדֹל), which I sent among you.

As in 2:11aα the locusts—i.e., the hostile army—are termed “Yahweh’s army” (חֵיָלֵי הַגְּדֹל), and are thereby identified with “the northerner.” It is Yahweh himself who has sent the enemy, but now he is about to pay compensation (שִׁלַּם *pi.*).

The enemy himself is threatened in v. 20. This verse again does not fit the context. The prayer has already been answered in v. 19. “Yahweh spares ... his people and promises it abundant grain, wine and oil. After this result, the removal of ‘the northerner’ comes ... too late; the verse is again referring not to natural locusts but supernatural ones.”⁵⁷ We again find ourselves here on the level on which the locust attack was equated with a hostile army, which has entered the country as Yahweh’s instrument of punishment.

I will remove the northerner far from you,
and drive him into a parched and desolate land,
his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear-guard into the western sea;
his stench shall rise, and his foul smell shall rise,
for he has done great things.

54 Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 108, points to the fact that the reason given in v. 22b relates to v. 21, not to v. 22a.

55 Generally speaking, מְיֹרֶה is to be translated “teacher” from the root ירה III *hi.* “to teach.” However, in combination with מְלִקוֹשׁ “latter rain” as it is in v. 23b it may be deduced from the root ירה II *hi.* “to moisten” as a variant to the regular יֹרֶה “early rain,” cf. Deut 11:14 and Jer 5:24. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Joel – Amos – Obaadja – Jona* (KAT 13/2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1971), 66–68, deals most extensively with the problem.

56 See *BHS* (Karl Elliger).

57 Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, 432–33.

The fact that the enemy is called הַצִּפּוֹנִי “the northerner” shows even more clearly than 1:6–7 that the motif is modeled after the enemy from the north in Jer 4–6.⁵⁸ This enemy is now to be driven out, indeed punished. The reason כִּי הִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת “for he has done great things” is taken from v. 21. This means, the instrument has put itself in Yahweh’s place. Its hybris will bring about its fall. More clearly than ever before, it is a matter of equalizing justice, that is to say of Yahweh’s justice in history.

At the end in v. 26b the editor brings his message to the point:

My people shall never again be put to shame.

This is also an addition, which is detectible from the double change from the form of address in the second person plural to the speech about עַמִּי “my people,” and from the talk *about* Yahweh to the divine speech, which reminds of Deutero-Isaiah (see Isa 45:17; 49:23).⁵⁹ Once again the subject is the motif about the shame to which God’s people have been subjected among the nations.

The proof saying,⁶⁰ which follows in v. 27, shows itself to be a further addition by way of the resumptive repetition of v. 26b in v. 27b. “This verse, added by a ... redactor summarizes the whole and proclaims that all these marvellous favours serve a definite purpose: to make Israel and the whole world recognize the uniqueness of Yahweh.”⁶¹ Here the complaining question in vv. 17bγ–18: “Where is their God?” is answered with still more emphasis: “You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel.” This is again a cast back to Deutero-Isaiah. And this is what shall be further elaborated in Joel 3–4.⁶²

13. Conclusion

The core of the book of Joel is a theophany description which in Joel 2:1–11, once the accretions have been peeled away, emerges as being the earliest stratum (2:1aα, b, 2aα, 3a, 10, 11aα*, b*). It evidently depends on parallel utterances in Zeph 1, and therefore also presupposes

58 See already Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 218.

59 See Wellhausen, *ibid.*; Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 110; Marti, *Dodekapropheton*, 135; Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*, 114; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 56.

60 For this genre see Walther Zimmerli, “The word of divine self-manifestation (proof-saying): a prophetic genre,” in *I am Yahweh* (trans. D. W. Stott; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982).

61 Robinson, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 65.

62 As a summary to the whole book, 2:27 is repeated in 4:17.

the thrust given to the motif in Amos 5, where it is moulded into a prophecy of disaster. However, the reinterpretation does not go very deep. The hymnic form has been well preserved. And in substance the original cultic concept is still paramount, too, as is shown by the numerous agreements with the "Yahweh is king"-psalms. These are not word for word quotations, but point to one and the same, still living group of motifs just as do the corresponding passages in the psalms themselves. Joel 2:1-11 contains the most detailed description of the Day of Yahweh which has been preserved, and shows even more clearly than Zeph 1 that on the Day of Yahweh the accession to the throne of the weather god was celebrated.

The Day of Yahweh is linked with a plague of locusts and the drought that follows it. The lamentation over the locusts constitutes the earliest level of Joel 1. The fragments, beginning with v. 4, fuse together into a coherent, poetically impressive description, which proves to be a second source on the basis of the book of Joel (1:4, 10a, 12a, *ba**, 17a, 18a). In 2:4-5 $\alpha\alpha$, there is a further fragment, which according to the sequence of events ought to precede the description given in Joel 1. In the composition as it now stands, the locust swarm has turned into the terrible phenomenon going along with the theophany.

The description of the distress which was caused by the locusts is regularly interrupted in 1:5, 8, 11, 14* by calls for collective lamentation. Here elements of a liturgy are evident. The lament is answered by an oracle of salvation which is to be found in 2:21, 22b, 24a, 26a*. It takes up the jubilation over the (divine) king in the theophany. Here Yahweh's theophany on his day is nevertheless still a salvific event; it means the turn to salvation.

Later, before the hearing of the plea, in 2:12-14a, 15-16, 17 $\beta\alpha$, 19 a call to repentance has been interpolated. This has interrupted the direct sequence of theophany and announcement of salvation. The call links up with Amos 4:6-11, and fits the locust plague into the series of plagues listed there, plagues through which Yahweh wants to call his people to repent. The model for the repentance rites was to be found in Jonah 3, but in Joel Yahweh's remorse is no longer attributed to his justice, as it is in Jonah 3, on the basis of Jer 18:7-10; here, as in Jonah 4, it is ascribed by way of the formula of grace to his compassion. At the same time the reference to the book of Jonah also brings into play the relationship between God's people and the non-Jews. Consequently the call to repentance is linked with Deut 11:13-15. There the love of God enjoined by the *Shema*^c is the condition for the land's moisturing and blessing. In complete correspondence with this, the description of the distress in Joel 1 is furnished in vv. 10b and 17b with pointers to Deut

11, as well as the oracle of salvation are supplemented in 2:23*, 24b, 26aα* in such a way.

The narrative with which 2:19 reports that the prayer has been heard is logical, but fundamentally speaking it changes the character of the book as a whole. Now it becomes possible in 1:2–3 to introduce the description of the distress and the call to lamentation as being the recollection and accompaniment of an act of rescue that has taken place. At the same time the book may have received its present heading in 1:1 by which it became part of the *corpus propheticum*.

The ceremony of repentance evokes the dilemma that the drought was bound to prevent the offerings, and thus the means by which Yahweh was to be moved to end the drought. Joel 1 and 2:1–19 were noticeably expanded by this theme (1:9, 13, 14aγ, 16; 2:14b, 17a).

A still later literary level interprets the locust swarm as the attack by the nations, drawing on the songs about the enemy from the north in the book of Jeremiah (1:6–7, 12bα*, b, 14aβ*, 15, 18b, 19b). Now the book became the memory of history—a lament about Judah's defeat and an expression of hope for restitution.

The storm of the locusts/nations eventually assumed the features of the eschatological catastrophe. The Day of Yahweh turned into the *dies irae*, as it was generally conceived in later times.⁶³ Now the nations/locusts are seen as Yahweh's own army. They became his instrument to judge all inhabitants of the earth (2:1aβ, 3bβ, 6, 8–9, 11aβγ, b*).

This raised the question about Yahweh's relation to his own people: "Where is their God?" What does the prophecy of doom mean about Yahweh's justice in history? Now the final judgment is seen as serving Yahweh to balance the fate of his pious. He shall destroy all of their enemies and put an end to their distress for all time (1:19a, 20; 2:17bβγ–18, 20, 22a, 23aβb*, 25, 26b, [27]). The book of Joel is now to be read as Yahweh's promise that he will finally re-establish his people and that his presence in the midst of Israel will never be put into question.

63 See Spieckermann, "Dies Irae."