

Joel 1.1-15

- The name means ‘YHWH is God’
- Son of Pethuel who prophesied in Judah

- Debatable date: Between the 9th Century and 2nd century B.C.
Some to argue for 9C authorship. However, many facts suggest a late-4th or early -3rd Century authorship, when Jerusalem was under Persian rule:
 - a. Israel and Judah are used interchangeably (2.27; 3.2, 15-17)
 - b. The people are described as scattered (3.2) and enslaved (3.3)
 - c. The Temple is in use (1.13-14; 2.12-17, etc.). It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. (2 Kings 25.8-9), then rebuilt by 515 B.C. (Ezra 3.12). In 167, the Greek ruler Antiochus IV outlawed temple worship.
- A call for repentance and rejoicing in God’s blessings
- A major theme of Joel: the Day of YHWY

1.1-15 A Call to the Nation of Judah

Judges 20.26: Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

2-4: Elders and Children

Elders – community leaders, perhaps a legislative council or quasi-Sanhedrin (Ezra 10.8)

The ‘country’ – Judah. This is a word for everyone in a time of national crisis.

What is the crisis? Locusts. Literal or figurative? 20 names for locust in Talmud

gazam – ‘cut off’; *arbeh* – general word for locust from Hebrew *raba* (‘be many’); *yeleq* – refers to larval form of locust, a wingless jumping insect; *hasil* – ‘to finish or consume’ -

5-7: A Word for Drunkards

Why alcoholics here? Why might they be especially hard hit by the locust plague?

How are the insects described?

Often, vines and fig trees are symbols of peace and prosperity. What about here?

8-10: Priests in Mourning

‘A virgin in sackcloth’ – ‘In the ancient Near East, marriage took place in two stages, the first was the betrothal, more binding than modern engagement . . . (here) instead of donning the customary lovely embroidered wedding robes, she puts on her widow’s weeds of sackcloth and wails a dirge’ (Allen 52).

Exodus 29.38-40 and Numbers 28.3-8 directed the priests in the Temple to offer a daily sacrifice of a lamb to God every morning and evening. It was accompanied by an offering of meal moistened with oil and by a libation of wine.

What supplies have been destroyed by locust? Oil, wine, and grain. Consider Deuteronomy 7.13, Hosea 2.8-10, and Psalm 104.15f. What is the importance of these crops?

What is the impact on worship in the Temple? How do the priests respond?

11-12: Devastation on the Farm

Wheat and barley were the most important cereals in Judah. What is happening here?

No vines, pomegranates, dates, or *tappuah* (perhaps apple, apricot, citron, or quince)

What would this mean for the people in Judah?

13-15: Calling for a Special Service

Now that the harvest was wrecked, there would be no harvest festival. Read 13-15. Joel is calling the people to what type of service in this moment of national disaster?

Sackcloth – used as funeral garb and for ritual lamentation (2 Kings 19; Lament. 2.10)

Does the Church ever call such assemblies? If so, when? For what purpose?