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NOTES ON JOEL 3:1-5¹

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INTRODUCTION

The pericope, Joel 3:1-5 has attracted the attention of both Biblical Scholars and interested believers. This ability to attract attention, derives from both its Old Testament context and significance along with its New Testament usage's (Acts 2:17-21; Mark 13:24; Rom 10:13). Yet beyond its intra-testamentality it challenges the way we understand our relationship with God and those special "transformational moments" we experience and call spiritual.

In this paper I will attempt to exegete Joel 3:1-5 by arguing for its internal structural and thematic unity. Joel 3:1-5, I will argue, is an integral component in God's eschatological promises in the Old Testament, to make his people into a "prophetic" people.

TRANSLATION OF JOEL 3:1-5

3:1 And it will come to pass after this² I will pour out my spirit

¹ In this paper I have followed the versification of the Masoretic Text. Joel 3:1-5 is Joel 2:28-32 in most translations.

² The MT has !keyrəḵā; hyhlē which is unique as compared to just yrəḵā; or even the combination !ke yrəḵā; (here see Isa 1:26; Jer 16:16; 21:7). Prinsloo has strangely called it a "stereotyped introductory formula." W. S. Prinsloo, *The Theology of the Book of Joel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), p. 80. The usual translation value

- on all flesh.
 Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 your old men will dream dreams,
 your young men will see visions.
 3:2 Even on male and female slaves
 I will pour out my spirit at that time.³
- 3:3 And then I will put⁴ signs in the sky and on earth,
 blood, fire, and columns of smoke.
- 3:4 The sun will turn into darkness and the moon into blood
 before the great and fearful day of Yahweh comes.
- 3:5 And it will come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of
 Yahweh
 will be saved,
 “for on Mount Zion there will be an escape,”⁵
 just as⁶ Yahweh said,
 and in Jerusalem⁷ there will be survivors⁸

for *hʾlhl* is “and it will happen” or “and it will come to pass”. See P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1991) §111i. While the posterior clause, *!keyrākā*; can be translated adverbially, “afterwards” or “then.” The conjunctive construction that has been created here intends to both presuppose what took place before it and yet indicate a new prophesy unit.

³ The phrase *hʾlhl* *~ym* has been translated in light of *~ym*’s meaning of “time.” See, Joüon & Muraoka, *A Grammar*, §135d^N and Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 313-314.

⁴ I am reading the *yʾtʾl* as a w-qatali form used to represent “future action subsequent to another action.” In this case it is the action of the *%Apvā*, of 3:1, 2. Note Joüon & Muraoka, *A Grammar*, §119c.

⁵ I am reading this as a direct quotation. This does not mean that this quotation is necessarily from Obadiah 17a, since both could have come from a common tradition or speech form. Note Gary Stansell’s conclusions concerning similar texts between Isaiah and Micah in his, *Micah and Isaiah: A Form and Tradition Historical Comparison*, SBLDS 85 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

⁶ A question that needs to be considered is if this *rʾvā* is not a marker to identify an ancient exegetical process. Note M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

whom Yahweh calls.

IS THE PERICOPE, JOEL 3:1-5 A UNIT?

The unity of Joel 3:1-5 is not necessarily self-evident. Although we may consider that the content i.e., the outpouring of *yḥw* (“my spirit”) and the *yḥw* *-ay* (“Day of Yahweh”) signs, set it apart from the previous (2:18-27) and following units (4:1ff.),⁹ it remains an open question if this “content” is really one that can be called an unit. Is the effect of “my spirit” continued in the placing of signs on the earth and in the heavens? Is the final clause of verse 4, “Before the great and fearful day of Yahweh comes” speaking of the same time or sequence of events as the outpouring of “my spirit”? What does verse 5 have to do with the poured out “my spirit” and the nature affecting signs of the “Day of Yahweh”?

Beyond content, Wolff, investigating the text from a form-critical perspective has divided the whole unit into three sections: 3:1-2, 3-4 and 5.¹⁰ He argues that 3:1-2 exhibits the general form of the assurance of

⁷ Although the MT has placed the $\text{h}^{\text{w}}\text{y}^{\text{w}}\text{h}^{\text{w}}$ after $\text{h}^{\text{w}}\text{y}^{\text{w}}\text{h}^{\text{w}}$ and one could read the quotation as “for there will be an escape in Mount Zion, that is, in Jerusalem,” the reading seems forced. I have move the “in Jerusalem” because: a) Joel tends to use a tight and well-balanced parallel structure in most strophes, this reading restores that the parallelism of $\text{h}^{\text{w}}\text{y}^{\text{w}}\text{h}^{\text{w}}$ with $\text{h}^{\text{w}}\text{y}^{\text{w}}\text{h}^{\text{w}}$; b) the reading of the h^{w} as either a waw-explicative or a waw-co-ordinative is problematic in the present MT location, whereas moving it to the last line solves this problem; c) this conjectural emendation takes the “in Jerusalem” as original and therefore the emendation is one of misplacement alone.

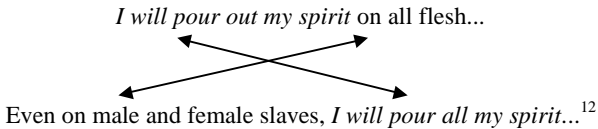
⁸ The LXX has *euanggelizomenoi* “those who bring glad tidings” instead of MT’s *-ydyrFbll*. The LXX would retrovert to *-yrFbml* but the Syr *lmswzb* “to those who survive” and the Targum’s *aybyzfmw* seem to indicate that they were dealing with a *Vorlage* similar to the MT. Note that the Tanakh translation has opted to leave the MT as it is and given its usual “Meaning of Heb. uncertain” label to this problematic line. *Tanakh, a new translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the traditional Hebrew text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988).

⁹ Prinsloo, *Theology*, p. 80.

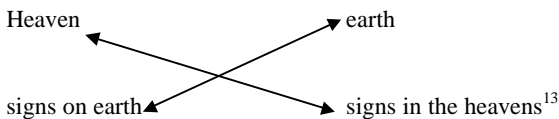
¹⁰ H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), p. 58. L. C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 97, and W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "The promise of God and

salvation in that the divine speech is continued from the prior units (2:19-20, 25-27) and the second person plural suffixes attached to the affected subjects are continued from 2:19-27. Thus he see that the unit 3:1-2 establishes an absolute assurance of salvation. 3:3-4 however is labeled an announcement of a sign and therefore in spite of the divine speech indicated in the first person singular $\gamma\tau\iota\tau\eta\lambda\iota$ (“And then I will put”) he sees a composite unit. Verse 5 is the concluding element that is used to tie the composite unit together with the initial plea in 2:12-17 and the oracular answer beginning in 2:18-19. For Wolff, it is the final composite nature in its present literary context that makes it “inappropriate” to divide the original from the later “additions.”¹¹

It is instead when we turn to the pericope’s inward structure that we find its unity. First of all the first strophe (3:1-2) is tied together by the repetition of $\% \text{Apva}$, (“I will pour out”) as an inclusio and an internal chiasmic structure:



A similar structure is seen in the second strophe (3:3-4) with the chiasmic structuring of the term “Heaven” and its signs with “earth” and its signs:



While not a perfect match, the double use of the noun -D (“blood”)

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” in *The Living and Active Word of God*, eds. M. Inch and R. Youngblood (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), p. 114.

¹¹ Wolff, *Joel*, pp. 58-59.

¹² Prinsloo, *Theology*, pp. 81-82.

¹³ *Theology*, p. 82 and Allen, *Joel*, p. 100.

in 3:3b and 4a parallels “I will pour out” in the first strophe. Structurally it is 3:4b that is problematic. How is one to account for it? The *Tanakh* has chosen to move it above 3:3a, but this is for interpretative purposes¹⁴ and does not solve the structural problem. However as a temporal designation it parallels the phrase $\text{hMh'h' } \sim \text{ymI'B}$; (“at that time”) in 3:2b. This would account for all components except for the w-qatalti verb, y'tn (“and then I will put”) which continues the first person direct speech following the “I will pour out”.

Although the third strophe (3:5) is difficult to translate and interpret, its structure seems to follow the set pattern of the first two strophes. That is the use of a repeated word, in this case the verb arq (“to call”) which plays the role of the inclusio like “I will pour out” in the first strophe and possibly the conceptual reversal (“...calls on the name of Yahweh” and “whom Yahweh calls”) as a substitution for the internal chiasmus. The conjectural emendation of “in Jerusalem” also gives another structural parallelism, i.e., h'j'j'l p . (“an escape”) with $\text{*}\sim \text{y'dj'rI'F'h}$; (“the survivors”).

These three units, 3:1-2, 3-4, 5 have been fused together by several temporal and sequential indicators. The first indicator is the obvious connecting phrase $\text{!k'eyr'x'a; h'yh'l'}$ (“and it will come to pass afterwards”). Since the phrase is unique in the Old Testament its full significance can not be establish beyond doubt. However, if one focuses on the last component ($\text{!k}\sim \text{y'r'x'a}$), we can say that this phrase depicts what follows as occurring after the prior unit i.e., 2:19-27.¹⁵ It governs at least 3:1-2 and possibly the whole unit, 3:1-5. Although one may argue that $\sim \text{ymI'B}$; hMh'h' (“at that time,” “in those days,” “on the same day”) indicates the next time element, I would propose that the time sequence that is involved is that of “synchronism.”¹⁶ That is, the phenomenon of the male and female slaves receiving the same out pouring of the “my spirit” is meant to be taken as an occurrence that takes place at the same time as when the sons, daughters, old men and young men were showing the affects of

¹⁴ The footnote on p. 1011 of the *Tanakh* reads, “Brought up from v. 4 for

¹⁵ Note however that Simkins has argued that 3.1-5 is a sequential continuation of 2.12-17 and therefore a parallel response with 2.18-27, R. A. Simkins, “God, History, and the Natural World in the Book of Joel,” *CBQ* 55 (1995) p. 448.

¹⁶ See Waltke and O'Connor, *Hebrew Syntax*, p. 314.

the “my spirit.” The phrase however has another function in the structuring of the unit. It functions simultaneously as marking a conclusion or closure to the unit.

Therefore the second significant temporal and/or sequential indicator is the w-qatalti, $y\dot{t}t\dot{w}$ (“and then I will put”). I understand the w-qatalti here as indicating “future action sequence” in contrast to $WaB\dot{w}$ (“and they will prophecy”) in 3:1 where the w-qatalti form expands the meaning of the first clause. Here however the closure caused by “at the time” and the inclusio, formed by “I will pour out” makes “and then I will put” a major sequential progression. That is, on this occasion the w-qatalti moves the subject matter forward in sequence, while attaching itself to the unit, 3:1-2.

The prepositional clause beginning with $y\dot{m}p\dot{l}i$ (“before”) in verse 4, functions very similarly to the “in that time” of verse 2. Here it is meant on one level to close off the unit, 3:3-4 and at the same time places the catastrophic occurrences in nature in an eschatological sequence. This eschatological sequence does not help us in the structure of the unit. It is more significant in terms of the pericope’s content.

The final unit is sequentially attached to the prior unit by the common verbal form $hyh\dot{w}$ (“and it will come to pass”). Although some have opted to begin this unit by the adversative conjunction “but,”¹⁷ others have dropped it as not holding translation significance.¹⁸ A final group have either used the wooden “and it will come to pass” or

^{Then} The problem rests in the fact that the verb has conjunctive functions, but its context determine its significance or lack of significance. It is interesting to note that in both 3:1 and 4:18 the $hyh\dot{w}$ is followed by a time indicating phrase (3:1, “ $!k-y\dot{r}xa$ and 4:18, “ $awh\dot{h} \sim y\dot{w}b$ ”). This would tend to favor a non-temporal conjunctive function for the verb here since a temporal phrase was not added. I have chosen the wooden “and it will come to pass” because of this lack of “time-sequence” indication. This means that verse 5 should be more closely united to the 3:3-4 unit than has been generally accepted. The catastrophic signs-events therefore will occur in tandem with the prophetic manifestations.

¹⁷ Tanakh; Shinkyodoyaku Seisho; Shinkaiyaku Seisho; Allen, Joel, p. 97.

¹⁸ Prinsloo, *Theology*, p. 83; Stuart, p. 256; Kogoyaku Seisho.

¹⁹ KJV; NEV; NASV; NIV; RSV; NRSV; Wolff, Joel, p. 56.

WHAT IS THE PERICOPE'S SUBJECT MATTER?

We can now finally turn to the subject of content. The pericope centers on the effects of the outpouring of the “my spirit” on individuals. Briefly, the passage contains ways in which the prophetic can function: i.e., to prophecy, dream, have visions, the signs (“~ytpAm”) given by Yahweh and the calling on the name of Yahweh. These five verses then can be seen as one movement, instead of three, centered on a nationalization and normalization²⁰ of the prophetic gifting.

There are several cruxes for such an interpretation. The first deals with the phrase רָפָאֵל כָּל־בָּשָׂר [“on all flesh”]. Does this “all flesh” have an universal meaning or is it limited to Judea/Israel? The phrase “all flesh” (with or without prepositions ל, כ, or לִמִּי but excluding those with a definite article or pronominal suffix) occurs 39 times. The most dominant connotative category is that of “all animals with humankind

²¹ The second connotative grouping is that of “humankind

²² In this second group one can attempt to isolate a subgrouping “nations,” however the only unambiguous passages is Jer 25:34. While Job 12:10 and 34:15 fall in the unambiguously “all

²⁰ These terms are adapted from Fishbane, who sees a larger inner-biblical “typology” at work in this and other passages. See, Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 373-374.

²¹ Gen 6:12, 13, 17, 19; 7:16, 21; 8:17; 9:11, 15 (occurring 2 times), 17; Num 16:22; 18:15; 27:16; Ps 65:3; 136:25; 145:21; Jer 32:27; Ezek 21:4, 9, 10. Note that this type of semantic division tends to be quite subjective. For example, Gen 6:12 and 13 could very well be reckoned as part of the “humankind” category. While Gen 8:17 would lean toward the opposite direction, i.e., “animals without humans.” I have chosen to cluster the connotative categories with an emphasis to the context. The most problematic occurrence is Lev 17:14, where the context indicates the category “animals without humans,” and the last two occurrences in the verse fall without problem in this category. However the first occurrence seems to have the “animals with humankind” ring.

²² Deut 5:26; Job 12:10; 34:15; Isa 40:5; 49:26; 66:16, 23, 24; Jer 12:12; 25:34; 45:5; Zech 2:14.

humankind” grouping. It seems that the phrase “all flesh,” whether used generally to connote “all animals including humankind, “all ²³ are all intended to modify by enhancing or enlarging the referent. Because of this aspect the fine tuning of the semantic field is impossible. However, when we turn to Joel 3:1 the “all flesh” phrase seems to carry a meaning different from its dominate Old Testament usage. Here it is “all Israel” or “all Judah.” This can be seen first of all from the fact that the pericope prior to 3:1 is addressing an “Israelite” or “Judean” audience. Second, the groupings of peoples: sons, daughters, old men, young men are all qualified by the second person plural pronominal suffix which refers back to the prior “Judean” audience. Third, when the roots of *db* (“servant” or “male slave”) and *hxpvi* (“maid” or “female slave”) are taken together, the connotative significance centers primarily on their status as “property”.²⁴ With this notion of “property” the concept of “nationality” is lacking. A subcategory to this group may be seen in Ps 123:2 and Isa 24:2 where the terms are used metaphorically to explain relationships. It is interesting to note that in those passages that identify the nationality of the “male and female slaves,” the majority deal with Israel / Judeans.²⁵ There is only one occurrence where the “male and female slaves” are purposefully identified as foreigners (Isa 14:2). This passage is significant because it could potentially establish an universal connotation to this phrase and possibly develop a case for understanding the “all flesh” as having an “all humankind” meaning. The text reads:

But²⁶ Yahweh will have compassion on Jacob
and will again choose Israel
and settle them on their own land.

²³ Lev 17:14 (3x).

²⁴ Gen 12:16; 20:14; 24:35; 30:43; 32:5; 1 Sam 8:16; 2 Kgs 5:26; Ecc 2:7.

²⁵ Deut 28:68; Jer 34:9-11, 16; 2 Chr 28:10; Esth 7:4.

²⁶ *yKi* here has been translated as an adversative, after the negative clause *WkvMji al h/mlyb* (“Her days will not be prolonged.”). See R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), §447. However, it functions not only in contrast with 13:22bb, but also introduces an epilogue to chapter 13. See J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 312.

The sojourner²⁷ will join himself to them
 and they will attach themselves with the house of Jacob.
 The people will take them
 and bring them to their place,
 while the house of Israel will possess²⁸ them in the land of
 Yahweh
 as male and female slaves.
 They will indeed take captive those who were their captors,²⁹
 and they will rule over those who oppressed them.

The important aspect of this passage for understanding the phrase “male and female slaves” is that it represents a series of reversals of fortunes for the Judeans. God’s wrath and judgment is turn to compassion and re-election. This seems to lead naturally to the return of their land in a Second Exodus sweep. The people that assist the Judeans experience a role reversal: captors are now captive and oppressor are now ruled by the Judeans. The crucial “male and female slaves” designation here therefore presupposes the slavery status of the Judeans in exile. And second, that like the turn of the Judeans property, the people become property to the Judeans. This would imply that even in this pericope the phrase “male and female slaves” does not argue for an

²⁷ I have translated רֶעֱ here in light of L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 201. The definition that is given here is: “רֶעֱ is a man who (alone or with his family) leaves village and tribe because of war 2 Sam 4:3, Isa 16:4, famine Ruth 1:1, epidemic, blood quilt etc. and seeks shelter and residence at another place, where his right of landed property, marriage and taking part in jurisdiction, cult and war has been curtailed.”

²⁸ The HtD of the verb יָרַשׁ “to possess” is used as a technical legal term which is usually applied to the possession of the land (Num 32:18, 33:54; 34:13; Ezek 47:13). Here, however it is has been applied to the oppressors. This implies that the phrase “male and female slaves” is once again used to specify property. See Oswalt, *Isaiah*, p. 310 n. 3.

²⁹ I have taken the paronomastic construction -הַיְבִימוּ here as emphatic. This construction seems to be the same type that cause the infinitive absolute to be taken as emphatic. See Waltke and O’Connor, *Hebrew Syntax*, p. 584; T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 86, 92.

universal, “all humankind” connotation to the phrase “all flesh.”³⁰

Therefore verses 1-2, promises an outpouring of God’s spirit, which specifically produces a prophetic gifting. This gifting is irrespective of gender, age or social standing,³¹ but it is contextually limited to the listening audience, i.e., the Judeans or Israelites. Prinsloo summarizes it best: “The entire nation consists of fully authorized media of revelation.”³²

Verses 3-4 possess a new problem in interpretation, a second crux. The bare data of the verses indicate that there will be signs in the sky and on the earth. The earthly portents include blood, fire, and columns of smoke, while the portents in the sky include the darkening of the sun and the moon turning to a blood likeness. All these signs point to the continually repeated leitmotif of the book of Joel: “the day of Yahweh.” The problematic aspects to these verses revolve around two questions. First, how does verses 3-4 relate to verses 1-2? And second, what is the significance of verse 4b, “before the great and fearful day of

The first problem finds its solution in the usage of תָּפִיחַ (“sign,” “portent,” “wonder”). Scholarly tradition defines תָּפִיחַ by differentiating it with its synonyms, תָּא (“sign”) and אֵלֶּי, (“extraordinary thing”). Wolff is a good example. He writes, “While תָּא (“sign”) need not indicate anything extraordinary, and אֵלֶּי, (“extraordinary thing”) need not refer to a sign; תָּפִיחַ is that which is completely out of the ordinary and as such has sign character.”³³ W. D. Stacey focuses only on תָּא and תָּפִיחַ and

³⁰ D. E. Gowan has written, “but the reference to slaves surely means some Gentiles might be included.” This statement is probably as far as one can honestly move toward a “all humankind” perspective. However, I would see this approach as viewing these Gentiles as “Israelite” property. D. E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), p. 75.

³¹ James L. Crenshaw argues further that, “One could view vv. 1-2 as a vast merism beginning with all inhabitants of Judah, who are designated by the reference to “your sons and daughters.” Since everyone falls into this category, the reference is all-inclusive. The focus then moves to the significant male representatives in society, older men who have the elevated status of decision-makers and younger men who fill military ranks.” James L. Crenshaw, *Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 24C (New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 165-166.

³² Prinsloo, *Theology*, p. 126.

³³ Wolff, *Joel*, pp. 67-68. Note also Prinsloo’s quoting of a similar contrastive

concludes:

It seems clear that *mopet* is used to describe people and events only, whereas *'oth* is used for objects as well, but perhaps this is not very significant. It is fair to say that *mopet* usually means something extraordinary and *'oth* can often mean something mundane, though, in referring to the plagues of Egypt, both words have the sense of the extraordinary. Occasionally *mopet* implies the ominous, whereas, in this respect, *'oth* is neutral.³⁴

When one ventures into the texts themselves one notices first of all the high number of occurrences that refer either explicitly to the Exodus event or implicitly to the event as paradigmatic of God's wondrous works of the past.³⁵ A second grouping may be found in Deut 28:46 and 29:2 in which the results from the covenant curses are seen as תַּפְאָה. It is the next grouping that is interesting for our purpose, that is, those verses that depict the prophet and his or her actions as תַּפְאָה.³⁶ Exodus 7:3 and Deut 34:11 connect the whole Exodus "signs and wonders" episode as being related to the prophetic ministry of Moses and/or that of Aaron. Another subgrouping are those texts that identify the prophet and his children as the תַּפְאָה itself (Isa 8:18; Ezek 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27).³⁷ The "sign" actions of Isaiah in Isa 20:3 also fall under the larger grouping of prophetic actions, while Deut 13:2, 3 even mentions "prophet" and "dreamer of dreams." One last text must be considered which falls to the "sign" grouping. It is 2 Chr 32:31 in which astrological signs seem to be the meaning. From this semantic evidence, it is possible to return to Joel 3:3 and view the יִתְּפְאֵה ("signs") as the data that a prophet or dreamer of dreams would have to deal with.

definition from Robinson, Prinsloo, *Theology*, pp. 84-85 n. 16.

³⁴ W. D. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1990), pp. 17-18.

³⁵ Exod 4:21; 7:3, 9; 11:9, 10; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 1 Chr 16:12; Neh 9:10; Ps 78:43; 105:5, 27; 135:9; Jer 32:20, 21.

³⁶ Exod 7:3; Deut 13:2, 3; 34:11; 1 Kgs 13:3, 5; 2 Chr 32:24; Isa 8:18; 20:3; Ezek 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27; Joel 3:3; Zech 3:8.

³⁷ Note that Zech 3:8 and Ps 71:7 could also be grouped here as a similar type of usage.

Therefore, on the level of content, one continues the picture that has been developed in verses 1-2.

Are these “signs” positive or negative? Prinsloo, for examples sees them as positive signs, but has seen a new exodus by the use of the term *-ytpwm*.³⁸ I would also argue that the signs are positive, but that they are positive readings of otherwise negative experiences. The “blood” occurs in 4:19 and 4:21 with a need to be avenged. The fire in 1:19-20 and 2:3 destroys nature and everything before it. Both the sun and moon facing change in 2:10 and 4:15 are far from positive pictures.

When one goes beyond the limits of Joel, the terms: blood, fire and smoke do not occur together in one pericope. Several passages pair up “fire and smoke” in a theophanic context³⁹, which would possibly give a positive connotation to the passages.⁴⁰ However these passages do not include the ominous word “blood.” Crenshaw interprets the imagery of “blood, fire and smoke” as that of warfare. He writes, “Savage attacks by vicious soldiers spill blood in the streets and within the dubious shelter of houses, as a conquering army sets fire to everything.”⁴¹ If this is the case the Divine Warrior Hymn of 4:9-16 is integrally related to this passage. It is not just a human battle scene, but one viewed from a theophanic lens. The image would then be positive to the Judean/Israelites that would be delivered by the Lord’s avenging battle.

The interpretative problem would then shift to the second question, that of the last clause of verse 4, “before the great and fearful day of Yahweh.” The concept of the “day of Yahweh” has been investigated quite often and quite thoroughly. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger summarizes the Biblical understand succinctly when he writes:

³⁸ Prinsloo, *Theology*, pp. 84-85.

³⁹ Gen 15:17; Exod 19:18; 2 Sam 22:9/Ps 18:9; Ps 68:3; Isa 4:5. Note that Isa 9:17; 65:5 combine “fire and smoke” as a negative image. I would see Job 41:11-12’s description of the Leviathan in the same vein.

⁴⁰ David A. Hubbard notes that the sun being darkened may imply a theophany, however his treatment of verses 3-4 divides up the terms and therefore sees multiple purposes which predominately focus on the term “smoke,” David A. Hubbard, *Joel and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downer Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1989), pp. 25, 71.

⁴¹ Crenshaw, *Joel*, p. 167.

In the New Testament, the expression “Day of the Lord” refers to the day Jesus arose from the dead - Sunday. Alternatively, it sometimes refers to the day of the return of Christ. In the Old Testament, the phrase often has eschatological connotations. There it has to do with the day of God’s final intervention in world history, the day when he will judge the peoples. “The Day of the Lord” and related expressions occur virtually only in the prophetic literature.⁴²

For the book of Joel itself, seven significant passages deal with this topic. First of all, 1:15b, 2:1 and 4:14 form a conceptual unity in the use of the adjective *bArq’* (“near,” “imminent”). This imminent perspective dominates the book of Joel by the strategic locations of these clauses. The second descriptive grouping is seen in the use of the definite article with the solitary “day” (1:15a, *-Ayl*). Obviously this solitary grouping is further clarified by the following clause. The third grouping is that of 2:2: “a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and darkness.” The wording is the same as that found in Zeph 1:15, with a background of Amos 5:18-20 for “darkness and gloom” and Ezekiel 34:12 paralleling the imagery of “clouds and darkness.” Unlike the depiction of the “day of Yahweh” as being imminent, this phrase brings to life the mood of despair associated with it. The fourth and last grouping is that of our present text, 3:4b and 2:11, which describes the “day of Yahweh” as *arAm*) and “fearful” (*lAdG*). What is the specific thrust of this formulation? The fact that Malachi 3:23 has the exact same phrase as 4b is helpful,⁴³ although one must refrain from using later texts to define earlier ones.⁴⁴ The Mal 3:23 offers another text in the prophetic tradition that has a similar interest in the revival of the prophetic gifting in light of the approaching “day of Yahweh” and calls it “great” and “fearful.” There seems to have been a trajectory within the “day of Yahweh” expectation that necessitated this resurrection of the prophetic

⁴² T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), p. 117.

⁴³ Once again the issue of the an identical text does not have to presuppose the quoting of one of the text from the other. In this case one should neither argue that Malachi quotes Joel nor with an unconvincingly late date for Joel, that Joel quoted Malachi. A prophetic tradition about the “day of Yahweh” with the full “gene pool” for such phrases is a more likely hypothesis. See, note 4.

⁴⁴ See Hoffmann, “The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature,” *ZAW* 93 (1981), pp. 37-50.

before its positive usage. However, there is a radical difference between the Malachi text and Joel 3:4b. In Malachi it is the return of Elijah "Behold, I about to send Elijah the prophet to you"⁴⁵ that is to precede the "day of Yahweh."⁴⁶ While in Joel it is first of all the nationalized and normalized prophetic gifting that is able to interpret the prophetic signs. Therefore the "signs" that are now understandable to the Judeans intensify the prophetic gifting.

Now we turn to verse 5. There are several important issues in 3:5 that need to be investigated. First of all I will consider the phrase "everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh"⁴⁷ with its inverse "whom Yahweh calls"⁴⁸. Here, those who are doing the "calling" once again limit the extent of 3:1's "on all flesh." This delimitation is based on the notion that "to call on the name of Yahweh" ("hwh y -vb arq") was a cultic activity.⁴⁹ In dealing with an identical clause in Zech 13:9, Carol and Eric Meyers have argued that, "the notion of calling upon a divine name undoubtedly originates in supplicatory language. It is a kind of invocation of God's presence prior to addressing a statement to the deity. And it assumes an answer will be forthcoming...."⁵⁰ Exodus 33:19 and 34:5 are illuminating at this juncture. In both of these passages the "caller" or better "proclaimer" is Yahweh rather than a supplicant. These two verses seem to equate the "presence of Yahweh" with "the
⁵¹ Ps 145:18 applies this "presence of Yahweh" to the supplicant and the cultic setting "The LORD is near to

⁴⁵ ayblth; hyl' ae tae -kl' x! woykñh' hllñi

⁴⁶ See Beth Glazier-McDonald's helpful discussion of this pericope in B. Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, SBLDS 98 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 243-270.

⁴⁷ hwh y -vb. arqy-rva| l k

⁴⁸ hwh y rva| arq

⁴⁹ Glazier-McDonald writes, "Joel 3:5, however, makes it clear that rXb l k (3:1) refers to hwh y -Xb arqy-rXa l k. Only those who call upon the name of Yahweh will be delivered. These are, at the same time, 'all those whom Yahweh has called,' (3:5c), 'the ideal cult congregation.'" *Malachi*, pp. 264-65.

⁵⁰ C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 396.

⁵¹ \$ynl hwh y -Xb ytarqw, and hwh y -Xb arqy

all who call him, to all who call him in truth”⁵². This can be contrasted with the altar or religious site/ paraphernalia pericopes⁵³ which are more nebulous and seem to connote worship of Yahweh alone. Finally, the texts Zech 13:9; Pss 99:6; 116 stress that the answer is coming. In Joel 3:5a the “calling” is best understood as heartfelt, sincere religious rites, i.e., fasting, weeping, lamenting and others. These cultic moments are combined with the awareness that God is with them (Joel 2:26-27). This means that the supplicants can have confidence that God will answer.

The inverted clause, “whom Yahweh calls” may function as the answer here, although this seems a little awkward. The phrase itself is found only here in the Old Testament. Most treatments have either opted to read the phrase as the Bible’s unique expression of the “mysterious”⁵⁴ or as a designation for a “true worshipper.”⁵⁵

Its uniqueness would argue for a delimitation that comes from this pericope and it is with the next issue that one may have grounds for further speculations.

The second issue in this verse is that of the reconstructed phrase “for on Mount Zion there will be an escape”⁵⁶. Here “The Twelve” offers a parallel in Obadiah 17: (“But in Mount Zion there will be an”⁵⁷. These two clauses remind one of the Zion tradition and specifically the promise of security and safety in Zion.⁵⁸ According to

⁵² tmaḇ, Ḥarṣqī rva] l kīl . yḥrṣqī kīl . ḥwḥy>ḇlṣrṣq

⁵³ Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; Exod 17:15.

⁵⁴ J. D. W. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 41.

⁵⁵ J. A. Brewer, *Obadiah and Joel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), p. 124.

⁵⁶ ḥj]l p. ḥyḥ.Ti ḤYcīrḥB. yKī

⁵⁷ ḥj]l p. ḥyḥ.Ti ḤYcī rḥḇll

⁵⁸ Prinsloo, *Theology*, pp. 84-87, 126. For a full discussion of the Zion Tradition from various perspectives see: R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), I, pp. 105-195; D. E. Gowan, *Eschatology*; J. D. Levenson, “Zion Tradition,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), VI, pp. 1098-1102; T. N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982); B. C. Ollenburger, *Zion, City of the Great King*, JSOTSup 41 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); J. J. M. Roberts, “The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition,” *JBL* 92

Ben Ollenburger, the use of Zion as a symbol of security and refuge is based first of all on the understanding that “Yahweh is present there.”⁵⁹ Or as J. J. M. Roberts had earlier made clear, “another consequence of Yahweh’s living in Jerusalem is the absolute security his presence provides. With Yahweh in it the city cannot be shaken (Ps 46:7). He is its stronghold (Ps 46:8; 48:4), and he is more than a match for any hostile power.”⁶⁰ Second, “Zion is thus a symbol of security for those who trust alone in Yahweh who dwells there....”⁶¹ These two aspects of Zion symbolism, the security and the necessity for “trust in Yahweh” may actually be the key to the understanding of the “everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh” / “whom Yahweh calls” paradox. The reciprocal relationship is actually the posture of the worshipper.

But also beyond this, the Zion tradition hinted at by Joel 3:5 and Obadiah 17 may hold the key to understanding the unity of the whole unit, 3:1-5 and even 2:18-4:21. Donald E. Gowan has argued that Zion is the center of Old Testament eschatology. By eschatology, he does not mean a literalistic “doctrine of the end,” but rather “the end of evil.”⁶² This Zion tradition develops through time and touches upon three key elements to bring about “the end of evil”: the transformation of human society; the transformation of the human person; and finally the transformation of nature. It is important to note that beginning at Joel 2:19 and through 4:21, we are presented these three themes.

First of all, nature is the focus for transformation. Gowan divides the biblical data concerning this transformation into two heuristic groupings, that is “righting what is presently wrong with the natural world” and “text that speak of immense changes in the earth’s

(1973), pp. 329-344; id., “Zion in the Theology of the Davidic-Solomonic Empire,” in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. T. Ishida (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), pp. 93-108; M. Weinfeld, “Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: Ideology and Utopia,” in *The Poet and the Historian*, ed. R. E. Friedman (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1983), pp. 75-115.

⁵⁹ Ollenburger, *Zion*, pp. 66 ff.

⁶⁰ Roberts, *Zion*, p. 102.

⁶¹ Ollenburger, *Zion*, pp. 70 ff.

⁶² Gowan, *Eschatology*, p. 2.

topography and even in the heavenly bodies.”⁶³

It is Ronald Simkins that has presented the strongest case to date concerning the “ecological” elements in Joel. He has argued that the problematic identification of the enemy in 2:1-11 is solved by neither a Babylonian or Assyrian invasion⁶⁴ nor an apocalyptic enemy.⁶⁵ But rather a twofold locust plague. He writes:

Joel’s presentation of an unprecedented natural catastrophe can now be summarized: Judah had been invaded by a devastating locust plague. The locusts, probably arriving in the spring just before the grain harvest, consumed the grain crops, the foliage on the vines and the trees, and the wild grasses used for pasturage. After consuming the most of the vegetation, the locusts either moved on to greener pastures or were carried away by the winds, possibly into the eastern desert. The immediate result of the infestation was the loss of the grain harvest, but, as the summer progressed, the repercussions of the locust plague were compounded. The livestock suffered because there was no pasture on which to feed. The vines and fruit trees were unable to produce their fruit because of their lack of foliage. Any immature fruit that had survived the locust plague probably withered on the vine and fell to the ground. As the first rains signaling winter set in, the farmers sowed a new crop of grain and ploughed it under. The advent of winter meant the beginning of a new agricultural year. By early spring, however, a new swarm of locusts had migrated into Judah, had laid their eggs, and then had either died or moved on.... within one to

⁶³ Gowan, p. 97, and for more discussion, see pp. 97-120.

⁶⁴ See Stuart’s strong argument for a Babylonian or Assyrian invasion as a metaphorical interpretation of the locust in Stuart, D. *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), pp. 232-234, 241-242. Most recently B. Peckham writes, “The prophecy of Joel is an allegory on the Babylonian invasion and the capture of Jerusalem,” B. Peckham, *History and Prophecy* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 657.

⁶⁵ See Wolff’s discussion of Joel as being “at the threshold between prophetic eschatology and apocalypticism,” Wolff, *Joel*, pp. 14-15. While Paul Hanson, arguing from his sociological approach to the apocalyptic writes, “Thus, while Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Chronicler represent an ideological emphasizing continuity with the past, and a claim to the absolute authority of existing institutional structures, the Book of Joel espouses the model of discontinuity we associate with the apocalyptic eschatology of post-exilic dissident groups,” P. Hanson, *The People Called* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), pp. 313.

two months huge hopper bands of which Joel wrote could have aggregated and commenced marching, devouring most of the vegetation in their path. For the people of Judah who had already suffered the devastation of the previous year, this new locust infestation was a source of terror and panic, but for Joel it was the day of Yahweh. As such, who could endure it?⁶⁶

This twofold locust plague is the present wrong in nature that needs to be righted. It is in Joel 2:18-27 that the effects of the devastation of nature is now reversed in an assurance of salvation and righted. The unit firmly responds to the call for repentance in 2:12-17 and turns toward the hoped for change of venue and blessing (2:14 “[*clwy ym*” “Who knows?”) into a reality. Yet it is not only firmly linked to the call for repentance, but in reality to much of 1:4-2:11.⁶⁷

This unit can be divided into three sections: 2:18-20, 21-24, 25-27. The telltale sign of this division is primarily the fact that in 2:18-20 and 2:25-27 the speaker is Yahweh, while in 2:21-24 the speaker is the prophet. Beyond this the verses 2:21-24 use the perfect forms of the verb, which may be taken either as “prophetic” or “historical” perfects. I have translated the text as follows:

Fear not, O soil

Be glad and rejoice

For Yahweh has done great things.

Fear not, O animals of the field

For the pastures of the wilderness are green

For the tree bears its fruit

the fig tree and the vine give their wealth.

O Children of Zion

Be glad and rejoice in Yahweh your God

For he has given to you the early rain⁶⁸ in righteousness⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Simkins, “God, History,” pp. 443-444.

⁶⁷ Prinsloo, *Theology*, pp. 70-71. Allen writes, “Earlier motifs are deliberately taken up and put in a new setting of salvation. it is mainly the factually descriptive phraseology of 1:4-20 that is echoed, but elements from 2:3, 11, 17 are also repeated in these promises of victory and blessing,” Allen, *Joel*, p. 86.

⁶⁸ The reading *hrAmh:ta*, is extremely problematic and the problem has been compounded by the Dead Sea Scrolls. The problem is that *hrmm* is translated as

He has indeed made the rain to fall,
the early and the latter rain as before.

The threshing floors will be full of grain
and the wine-vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

This prophetic oracle of salvation follows a pattern characteristic of Genesis 1, where creation is depiction from soil to animal kind and then on to the creation of human beings.⁷⁰ Thus the Judean plight is solved through a transformation of nature, the reversal of the cosmic catastrophe.

rain only in Ps 84:7 and the following *hqdc* "according to righteousness" or "in a righteous way" is extremely awkward. Some have tried to solve the problem by claiming a dittographic replacement of an original *l kah* or *l kamh* for the now problematic, *hrmh*. This proposed emendation derives from retroverting the Greek *brwmata* ("food"), Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, pp. 255-256 and Wolff, *Joel*, p. 55. However, the MT's *hrmh* is reading of *hrmh* as "teacher" is supported by the Targum, Vulgate and Symmachus. The BHS has even gone as far as to suggest deleting the whole stiche and leaving only *-vḥ:ta*, after the *-kl'*. This emendation is quite radical and does not take into account that the versions were dealing with some sort of text here. Others like Ahlström have argued for "the teacher of righteousness" which works well with the following *hqdc*, G. W. Ahlström, *Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 1971). However, as Prinsloo has noted this text-critical problem rests on a hermeneutic problem rather than a true text-critical one, Prinsloo, *Theology*, pp. 66-67. I have retained the MT's *hrmh* and relied upon Ps 84:7 and the parallel *-xg* ("rain") as my support. I would tend to agree with Roth's thesis that the text was misread as the teacher of righteousness, C. Roth, "The Teacher of Righteousness and the Prophecy of Joel," *VT* 13 (1963), pp. 91-95.

⁶⁹ I have not only retained the MT's *hqdc* as it is, but also rendered it in a rather wooden fashion. Others, like Allen has rendered it as "in token of covenant harmony" on the basis of rain and blessing associated with the covenantal promises in Deut 11:13-15 and Lev 26:3, 4, Allen, *Joel*, pp. 92-93, see also his sources in note 29, or like the *Tanakh*, "[His] kindness."

⁷⁰ Prinsloo attributes this insight to M. Bic and follows it with the comment: "The author of Joel uses similar terminology (cf. Gen 1:11; 1:29; 1:24 ff.) and the same sequence (earth, beasts, man) as Gen 1. As a result Yahweh's redemptive work in this pericope is depicted as a new act of creation," Prinsloo, *Theology*, p. 72.

The transformation of nature in Joel 2:19-4:21 is not complete, however. Gowan's second grouping under this caption, "immense changes in the earth's topography and even in the heavenly bodies" are dealt with in 3:3-4 and 4:15, 18. The "signs" of 3:3-4 "in the sky and upon the earth" obviously change both the earth and the heavenly bodies, but this is only pointing to the great effects of the "day of Yahweh." It is during the combat of the Divine Warrior Hymn⁷¹ (4:13-17) and the conclusion to the book of Joel (4:18-21) that the changes are effected.⁷² 4:18 is the more interesting of the two:

At that time,
 the mountains will drip with sweet wine,
 the hills will flow with milk,
 while all the channels of Judah will flow with water,
 a spring will go forth from Yahweh's house
 and will water the Wadi of the Acacias.

This eschatological transformation of nature brings prosperity to the Judean area not unlike those described in Ezekiel 47:1-12.

The second, eschatological grouping is that of the transformation of human society. In the book of Joel this is seen in 4:1-21 in general. More specifically it is found in the "Oracles against the Nations" type of presentation in verses 9-17.⁷³

The third, eschatological grouping, "the transformation of the human person" is where Joel 3:1-5 can be located. This type of transformation usually deals with the forgiveness of sins⁷⁴ and then a re-

⁷¹ P. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 293-324.

⁷² Joel 4:18-21 seems to be disconnected from the form of 4:1-17. I view it as functioning in a similar fashion to Amos 9:11-15. This does not imply that its content is in conflict with chapter 4 nor that it is nor original.

⁷³ See D. L. Christensen, *Prophecy and War in Ancient Israel* (Berkeley: BIBAL Press, 1989 reprint) and Christensen's article, "Nations," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), IV, pp. 1037-1049. This aspect of Old Testament eschatology does not immediately affect our investigation into 3:1-5, so I will leave this discussion as it is.

⁷⁴ Note such passages as: the Penitential Psalms (Pss 25; 32; 51; 130); the formula of God's attributes in Exod 34:6, 7; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17;

creation by means of a new heart, new spirit and/or a new covenant.⁷⁵ Joel 3:1-5 focuses on the unique transformation of people into the prophetic. In relation to the clause, “for on Mount Zion there will be an escape,” this quotation of Yahweh’s former saying is affirmed by the being enveloped by the “everyone who calls upon the name of Yahweh” and “whom Yahweh call.” The prophetic community is the cultic community. It has the same theological trajectory as Numbers 11:29b, “Would that all Yahweh’s people were prophets, if only⁷⁶ Yahweh would put his spirit on them.”

SUMMARY

This study indicates that Joel 3:1-5 is a tightly bound structural unit. The three basic strophes dovetail in such a way that in the process of exegesis the isolation of the promises in verses 1-2 from verses 3-5 is unadvisable. Along with the structural unity, the pericope is bound together by a single thematic thrust, that is the eschatological promise of a national and normalized prophetic gifting.

Jon 3:9; 4:2; Nah 1:3; Num 14:18; Joe 2:14; and the different texts that deal with $\text{b}^{\text{w}}\text{x}$, like Deut 30, etc.

⁷⁵ Gowan, *Eschatology*, pp. 69 ff. Note especially Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-32 and many others.

⁷⁶ I have followed B. A. Levine in taking the $\text{y}^{\text{k}}\text{i}$ here as a restrictive adverb, “if only.” Levine writes, “the statement on the uniqueness of Mosaic prophecy in Num 12:6-8 may be seen as a reflex of the very words attributed to Moses in Num 11:29: ‘Would that the entire people of YHWH were prophets, if only YHWH would bestow his spirit on them.’ As if to counter the implication that others could attain to the status of Moses, we are informed quite promptly, in Num 12:6-8, that this is impossible,” Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 341. See Waltke and O’Connor, *Hebrew Syntax*, §39.3.5 for restrictive adverbs.