

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jbl-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php)

## JOEL 1, 17a

M. SPRENGLING  
University of Chicago

This verse in the book of Joel is well known to every serious student of Hebrew. As it stands it appears to offer no intelligible meaning. Many emendations have been attempted, most of them on the basis on the LXX, which on the face of it is surely no better than the Masoretic text. The latest commentator, Julius Beyer, in the *ICC*, has cut the Gordian knot by declaring that verse 17a is corrupt beyond repair and that the true text is to be found in the four succeeding words.

It would appear to the writer, as if this counsel of despair were after all somewhat premature. Though fully aware of the fact that absolute certainty can hardly be reached, he thinks he has found, if not the solution, at least an approach to a solution, which he herewith lays upon the scales against those previously offered.

First of all the LXX needs closer examination, than has been commonly given to it. Merx's specious emendation פָּיִט for יָבִיט ('improved' by Nestle-Nowack to יָבִיטָה) seemed to furnish the Hebrew basis for the striking statement ἐσκίρτησαν δαμάλεις ἐπὶ ταῖς φάτναις αὐτῶν. But this solution does not keep its promise: instead of furnishing a key for the extraordinary, and, in fact, rather ludicrous ἐσκίρτησαν of the LXX, it simply introduces this further corruption into the Hebrew. The explanation of the "heifers dancing at their mangers" must be sought elsewhere.

No one, to the writer's knowledge, has yet applied the touchstone of the Syriac to this remarkable LXX reading. Now the Peshito, which here, as elsewhere in Joel, is clearly influenced by the LXX, reads: "ܩܝܒܝܢ ܥܢܘܡܝܢ ܥܢ ܩܝܒܝܢܐ", "the heifers were parched at their mangers." It is clearly not another Hebrew, but a different LXX text, which the Syriac translates. Nor need one look far to find it. Ἐσκαλησαν, aorist of σκέλλω, is exactly what is needed. It translates correctly the Hebrew יָבִיטָה. It is

a rare word, just such as would appear strange and uncouth to later copyists; yet it was in use in the literary language of Alexandria at just about the time, when the prophets were being translated there or thereabout (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 2, 201, cf. 53). It furnishes a good starting point for the specious ἐσκίρτησαν. What first needs emendation, therefore, is the LXX text (and with it the grammar and concordance; for σκέλλω is not elsewhere listed in the LXX vocabulary). The passage, as read by the Syriac translator, was: ἔσκλησαν δαμάλεις ἐπὶ ταῖς φάτναις αὐτῶν; i. e. (Hab. 3, 17; Zeph. 2, 14) עֲבָשׁוּ פְרוֹת תַּחַת מִרְפְּתֵיהֶם.

The רַפְתָּ, translated φάτνη, is, of course, not a simple manger, but an enclosure at least partially roofed over for shade and shelter; this obviates Bewer's objection to the תַּחַת with the "mangers" (on this רַפְתָּ see also the remarks of Nestle, *ZAW*, 1900, 168). Greek ἐπί under similar circumstances is not wholly unknown to the LXX, cf. Jud. 6:11; Exod. 24:4. But the man who possessed a sufficient amount of the Oriental's emendatory ingenuity to read פְרוֹת and מִרְפְּתֵים, was hardly the man to read the senseless פִּישׁוּ (עֲבָשׁוּ); the emendation ἐσκίρτησαν for ἔσκλησαν is exactly the sort of cleverness, which a copyist, ignoring the context, exhibits. Moreover the Syriac יָבַד is much more probably to be traced to Greek ἔσκλησαν (or ἐσκήκασιν, possibly), than to Hebrew עֲבָשׁוּ; for the latter حَب would much more readily have come to the translator's mind.

This much, then, appears to the writer to be fairly well established, that the translator of what is known as our LXX text wrote as the Syriac indicates on the basis of the Hebrew above outlined. But this is not the end of the matter.

It throws us back, indeed, to the very beginnings. For with this all probability (if it ever existed), that LXX really had a Hebrew text differing from our own, from which together with our own a lost original could be reconstructed, vanishes. LXX is merely the first of a great number of similar attempts on the part of translators and interpreters to emend away a text, which

<sup>1</sup> כִּי after תַּחַת is not good Hebrew; but it is found, after all, in the text of Ez. 47:1b, as it stands. A noun with preformative כִּי would be another possibility.

they did not understand. It differs not at all in kind and but very little in clumsiness from later versions. e. g. Symmachus: ἡδρωτίασε σιτοδοχεῖα ἀπὸ τῶν χρισμάτων αὐτῶν (عصنة = صناديق = ܣܢܕܝܩܝܢ, which, if it be, indeed, the translation of verse 17a, and if σιτοδοχεῖα (ῥ;=l)<sup>2</sup> really is the original Symmachus, seems to mean “(the walls of) granaries have rotted away with mould from their plaster” (בִּנְרַפְתִּיהֶם < בִּנְרַקְחִתִּיהֶם < χρισμάτων, plaster! ; Theodotion: ἡσχέθησαν ἐπὶ τῇ διαρροῇ αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἰγνυας αὐτῶν, best left untranslated; the Targum's *jarcovers* (בִּינוֹפְתֵהוּן); the *clouds* of Luther. AV, RV, Kautzsch, *et al.* (the emendation רַגְבִּיָהֶם by no means original with Steiner, cf. ICC, p. 90, is later obscured by attempted combination with אַגְרָה.

Exod. 21:18; Is. 58:4, Arabic (جرف); *etc.*, *etc.*, down to the latest commentaries. No attempt is made at completeness of enumeration. The point is that thus LXX, so far from presenting actual textual variants, so far from attesting a corrupt text, which calls for emendation,—adds tremendous strength to the attestation of the Masoretic text. In fact, considering how near in time this LXX translation is to Joel himself, it cuts the ground from under Beyer's assumption, ICC, 91, see above. Of this more anon! At present it suffices to point out that out of the waves and waters of two millenniums of conjecture and criticism the rock of the Masoretic text of Joel 1:17 rises more firmly fixed than ever, its baffling symmetry unmarred. Stronger than ever is its challenge, demanding an explanation, at least, of its origin and existence, if we be really wholly unable to find for it a meaning consistent with etymology, syntax, and context, and not inconsistent, at least, with historical *milieu*, in so far as this may need consideration in such form as we can reconstruct it.

Of brave attempts to understand the text as it stands, it will suffice here to register two as samples of all, one from ancient and one from modern times. The first is that of Jerome in the Vulgate. And what an attempt it is! “Computruerunt iumenta

<sup>2</sup> In this case Symmachus must have substituted אִצְרִית for פְּרִירִית; or did Symmachus translate פְּרִירִית by στρεβλά “component elements disintegrate under their plaster covering,” which would account for the apparently disintegrating garners that follow), and is στροβλά an inner-Greek corruption?

in *stercore suo*." Whether even for עֲבָשׁוּ Jerome read עֲבָשׁוּ *computruerunt* (= Symmachus' ἡρωτάσσε), as does van Hoonacker, may be doubted; more probably he or his rabbis knew a root or pronunciation עֲבִישׁ, current somewhere in their time in this meaning, or they thought this the ancient Hebrew pronunciation, if they gave it much thought at all. פִּרְרוֹת, *jumenta*, is, of course, perfectly transparent; Jerome lived before the days of vowelpoints, and traditional synagogue and school pronunciation would not hinder him and his friends from reading differently at need. מְגַרְפֹּת, *Stercor*, sweepings, Pual Participle (Siegfried, *Gram. der neuhebr. Spr.* § 89 b; Albrecht, *Neuhebr. Gram.* § 99 d, e), is clever indeed; it is the gem of the Jerome version. But shades of meticulous Joel! What a hotch-potch is made of thy carefully planned and well-arranged penpicture: she mules and dung, broken down storehouses, confounded grain, cattle large and small, etc., etc. One wonders, whether a rabbi friend did not try to perpetrate a joke on the vain Illyrian. But that was well-nigh impossible, for to Jerome almost any collocation of words, that collectively meant something (or even nothing?), would have been just as welcome. In witness whereof the doubter is referred to the great translator's allegorizing commentary (Migne, PL XXV, col. 960), where he not only finds divine sense in both his own and the LXX interpretation, but succeeds beautifully in harmonizing the two.—Of the stuff of which this Jerome interpretation is made, however different the results, are a number of attempts at interpretation more or less current in orthodox Jewish circles, which can the more readily be passed over here, because they have not found their way to any appreciable extent into modern Occidental Christian thought.

One modern, scientific attempt, which happens to be easily accessible to the writer (Nowack, *HK* III, 4, 2. ed., p. 101), may be placed alongside Jerome's ancient one. Reidel (*StKr*, 1903, p. 167 f.) reads מְגַרְפֹּת, as in late Hebrew, in the meaning "broom"; he then equates עֲבִישׁ with Arabic اغْبَثَ، غُبِثَ, "to be, become dust colored." And from these elements he fashions his translation: "dusty have become under their (the farmers') brooms the grains of corn," i. e. the last remnants swept up

were more dust and dirt than corn." And there, despite further efforts by Nowack, Marti, van Hoonacker, Beyer, *et al.*, we stand stationary to the present moment.

Is there a remedy? Where lies the fault? To the writer it appears, that the root of the error and the reason for the *impasse* in which commentators have lost themselves over the little opening phrase of this verse, are clearly revealed in several of the most recent commentaries just named. Since they speak in almost identical language, ICC may be taken as the representative of all. Says ICC, p. 90, on verse 17: "The second half is clear, only . . . The first half is very difficult." That this statement hides a serious fallacy, is revealed by the comment, p. 88 f.: "There being no harvests *the storerooms are dilapidated, the barns are broken down*. We do not know any particulars about the storerooms and barns of the ancient Jews, but evidently they were not solidly built and had to be repaired every year. This year there was no use for them. *Since the corn has failed* (lit. *shows shame*) . . ." If this "second half is clear," whence all these difficulties? (1) The word translated "barns" (בַּיְטוֹרוֹת) has first to be emended (p. 90), so as not to be itself a *ἄπαξ λεγόμενον*; and even as emended (בַּיְטוֹרוֹת) it occurs in but two other places, Hagg. 2:19 and Ps. 55:16, the latter of which is again a *crux*: its etymology is very uncertain, and its meaning is by no means clear beyond a doubt in anyone of the three places. (2) We know nothing about Jewish barns, but assume much in order to make our translation hold water. If the Palestinian peasant's storage facilities in those times were at all like they are today, and we have reason to think they were very much alike, then the chief part of the farmer's barn, like his stable, was *in his house*. If he had more than he could stow there, covered pits in the open fields, "wheat-wells" (Ph. Baldensperger, *The Unconquered East*, 1913, p. 152), served his purpose.<sup>5</sup> Lack of repair of these latter would be neither a very

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Baldensperger, *The Unconquered East*, PEFQS, 1907, p. 270 at the top: "The wheat is carried home and put into a store dividing the fore-room from the anteroom" . . . p. 270 f.: "Where they have plenty of wheat, they put it in a pit (*matmar*), which is covered with loam and earth, so that the place can not be detected by anybody who does not know of its existence. When the wheat is to be taken out, the pits are opened, are aired by throwing a bundle in and drawing it out again, till the noxious

serious matter, nor a very noticeable feature in the Palestinean landscape. (3) *The corn has failed* hides a nest of difficulties in itself. "Has failed" is a very free rendering of הוּכִיִּית, as the parenthetic remark "(lit. *shows shame*)" confesses; RV adds another alternative, just as good or better, "*is withered.*" All this fits the immediate context only on the very unsafe assumption, that the translation of the two preceding clauses is correct; in the general context it is at best a most unnecessary repetition, if not, indeed, an impossible contradiction to verse 10: "is withered" fits the drouth, but not the locusts' work of verse 10; hence the choice of "has failed," which is rather lame for the drouth. It can hardly be said, therefore, that "the second half," really three-fourths, of this verse is any less impenetrable to the attempts as yet made upon it, than the introductory clause, "the first half," which is so blandly tossed into the scrapheap by ICC. Under these circumstances a fresh attempt from a different point of attack seems not unwarranted.

The present attempt starts from an X hitherto pretty consistently passed over as known here and elsewhere, and makes search for an element, the total absence of which in the context, marvelously enough, has not hitherto disturbed anyone, so far as the writer knows. Verses 15-20 Joel is evidently sketching a penpicture of a severe *drouth*, accompanying the locust plague of verses 2-12; the counterpart of verses 15-20 in chapter 2 are verses 21-27, years of *copious rains* and plenty. Now wherever else in the Old Testament (e. g. Amos 4:6-8; Jer. 14:2-6; I Kings 17:1, 7; 18:5) and elsewhere, certainly in the Semitic world, a drouth is depicted, prominent mention is made of the absence of rain and the lack of water. More especially, both by Jeremiah and by the author of Kings is such lack of water connected with dearth of grass and pasture for the beasts, as this latter is graphically enough depicted in the verses following upon our crux, 18-20, by Joel. But in all Joel's description of

gases are gone. Often this goes on several hours, and then a person only enters, if a lamp continues to burn. *The "treasures" of Jerem. xli, 8, were such fieldpits . . .* Storerooms of more public or community character were in the temple, and these, even in the second temple, were hardly as fragile as the commentators ask us to believe. See further Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, vol. 1, I, 29, p. 46; vol. 2, VI, 172, pp. 193-198.

a most unusually severe drouth according to the extant interpretations of verse 17 rain is mentioned not at all and water but once, in a little phrase in the middle of verse 20. In the first phrase of verse 17 heifers, she mules, grains of corn, even wine (van Hoonacker, Merx, perhaps, at least in punning allusion, the Targumim) have served as unsatisfactory stop gaps; the rest of the verse has pretty steadily labored under the obsession of grain. It is fitting, that in this era of water this element should have its turn at the attempt.

Now there is one point, and just one, in verse 17, where a notice of the most important rains may be found, and that is in one of the few words supposedly perfectly "clear" in the whole verse, the word which occupies the most prominent position in the verse, its last word יִרְגַּן. Everybody knows, what יִרְגַּן means ordinarily, and therefore no one has sought here the X, the finding of whose exact value might supply the key to the long lost solution of this equation. Ruben (Gesenius-Buhl<sup>15</sup> s. v.) proposed the meaning "rain, rainclouds" for the word in Ps. 65:10, and Jensen in Bandissin's article on *Dagon* in *PRE<sup>3</sup>* IV, 426, arrived at a similar starting point for that mysterious god.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The writer has no desire to weaken his argument by a serious entanglement with the vexed question of the god Dagon Da gán. The argument stands without help of Dagon, and, it is hoped, better than did Dagon before Jahwe's ark, 1. Sam. 5:2-5. In fact, the profit to Dagon from the reading proposed for Joel 1:17 may be fully as great or greater than any corroboration, which the reading may receive from him. The brief statement that follows is intended to be suggestive rather than dogmatic. Like Adad Ram'mann (Deimel, *Pantheon*, p. 43 ff., no. 23) Dagon-Da gán (Deimel, p. 99, no. 675) appear to have come into the Babylonian pantheon from or with the Semites of the West. In the West Dagon appears to have been more popular on the coast and farther south than Adad, whose chief territory is inland and rather north of Jahwe's preserves. Adad usurps the place of Eulil Bêl as the god of rain, with a strong bent toward tempestuousness and destructiveness (see esp. the Code of Hammurabi). Dagon is identified with Eulil Bêl, but in Hammurabi, at least, he appears to be of much more gentle and kindly nature than Adad. Together with Jensen's not improbable etymological derivation of his name this, after all, makes more probable than many of the authorities at present allow, that Dagon was a god of rain, moreover apparently of the nondestructive, pleasant, friendly rains and the fertility they help to produce, more distinctly than Adad *dominus abundantiae*; hence יִרְגַּן later, the abundance produced grain.



Both base their assumption on the Arabic root **سَجِن**, which is used in various forms in the meaning "rain, abundant rain, heavy rainclouds." In Syriae, also **سَجِن** is found in the meaning "copious snow," but its rare and late occurrence (see Brockelmann, *Lex. Syr. s. v.*) may point to Arabic loan, or, at least, Arabic influence. In any case it is certainly far from impossible that Joel knew the word **רָגַן**, in what vocalization we cannot tell, as a rare, choice, poetic, probably in his day archaic word for *rain, rainclouds*. Reading thus "*Rains have failed,*" or better "*Rainclouds have become barren of moisture,*" we have at least as good a rendering of the final phrase of our verse as any yet offered. Nor need we do violence to the lack of the article with **רָגַן** (usually rendered "*the grain*"), although at this point this is not as serious a matter as at several preceding points.

Going backward now and taking up first the relatively easier second phrase **נִטְנֵי אוֹצְרוֹת**, "*the storehouses are dilapidated,*" it has been pointed out above, how weak is the picture, if granaries be meant. But with the obsession of grain removed from the verse it is perfectly clear that **אוֹצְרוֹת** may just as well be containers, places of storage for water, reservoirs, Ps. 33:7; Sir. 39:17; Job 38:22. And if the phrase mean: *Reservoirs are deserted, empty, or even dilapidated*, there is much more reason for this statement in the description of a drouth. A drouth does cause reservoirs, built as they usually have been in Palestine, to disintegrate in some measure, and it would certainly cause defects, probably enough the result of perennial neglect, but generally hidden by water, to appear. And whether the phrase be taken to mean merely, that they are empty, or that they are deserted, or that they appear dilapidated, any of these would make a striking feature in the Palestinean landscape, particularly at Jerusalem, during a drouth.

Coming now to the intermediate phrase **נִהְרְסוּ מִיִּנְגְרוֹת**, "*the barns are broken down,*" we find, that we must first emend away the first **נ**, in order that the one pretty clear passage, Hagg. 2:19, may give fairly good attestation to the meaning "barns." But even so, why just *barns*? Why not *wheat wells*, the pits or cistern like structures above mentioned? Then, perhaps, the reading will hold without emendation for Ps. 55:16

as well. Whether this is to be related to Egyptian *magarati* ('foxes', holes or dens (Müller in Gesenius-Buhl<sup>15</sup> s. v. , and so, possibly, in the last instance to מַגָּרָה, مغارة, (μέγαρον), *cave*, can hardly be determined with certainty, though the trail is alluring. Of hitherto unseen significance, however, becomes the LXX λαφοί: these may, indeed, be winevats or winepresses, but they may quite as well be troughs, watering or baking. All this becomes still more hauntingly suggestive, when we find particularly prevalent in modern Egyptian a peculiar word ماحور, for which, likewise, no absolutely certain etymology has yet been found, but the uses of which are perfectly well-known. The earliest occurrence known to the writer is found in a book or treatise on the use of coffee written in 1588 (or, less probably, 1559) by a certain 'Abd al-Qâdir, a portion of which was published by deSaey in his *Chrestomathie*, 2 ed., vol. I. The word is found in the Arabic text p. 12 (148, l. 2, translation p. 421, l. 13 and in deSaey's note 51, p. 465. It designates, clearly, a "large" *urn or vase* "of red earthenware," from which a Yemenite chief "ladles out" (not pours, be it noted!) coffee to his followers. In a few places in *1001 Nights* it means a vase for flowers. In a modern Egyptian literary work, published by the late Karl Vollers in *ZDMG* XLV under the title *der auarabische Tartuḥ*, it is found p. 85, l. 5 from the bottom, in the meaning *bakingtrough*. Dozy, *Supplement*, lists the word twice, once under ماجر and again under ماجر; he adds to the material already mentioned, from lexicons and wordbooks, the meanings *tureen, bowl*, and from the *Description de l'Égypte*, VIII, part 2, 416, the meaning *wash tub*. Vollers in his *Glossar, op. cit.*, p. 95, s. v., adds, that at present, when used alone without qualifying modifier, it designates the bowl or basin under the *šir*—a porous jar used as a strainer, which catches the filtered water. He is inclined to suspect Berber origin. De Goeje, *Gloss. Tabari* p. CDLXXXI and *Bibl. Geogr.*, vol. 6, p. 215, *ult.*, and *ibidem*, vol. 4, *Gloss. Geogr.*, under ماجر? the book is not accessible at the moment to the writer. Hardly under ماجر, as Vollers and *Gloss. Tab.* have it—manifestly inclines with his teacher Dozy to derivation from ماجر and to correlation with ماجر *et tern, basin, pond*. Wahrumund s. v. says simply

“a vessel; flowerpot.” De Goeje’s suggestions lead on to Hebrew אָנַל, Job 38:28 (“drops” of dew), and אָנִין, *basin*, Exod. 24:6: *cups*, Is. 22:24; *goblet*, Song of Songs 7:2 (3 Hebrew). It seemed necessary to go to some length in collecting this material, small though its probatory power may be, since a like collection from the same point of view has nowhere been made.—For the form in this passage Delitzsch, *Z. f. K.* 1885, 392, note 2, posits a root מָנַר. It is true, that the proposed emendation above mentioned is none too well founded. It is true, therefore, that, unless we find in אוֹצְרוֹת, contents rather than containers, and then read with Aquila’s ἐκ Μὲνורות (“stores have vanished, they have been exhausted from out of reservoirs” or “they have disappeared from out of containers,” hardly commendable), we have here a noun with מ preformative. But Joel himself may quite well have deduced this very root מָנַר from מְנוֹרוֹת, apparently a rare and little understood (loan?) word in Palestinian Hebrew, and formed his own *nomen instrumenti*. A Semitic poet of his type, avid for rare words, formations, and modes of expression, would surely be quite as capable as Delitzsch and other moderns of such sagacious procedure. We may, therefore, without doing violence to the text, as it stands in the Masoretic vocalization, read: “*pools have crumbled into ruins*”; and whether we read thus, or as with Aquila above, in either case we have a flawless succession of ideas in verse 17 b, c, d.

There remains the “very difficult” first phrase. This is not nearly so formidable now. Taking the first and the last word of the phrase in meanings easily and correctly derivable from the Arabic, as those who have hitherto rejected them for supposedly contextual reasons have themselves demonstrated or admitted, we have the following: עָבְשׁוּ × תַּחַת מְנוֹרְתֵיהֶם, “were dried up, caked with dried mud, parched . . . under banks overhanging them, banks washed hollow by torrents.” The X is now easily supplied for the ἀπαξ (but cf. Ezech. 1:11) פָּרְרוֹת. The traditional vocalization, though it does not understand the phrase, suggests plainly a passive participle, and we violate no valid canon of grammar, lexicon, or exegesis, even though we do not find this meaning elsewhere, if in so plain a context we read “rifts, fissures, watercourses, brookbeds.” If

it were not in Palestine, more particularly in Jerusalem, one might think of a system of canals dividing into many branches (cf. Gen. 2: 10 פְּרָדָה, brought to the writer's attention by Prof. J. M. P. Smith). Possibly Joel has the word from Hebrew literature lost to us, which was written in Babylonia or Egypt; from the point of view of vocabulary his book (like many of its fellows, not only in Hebrew, but also in Syriac and Arabic) is a veritable crazyquilt of literary reminiscences. In Palestine Joel may have understood it to mean a system of *wadis*, such as wrinkles the surface of Jerusalem and its surroundings. More likely, whether he loaned it from such literature, or from some remote and obscure dialect, or whether, as is not at all improbable, he coined it himself, he uses it here in the simpler meaning above suggested. In any case we will not stray far from the author's intention, if we read: "*Parched are wadis recourses under their banks swept hollow by torrents.*"

And now the four facets of the crystal stand forth in their pristinely perfect symmetry:

*Brookbeds are parched under their banks swept hollow  
by torrents;  
reservoirs are desolate,  
pools have crumbled to ruins;  
for rainclouds are become barren of moisture.*

In this reading it is not necessary to violate in a single instance the absence of the article, a vital point in so careful a master of word-wizardry as Joel, a point, moreover, consistently overlooked hitherto, especially by modern interpreters.

The crystal thus regained falls naturally into its setting, the general picture of the drouth, verses 16-20, read in any, except a modern, "emended" version. For "food" and for "joy and gayety in Jahwe's house" mill and meat, and even water formed quite as necessary ingredients as the grain, wine, oil, and fruits previously mentioned in vss. 10-12. Verses 13-15 form an exclamatory interlude, a sort of Greek chorus effect, a very good transition from the picture of the locust plague, verses 1-12, to that of the drouth, verses 16-20. This interlude is, on the other hand, thus an introduction to verses 16-20, finely

Those who feel they must emend the text are still free that play by reading, e. g. פְּרָדָה Job 40: 14 for פְּרָדָה יְזַן for יְזַן, etc.

balancing the introductory verses 2 and 3. Joel's is a highly literary art, very conscious, standing on the shoulders of many predecessors, quite unlike the uncouth freshness of Amos (4: 6-8), some steps beyond Jeremiah (14: 2-6). The latter may, indeed, have furnished the very outlines into which, but slightly modified, Joel painted his picture with a brand-new mixture of old colors.

Finally, the picture now fits excellently the place at which Joel is making his observations, Jerusalem, with its multitude of pools and reservoirs, with the *wâdis* and watercourses surrounding it and cutting furrows through its very midst. It will be remembered, of course, that Kidron might after all be dignified by the name of *brook* in the time of Joel; the pen-picture, however, would fit other watercourses equally well, if not better.

To the writer it seems, that he has discovered and refreshed the original colors of Joel, long hidden under disfiguring white-wash of unnecessary conjectural emendation, ancient, mediaeval and modern. It has been a labor of love for him to attempt faithfully to follow the thought of this minor prophet and to discern, what the poet's eyes were gazing upon. Joel is not one of the great poets of the Old Testament. Subjects and words do not well forth copiously, strong and fresh from his pen; they are carefully chosen. The words exhibit not a little *richeché* archaism; in subjects he chooses in the main wisely, in conformity with his limitations, those of the *genre* type. To say that he consciously borrowed words, phrases, outlines from others, is probably doing him an injustice. He is neither an original thinker, nor a fresh, unspoiled shepherd or peasant lad. He is a man, who has had and has made the most of a careful and extensive literary education. That is the world he lives in; that furnishes his natural medium of expression, when he comes himself to write. But such as it is, his work is very painstakingly executed along recognized lines and is by no means without artistic merit. Given the manner, this description of the locust plague and drouth in chapter 1 is difficult to excel. The picture as a whole, the paragraphs, sentences, and single phrases are for the most part clear cut and well balanced.

On the other hand Joel knows also, how to apply at need and to use effectively the obscure tints of the apocalyptic. It is because of its place in such a *milieu*, that the all too brief con-

trasting counterpart to chapter 1 found in chapter 2:21-26 suffers by comparison. A better contrasting picture to that of chapter 1:16-20 is found in Ps. 65:10-14, especially if with Ruben one read the curious **גִּלְגַּל** of verse 10 "rainclouds" instead of the dubious "grain for them." To the writer it seems, indeed, that this little Psalm-section, if not the whole of Psalm 65, might very well have been written by Joel himself.

If these be minor passages in that great collection of Hebrew literature named the Old Testament, if they be *genre* sketches done by a lesser artist or artists, they are yet most excellent work of their kind, for that very reason, probably, accepted and preserved in the great collection. They are hallowed, furthermore, by being hung and cherished for a longer time in more homes than any others of like nature. As such they are worth careful study, that they may be presented to the hosts of those that love them as nearly as may be in their original colors. This has been the ultimate goal that has guided the writer in the search whose results he here sets forth for public judgment. If he be mistaken in his belief, that he has discovered the secret of Joel's original pigments, he trusts, that in contrast with previous efforts, it may at least hold good of this: *Se non è vero, è ben trovato.*

In conclusion, the writer feels, that he cannot let this occasion pass without remembering his recently departed friend Gustav Adolf von Brauchitsch, late Fellow in the University of Chicago, died April 2, 1919, to whose kind and conscientious assistance much careful elaboration of detail in this and other work of the writer's is greatly indebted.