FROM THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR TO THE PROMISE OF PRESENCE:
A RHETORICAL READING OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

by

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A Thesis submitted to
the faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
2011

SUMMARY

Doctor of Philosophy

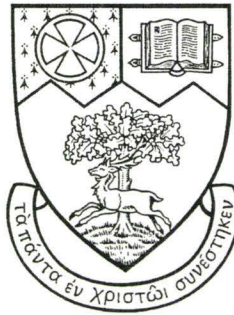   McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
                                       Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A
                            Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel

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SUPERVISORS: Mark J. Boda, Paul S. Evans

NUMBER OF PAGES: xi + 406

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

Upon the recommendation of an oral examining committee,

this Ph.D. doctoral dissertation by

Joel Barker

is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Ph.D. IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

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Primary Supervisor

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Secondary Supervisor

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External Examiner

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Academic Dean (designate)

Date: March 14, 2011

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ABSTRACT

"From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel."

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2011

This dissertation examines Joel through the lens of rhetorical criticism and seeks to demonstrate that Joel is a unified work of prophetic literature that moves from scenes of devastation to promises of restoration through its persuasive evocation of divine and human responses in order to articulate the necessity of calling and relying upon YHWH in all circumstances. This study orients itself in the broader context of Joel studies before examining rhetorical critical methodologies. This study discusses the model of George A. Kennedy and Karl Möller and proposes modifications so that it will better engage with the rhetoric of Joel.

This dissertation then seeks to apply Kennedy's and Möller's model in a detailed study of Joel. The body of this study considers different text units within Joel, discussing how the text constructs the rhetorical situations into which it places its persuasive strategies. This dissertation then considers the potential effectiveness of these strategies in their situations. It traces how Joel uses a series of crises in order to persuade the text's implied audience that its only hope is found in crying out to YHWH amidst desperate circumstances. This leads to the consideration of the gap between Joel 2:17, 18, where the tenor of the text changes from devastation to restoration secured by the powerful

actions of YHWH. This study notes how the latter half of Joel evokes restorative

responses from YHWH culminating in the promise of YHWH's protective presence in

Zion, which should further persuade the implied audience that it ought to heed the text's

appeal to cry out to YHWH.

This dissertation concludes with a summary of the persuasive elements of the

individual rhetorical units within Joel, while also considering the rhetorical trajectory of

Joel as a literary whole. It then offers suggestions for further rhetorical study of prophetic

literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible Commentary
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
ANETS	Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BibSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Bible Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CSCD	Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine
DTIB	Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
ETR	*Etudes theologique et religieuse*
FTL	Forum Theologicae Linguisticae
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testamentum
LHB/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NBS	Numen Book Series
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentaries
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTM	New Testament Monographs
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OS	Oudtestamentische Studien
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library

RQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
RSR	*Revue des sciences religieuses*
SBLAB	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLHB/OT	Society of Biblical Literature Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature: Early Judaism and its Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SEA	*Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok*
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
SOTBT	Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
TJT	*Taiwan Journal of Theology*
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
UBT	Understanding Biblical Themes
UUÅ	Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WEC	Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
YABRL	Yale Anchor Bible Reference Library

Introduction

Goal of the Study

The book of Joel provides many interpretive opportunities worthy of detailed exploration. This book combines impressive imagery, literary artistry and persuasive potential in a powerful prophetic proclamation. It begins with a vivid depiction of a locust plague and drought, followed by the terror-inducing threat of YHWH marching against Zion at the head of an invading army. This prompts a prophetic call to return that eventually leads to total restoration that is guaranteed by the presence of YHWH in Zion. Joel details how YHWH reverses both spiritual and material threats and concludes by announcing YHWH's intention to judge the nations and bless those who dwell in Jerusalem. This book also creatively employs the "day of YHWH" motif to announce both threat and restoration for the Judahite community throughout the book. Joel has an impact on our understanding of the broader canon of the Old Testament that belies its size since it recalls and adds new layers of meaning to other biblical texts with which it interacts.[1]

This study proposes to explore afresh the layers of imagery and meaning in this prophetic proclamation. It approaches Joel through the prism of rhetorical criticism, a discipline that delves deeply into the heart of the text and considers its persuasive intent and effect. This approach provides a valuable window into the language of prophecy and its struggle to present the reality of YHWH through the limitation of human speech and

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[1] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 27–28. Crenshaw lists twenty-two occurrences where there are close connections or quotations between Joel and other books in the rest of the Prophets, Torah and Psalms. This study will interact with a number of these allusions in its discussions of rhetorical strategy. See also Mason, *Zephaniah*, 117–20; Coggins, *Joel*, 21–23; Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 59–254.

thought.[2] A rhetorical-critical approach is also appropriate for a book of this length, since it allows the interpreter to enter the world of the text and thoroughly examine a discrete literary unit. It also prompts the interpreter to consider the effects of the book's literary artistry and to explore the ways in which it persuades an audience to adopt its point of view and respond appropriately.[3]

Survey of Research

The book of Joel continues to engender significant scholarly attention due to a variety of issues that defy expeditious resolution. Its wealth of interpretive challenges prompted Merx to label Joel as a problem-child of Old Testament exegesis in 1879.[4] This introductory chapter intends to briefly survey the history of interpretation of this book, orienting itself around some of the major *crux interpreti* that continue to call for careful analysis. It cannot cover all aspects of Joel studies, but it focuses on those that are relevant to the following discussion. This chapter does not necessarily claim to resolve these issues, but it locates the study that follows in the broader field of research into the book of Joel. Following that discussion, this chapter also intends to establish the foundation for employing a rhetorical-critical methodology in the study of Joel. It will survey the development of that particular field of inquiry and trace its growth to the specific model that guides this study.

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[2] Sandy, *Plowshares*, 32. Sandy articulately casts prophetic language between the poles of something exhilarating to describe, yet impossible to describe fully.

[3] On the nature of the "audience(s)" that this study considers, see the discussion of rhetorical effectiveness in the following chapter.

[4] Merx, *Die Prophetie*, iii. "Denn der Joel ist gradezu ein Schmerzenskind der alttestamentlichen Exegese."

The Date of Joel

Any survey of scholarship on Joel will note the interminable discussion of

theories concerning the proposed time of composition of the book. The debate continues

unabated since the book itself provides little evidence that would help to resolve this

issue. Most notably, unlike many other prophetic books, Joel contains no information in

its superscription that would at least provide a point of reference around which to orient

the discussion. In its absence, commentators look towards a myriad of other features,

including Joel's vocabulary, syntax, literary expression and relationship to extra-biblical

data to try to temporally locate the composition of this book.[5] The difficulties that arise

from the numerous attempts to use these categories are apparent when the range of

proposed dates stretches from the ninth to the second centuries B.C.E.

The earliest suggested date of composition is during the reign of Joash. The

reasons put forward for that proposal include the positioning of the book between Hosea

and Amos, two prophetic books that locate themselves in the monarchic era, and the

presence of Jehoiada's regency that could possibly explain the lack of reference to a king

within Joel (2 Kings 11–12).[6] This line of argumentation no longer carries significant

sway since it relies heavily on Joel's location in the order of the Minor Prophets, which is

not a firm foundation on which to make chronological judgments.[7] Consequently,

theories of Joel's early composition have not gained significant traction in contemporary

scholarship.

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[5] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 23.

[6] See especially Credner, *Der Prophet Joel*, 40.

[7] Hubbard, *Joel*, 24. Allen correctly notes that the different location assigned to Joel in the LXX version of the Minor Prophets is problematic for using canonical order as a strategy to establish chronology; Allen, *Joel*, 21. See also the forthcoming discussion in this chapter concerning the relationship between Joel and the rest of the Minor Prophets, or "The Book of the Twelve."

Arguments for a later pre-exilic time of composition are attributed primarily to Kapelrud who asserts that the time of composition was just prior to the fall of Jerusalem.[8] He looks at references to other nations made within the book and suggests that the mention of the Philistines in Joel 4:4–8 reflects similar references in Zeph 1:14–18 and Jer 47:4, the latter of which also includes Tyre and Sidon. Based on a supposedly more secure date for these passages to which Joel alludes, Kapelrud claims that Joel is situated prior to the exile.[9] He notes Joel's failure to mention a king and suggests that this reflects the prophet's intent to include all people within the text's intended audience, further suggesting that Joel's summons tend to group people according to age, rather than social rank (Joel 1:2; 2:16).[10] Stuart follows a similar path, suggesting a late pre-exilic date, which is connected to his understanding of the locusts in Joel 1:1–2:11 as symbols of an invading Babylonian horde.[11] For Stuart the crisis that drives Joel is the ominous threat of Babylonian invasion and the destruction of the Judahite kingdom.

Despite Kapelrud's and Stuart's contributions, the weight of recent scholarship falls towards dating Joel to a time after the fall of Jerusalem and into the Second Temple period, although this still encompasses a significant range of dates. Evidence adduced to support this period includes the lack of mention of a major enemy (i.e. Assyria or Babylon), the absence of a royal figure, and the commands for the community to gather

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[8] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 191.

[9] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 152–53. Kapelrud also considers the reference to Greeks in Joel 4:4–8, appealing to extra-biblical evidence to suggest points of contact between Mesopotamia and Greece that would have preceded the Babylonian captivity.

[10] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 191. He claims that the absence of a king "is not really decisive" in determining Joel's date of composition.

[11] Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 225–26. The question of whether or not the locusts are intended as literal or symbolic will be discussed in detail in the text analysis of Joel 1:1–14 and 2:1–11. For now, what is important is Stuart's reliance on a symbolic interpretation of the locust imagery in order to support his understanding of Joel's date of composition.

under priestly leadership which is thought to suggest a period of theocratic leadership.[12] Numerous commentators follow some variation of this line of argumentation, although most acknowledge that they cannot make this claim with a significant degree of certainty.[13]

Ahlström further considers the possibility that the rebuilt temple contained improper syncretistic elements against which Joel spoke, revealed in the prophet's sevenfold use of the phrase יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם or "YHWH your God" (Joel 1:14; 2:13, 14, 23, 26, 27; 4:17).[14] This would mean that Joel employs this suffix to separate YHWH from the other deities that may have crept into the community's worship practices. This concern, along with evidence drawn from lexical analysis, suggests to Ahlström a date between 515 and 505 B.C.E.[15] Taking a slightly different approach, some leverage the image of a city wall in Joel 2:1–11 to try to attribute Joel to the time of Nehemiah (c. 445 B.C.E.) and the completion of Jerusalem's wall.[16] This line of interpretation depends upon the assumption that the image of an invader breaching the city walls is most appropriate in a context where Jerusalem had functioning city walls.

Alongside these interpretations of Joel's imagery and language, some commentators rely more explicitly on extra-biblical data to support theories of Joel's

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[12] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 6.

[13] See Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 14; Allen, *Joel*, 24–25; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 6; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 24–25; Hubbard, *Joel*, 27. Representative of these assessments is Allen who states that, "This survey of the main chronological views and supporting arguments must leave the reader without a single clear impression."

[14] Ahlström, *Joel*, 27–28. The idea is that that title "YHWH your God," implies that there were other deities whom the community may have been worshipping alongside YHWH. Ahlström then suggests that this mild correction found in Joel develops into Malachi's full rebuke of improper priestly practices (Mal 1:11; 2:11, 13).

[15] Ahlström, *Joel*, 1–22, 129. Ahlström begins his monograph with a collection of word studies including יְעַבְּטוּן, מִנְחָה וָנֶסֶךְ, and הַשֶּׁלַח. The intention of these studies is to argue that these words do not necessarily indicate a late time of origin for the book of Joel. Instead, his understanding of an early post-exilic date remains a viable option.

[16] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 55. See Joel 2:7 and the description of the invading horde running over the top of the wall that fails to keep them at bay.

composition during the Second Temple period. Myers extrapolates a time of composition

from references to Greeks, Sabeans and their involvement in slave trading in Joel 4:4–8.[17]

He uses this passage to ground a detailed examination of the political and social situation

of the ancient world that focuses on the mostly likely points of contact between these

nations and Judah. He suggests that the right conditions for these events to occur would

have been around 520 B.C.E., at a time when "the devastated Judan (sic) territory was

more or less at the mercy of the neighboring states who had moved into the vacuum

created by the captivity and subsequent decline of the Neo-Babylonian Empire."[18]

Stephenson similarly approaches the question of Joel's date of composition

through extra-biblical material. He uses astronomical data to establish that solar eclipses

occurred in 357 and 366 B.C.E. He argues that they would have been the points of

reference for Joel's use of imagery concerning the darkening of heavenly bodies.[19]

Treves pushes the date of Joel into the Ptolemaic era, suggesting that the book's concern

with Egypt in Joel 4:19 reflects a time when Egypt's influence was in ascendance.[20]

Finally, the latest date proposed for Joel's composition is during the second century

B.C.E. Duhm is the primary proponent of this theory and he roots it in his understanding

of the dual nature of the book's composition in which Joel 2:17–4:21 and the references

to the day of YHWH in Joel 1:1–2:17 should be attributed to a Maccabean preacher who

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[17] Myers, "Date of Joel," 177–95. Myers' strongest arguments consist of his detailed research on various signs of Greek and Sabean presence in Palestine at the time of composition that he prefers, alongside research into the development of slave-trading in both cultures. He also reflects on Joel 2:9 and its mention of invaders running over a wall and he tries to demonstrate that this does not necessitate a date of composition during the time of Nehemiah since parts of the wall were likely to have remained standing even after the Babylonian assault (cf. 2 Kgs 25:10; 2 Chr 36:19; Jer 52:14). This argument, however, is not persuasive since the image of a divinely-authorized army breaching city walls does not need to have any particular correlation to the state of actual city walls at that time.

[18] Myers, "Date of Joel," 190.

[19] Stephenson, "Date," 229.

[20] Treves, "Date," 154.

attempted to recontextualize prophetic literature to serve his concerns regarding the day

of YHWH.[21]

Overall, none of the lines of argumentation articulated above has succeeded in

providing the final word in this debate. It is quite possible to award differing degrees of

significance to internal criteria such as the lack of mention of a royal figure, the mention

of a Temple, or the mention of outside nations. Further, such references are incredibly

difficult to unequivocally restrict to specific times and places as seen in the fact that the

absence of a royal figure in Joel is advanced as evidence of both the Josianic era as well

as the time after the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem.[22] Also, attempts to date the book

that proceed according to these arguments assume that the text is directly reflecting the

circumstances of its immediate socio-political surroundings. It is improbable, for

example, that every mention of convulsion or darkening of the heavenly bodies in

prophetic literature has an actual astronomical event behind it (cf. Jer 13:16; Amos 4:13,

5:8). The same holds true for the reference to the city wall in Joel 2:7–9 and perhaps even

the idea of a functioning Temple that undergirds the imagery of Joel 1:1–2:17.[23]

In summary, all of these different discussions regarding the date of Joel have not

yielded consensus, nor is there much probability of future agreement. Consequently,

further studies of Joel will either rehash the above-mentioned issues before settling on a

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[21] Duhm, *Israels Propheten*, 398. Duhm's theory and its significance will be discussed further in the following section on the debate over the unity of Joel's composition; cf. Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism*, 168.

[22] Allen, *Joel*, 19.

[23] Linville offers an apt perspective in which he argues that scholars are too quick to assign extra-textual reality to the images and metaphors contained within Joel. He concludes that the only Joel to whom later interpreters have access is the Joel revealed in the text of the prophetic book, which may or may not resonate with actual political and social settings in ancient Judah. Linville may tilt the balance too far in removing nearly every trace of historicity from the text, but his work offers a useful corrective to those trying to find a one to one correspondence between prophetic imagery and real world scenarios. See Linville, "Bugs," 283–98.

particular, contested date of composition, or they will adopt a different approach entirely

and leave aside such questions for the sake of reading the book of Joel as a received text.

Prinsloo offers the best synopsis of the situation, claiming that since, "it is virtually

impossible to date it exactly on the basis of its contents," the exegete must, "use the text

of Joel itself to the utmost to try and discover its actual message and intention."[24] As a

result, while the date of Joel is one of its enduring issues and merits review, this study is

unlikely to shed any new light on it. Instead, it will use the preceding survey to ground a

rhetorical approach that focuses on the persuasive strategies that the text employs,

without explicitly linking it to a specific time of composition.

The Unity of Joel

Closely related to the question of the date of Joel's composition is the question of

its compositional unity. Any cursory reading of the book will reveal that there is a

dramatic shift in the tenor of the book from Joel 1–2 to 3–4. Joel 1–2 is largely oriented

around the image of a locust plague that causes tremendous devastation and destruction.

Against this backdrop, the text interweaves images of the day of YHWH, military

invasion, and a call for divine mercy that finally culminates in a systematic reversal of the

preceding crises. Joel 3–4 on the other hand, seems to depart from the locust plague and

instead focuses upon the outpouring of the divine Spirit, YHWH's authority to judge all

nations, and a promise of future blessing for Judah and Jerusalem which is rooted in

YHWH's presence in Zion.

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[24] Prinsloo. *Theology*. 92.

The origin of the discussion of multiple authorship in Joel goes back to Vernes,

who proposed in 1872 that Joel 1–2 makes reference to a day of YHWH that preceded the

prophetic declaration, while Joel 3–4 looks ahead to a day of YHWH to come. For

Vernes, these different orientations indicate that there are different authors for the two

"halves" of the book. Vernes declares, "il est résulté pour nous la convinction très-nette

que nous avons affaire ici à deux oeuvres fort différentes...qui ne sauraient appartenir à

un même auteur."[25] Vernes specifically draws attention to the lack of mention of locusts,

drought, or agricultural crises in Joel 3–4 to suggest that these chapters must have a

different provenance.[26] He posits that the two parts of Joel were united later because they

both make use of the day of YHWH, even though they treat it quite differently.[27] This

proposal provides the foundation for further research into the text's compositional unity,

while adding a new layer to the already unresolved question of the book's date of

composition. Conceivably, the interpreter would need to locate temporally the

composition of the two halves, which may be separated by a period of centuries.

Following Vernes, the most influential theory of Joel's disunity comes from

Duhm. He differs from Vernes in that he locates the key point of disjunction in between

Joel 2:17 and 2:18, while also asserting that Joel 1:15, 2:1b–2a, 11b arose from the hand

that composed the latter half of the book.[28] This would also seem to be a logical point of

division since Joel 1:1–2:17 deals with the challenges and threats to the Judahite

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[25] Vernes, "Le peuple d'Israël," 47.

[26] Vernes, "Le peuple d'Israël," 49.

[27] Vernes, "Le peuple d'Israël," 51. "Du reste, la deuxième partie de Joël nous a semblé trahir une imitation assez directe des deux premières chapitres." Vernes then suggests that the author of Joel 3–4 composed it with the knowledge of what was contained in Joel 1–2.

[28] Significantly, the verses in Joel 1:1–2:17 that Duhm attributes to the creator of the latter half are the references to the day of YHWH. Duhm asserts that the reference to the day of YHWH in Joel 1:15 does not fit the context of the book and its appearance in Joel 2:11 does not fit the metrical scheme of the verse; Duhm, "Anmerkungen," 184–88.

community's existence, while Joel 2:18–4:21 offers resolution and restoration from both physical and spiritual threats through YHWH's intervention. Duhm essentially reduces the message of the "original" prophet to a call towards lament in the wake of a locust invasion and its ensuing agricultural disasters. Consequently, material that looks beyond the immediate horizon of the locusts must belong to a later layer of composition. Duhm attributes the day of YHWH material and the rest of Joel 3–4 to a synagogue preacher in the Maccabean era who was attempting to transform Joel's discussion of the locust plague into a harbinger of a coming eschatological event.[29]

The assertion that passages referring to the day of YHWH must have a late provenance is somewhat surprising given the broad range of reference to the day of YHWH in the Old Testament. Prophets as early as Amos employ the day of YHWH in a way that suggests it was a reasonably well-known concept from which prophets could draw (cf. Amos 5:18–20).[30] Consequently, it does not seem necessary to attribute the day of YHWH references in Joel 1:1–2:17 to later redactional activity. Further, efforts to separate the discussion of the day of YHWH from the description of the locust plague require a radical bifurcation between history and events in the natural world.[31] This does not adequately explain the scope of Joel since, "Joel has fused together the human and natural dimensions, the historical and cosmological dimensions into one complex day of

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[29] Duhm, "Anmerkungen," 187. He finds evidence for the Maccabean era in the mention of Greeks in Joel 4:4–8.

[30] This study will delve into the day of YHWH in greater detail when it talks about the rhetorical strategies of the passages that use the day of YHWH. See especially the discussion of the rhetorical strategy of Joel 1:15 since it also explores the origins and range of the day of YHWH motif.

[31] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 81. For Simkins' cogent argument on the false dichotomy between the historical and natural realms of the biblical world see especially Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 43–76. Instead, he argues for a fusion of these realms rooted in the creative activity of YHWH that guides both the cosmos and events in human history.

Yahweh which involves all creation."[32] In this view, the locust plague is a viable

harbinger of YHWH's action in the affairs of Judah and the nations. The devastation that

the text portrays creates an appropriate milieu for the prophet to announce the day of

YHWH.

Plöger offers a slightly different perspective by proposing a complex

compositional history for the book of Joel. He follows Duhm in positing that Joel reflects

a historical message related to a locust infestation that a later eschatological outlook

enlarges and embellishes.[33] He considers Joel 1:4–10 to be the kernel of the original

message, to which the day of YHWH references in Joel 2:1b, 2, 11 added a later

theological reflection.[34] The remainder of Joel 1–2, with its calls to cry out to YHWH,

shifts the focus of the text away from the in-breaking of the day of YHWH and towards

remedies mediated by the cult.[35] Plöger then asserts that the provenance of Joel 3–4 rests

with an eschatological group of outsiders opposed to the theocratic programme of Joel 1–

2. This group "retained their respect for the old prophetic word," which, "provoked

definite reactions, namely to hold fast to the eschatological meaning of certain parts of

the prophetic message."[36] In other words, Joel 3–4 reflects an attempt to resignify the

prophetic message of Joel 1–2 and to use it to paint a picture of eschatological hope when

YHWH chose to intervene in power.[37]

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[32] Simkins. *Yahweh's Activity*, 277.

[33] Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 97–106. Blenkinsopp essentially follows the same line of reasoning, claiming that Joel 3–4 reflects a later eschatologically driven interpretation of an actual locust plague in Joel 1–2; Blenkinsopp. *History of Prophecy*, 224.

[34] Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 98.

[35] Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 100.

[36] Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 100.

[37] Plöger is also unique in that he posits that this group added Joel 4 prior to the addition of Joel 3. In his reading, Joel 4 opens the door for Israel's eschatological rescue, while Joel 3 restricts it to those who believe in this eschatological hope; Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 103–04. This reading requires finding dissonance between the assertion in Joel 3:1 that YHWH will pour out the divine Spirit on "all

Plöger's theory of dispossessed outsider groups adding an eschatological tinge to a prophetic message has its critics. In particular, Cook disputes the sociological basis of Plöger's theory, suggesting that it is not only outside groups who adopt eschatological rhetoric.[38] Instead, he notes Joel's concern to draw the audience together, summoning different sub-groups in the first call to assemble in Joel 1:1–14, and commanding everyone from the oldest to the youngest to gather at the temple in Joel 2:15–17. Cook also points out the lack of animus towards the cult and its figures, since they are the ones who guide the community in crying out to YHWH.[39] Further, the statement that YHWH will give the divine Spirit to "all flesh" (כָּל־בָּשָׂר) suggests that the book is trying to maintain unity within its audience.[40] All of this successfully argues against the need to posit a disenchanted group that sought to reinterpret a prophetic message to suit its particular concerns.

Theories of Joel's multi-layered history of composition continue to persist into the present era. Barton takes Vernes and Duhm as the points of departure for his own analysis and focuses on the seemingly disjointed nature of Joel 3–4, which he sets in contrast to Joel 1–2 which "gives every impression of being well-ordered."[41] For Barton, Joel 1–2 consists of two parallel cycles of oracles reflecting on a current dire situation and calling for the audience to cry out to YHWH (Joel 1:2–20; 2:1–17). This cycle concludes with a declaration that YHWH heeds such cries and acts salvifically (Joel

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flesh," and the statement that everyone "who calls on the name of YHWH" will be saved in Joel 3:5. See Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 169.

[38] Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 56–83. This chapter is a cross-cultural examination of eschatologically oriented groups who exist in central positions in their respective societies.

[39] Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 207.

[40] This study will return to the subject of the range intended by the phrase כָּל־בָּשָׂר in its rhetorical analysis of Joel 3:1–5, but it states here that at the minimum the phrase encompasses the entire Judahite community.

[41] Barton, *Joel*, 13.

2:18–27).[42] Joel 3–4, however, appears to reflect a different world with prophetic oracles

that reflect on YHWH's judgment of the nations and the future for Judah and

Jerusalem.[43] Consequently, Barton divides Joel 3–4 into individual pericopes which he

examines independently of one another.

In contrast to suggestions of a fragmented compositional history, there are also

many defenders of Joel's essential literary unity, stretching back to Dennefeld. Dennefeld

responds to Vernes' distinction between the two days of YHWH, suggesting instead that

the locusts in Joel 1–2 serve as forerunners of a coming day of YHWH which is

introduced in Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11 and described in detail in Joel 3–4.[44] He notes that the

proposed victims of the day of YHWH differ between Joel 1–2 (Judah) and Joel 3–4 (the

nations), but there is no necessary contradiction there since the prophetic narrative

provides an opportunity for Judah to return to YHWH and escape in Joel 2:12–14.[45] He

further demonstrates congruence throughout the book in stylistic matters, including

allusion to other texts which permits him to conclude that, "La prétendue contradiction

entre la première et la seconde partie, en particulier entre quelques versets et le reste de la

première partie, n'éxiste pas."[46] Dennefeld's thorough and detailed work provides a solid

scholarly foundation for defending Joel's compositional unity.

Those following in Dennefeld's wake have contributed to make the compositional

unity of Joel the majority view.[47] Kapelrud derives the unity of the book from its

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[42] Barton, *Joel*, 13.
[43] Barton, *Joel*, 27–28.
[44] Dennefeld, "Les problèmes," 555–75.
[45] Dennefeld, "Les problèmes," 562.
[46] Dennefeld, "Les problèmes," 575.
[47] See the brief discussion in Coggins, "Joel," 93–94.

resonances with cultic laments followed by divine responses from YHWH.[48] Kapelrud

further takes issue with Duhm's insistence that the day of YHWH references in Joel 1:1–

2:17 must be later insertions. Kapelrud asserts that the day of YHWH references are

appropriate to their contexts as the prophet attempts to take the occurrence of a locust

plague and use it as a harbinger of the forthcoming day.[49] He appeals to the long history

of the day of YHWH tradition to suggest that it would be appropriate for the prophet to

refer to it, convincingly arguing that the day of YHWH does not have to be a later

eschatological interpolation. This work deftly traces the movements within the book,

from the description of devastation and warning of further disaster to divine promises of

restoration that effectively reverse the threats articulated in previous pericopes.[50]

Another approach to defending the literary unity of Joel comes from Wolff.

Similar to Duhm, Wolff notes the abrupt transition between Joel 2:17 and 2:18, but

argues that the same author is at work in both halves.[51] Instead, he constructs a

symmetrical structure for the book where the same issues recur in both parts. These

include: i) the lament of agricultural scarcity in Joel 1:4–20 which Joel 2:21–27 reverses,

ii) the announcement of imminent eschatological catastrophe for Jerusalem in Joel 2:1–11

which turns to an announcement of security and salvation in Joel 4:1–3, 9–17, and iii) the

call to return to YHWH in Joel 2:12–17 which YHWH seems to answer in the affirmative

[48] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 9. Ahlström appropriately nuances the identification of Joel as lament by stating that it bears resemblances to the style of a lament and perhaps reflects a situation in which a lament should be offered up to YHWH in hopes of redress: Ahlström, *Joel*, 130–31. The connection between Joel and lament reappears in Ogden's work in which he portrays the four oracles in Joel 4 (4:1–3, 4–8, 9–17, 18–21) as prophetic responses indicating that earlier pleas to YHWH will lead to Judah's restoration and salvation from foreign enemies: Ogden, "Joel 4," 97–106.
[49] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 178. Kapelrud claims that, "This is the core of Joel's message, and it is incomprehensible that critics could delete it."
[50] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 178–79.
[51] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 7.

in the pouring out of the divine Spirit in Joel 3:1–5.[52] Consequently, since Joel 1:1–2:17

mirrors the concerns of Joel 2:18–4:21, it is appropriate to consider the book to be an

integrated literary composition.

This breakdown of Joel's structure is not without its difficulties, specifically its

insistence that Joel 2:1–11 references a different kind of crisis than Joel 1:1–20.[53]

However, Wolff's identification of crises in Joel 1:1–2:17 that YHWH addresses and

redresses in Joel 2:18–4:21 is helpful for demonstrating the integrated nature of the

subject material in this book. This work provides the foundation upon which others

propose similar understandings of Joel's structure.[54]

Prinsloo adopts a different approach in arguing for the unity of Joel's composition

by denying that there is a radical bifurcation between the two proposed halves of the

book. Instead, he puts forward a theory that each passage within the book refers to

preceding passages through lexical and thematic repetitions. Consequently, the governing

structure of the book is that of a *Steigerung* that builds towards the book's climax.[55] This

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[52] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 7. Notably, Joel 2:18–20, 4:4–8 and 4:18–21 are absent from this symmetrical scheme, because Wolff considers them to be redactional additions. Prinsloo aptly notes that Joel 2:19 and 4:18–21 also point powerfully to the end of the lack of sustenance which renders troubling their excision from Wolff's structure; Prinsloo, "Unity," 73.

[53] See the discussion of rhetorical strategy in Joel 2:1–11 for further critique of Wolff's understanding of this passage. Essentially, it will be argued that the text is reusing the imagery of the locust invasion to set up YHWH's turn against Jerusalem, rather than pointing towards an eschatological event.

[54] See Ahlström, *Joel*, 135. Ahlström refers to the "correlative" nature of Joel's structure where the second part of the book reverses every facet of the negative fate prophesied for Judah and Jerusalem in the first part. Also, Allen modifies Wolff's theory so that Joel 4:4–8 also has a parallel to a previous section of the book (Joel 2:21–23); Allen, *Joel*, 28. Garrett goes to the greatest lengths in constructing a symmetrical understanding of the book, proposing that Joel contains a "double-hinge" structure where two overlapping chiasms have their hinge points at 2:17/18 and 2:27/3:1. The first chiasm covers Joel 1:1–2:27, while the second stretches from 2:20–4:21. The first consists of two elements of punishment (A. 1:1–20; B. 2:1–11), two elements of forgiveness (A'. 2:20, B.' 2:21-27) with a middle point of repentance plus a transition to YHWH's response (C. 2:12–17, plus 2:18–19). The second chiasm consists of "outer" passages of judgment (A. 2:20, A.' 4:1-21) and "inner" passages of grace (B. 2:21–27, B'. 3:1–5); Garrett, "Structure," 289–97. Garrett stretches the boundaries of what should be considered a chiasm farther than is likely with the lopsided nature of certain elements in his structural proposal. See Boda, "Chiasmus," 56–57.

[55] See Prinsloo, "Unity," 66–81.

is especially notable in his discussions of the passages where other interpreters find the greatest disjunction. In Joel 2:18–27 Prinsloo identifies a close connection between the plea of the people not to be given into reproach in Joel 2:17 (וְאַל־תִּתֵּן נַחֲלָתְךָ לְחֶרְפָּה) and YHWH's declaration in Joel 2:19 that this will not occur (וְלֹא־אֶתֵּן אֶתְכֶם עוֹד חֶרְפָּה בַּגּוֹיִם).[56] Similarly, in Joel 3:1–5 he draws attention to the introductory phrase (וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן) which he views as an interpretation of the *waw*-consecutive phrases that commence Joel 2:18.[57] After the material restoration of Joel 2:18–27 spiritual restoration follows in Joel 3:1–5. While this study will not follow Prinsloo's structural divisions precisely, the way in which he identifies points of continuity that stretch across significant points of apparent disjunction is helpful in tracing the flow of Joel's prophetic message.

Moving beyond the various proposals for Joel's structure, it is important to realize that the use and reuse of similar lexemes, images, and themes throughout the book are key features upon which numerous commentators rely. The day of YHWH is a key *Leitmotiv* that occurs throughout the book and requires reflection as the nature of this day develops.[58] Further, Joel 2:27 and 4:17 both use the same statement of knowing that YHWH is God based on divine actions on Judah's behalf. Other images that span this prophetic book include that of the "nations" (גּוֹיִם) who invade and destroy the land. The idea of an invading nation first appears in Joel 1:6 as a metaphor for locusts. It then recurs in Joel 4:12 where YHWH summons the nations to a place of judgment. Joel 2:11

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[56] Prinsloo, "Unity," 78.
[57] Prinsloo, "Unity," 79.
[58] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 47. Identifying the day of YHWH as a signal of literary unity presumes that mentions of this day in Joel 1–2 are not later redactional insertions. See the discussion of this issue above.

describes the strength of YHWH's army and the terrifying nature of the day of YHWH when YHWH speaks and leads an assault against Zion. The image of YHWH's voice reoccurs in Joel 4:16, this time promising sanctuary for those who dwell in Zion since YHWH is in their midst.[59] Similarly, images of agricultural fertility and its lack permeate the entire book (Joel 1:5, 11; 2:22; 4:13, 18).[60] Overall, the lexical correspondences that span the length of Joel provide evidence of its unity.

In summary, the weight of the arguments concerning Joel's composition seems to fall on the side of those who consider it as a unified work. Coggins may be correct to claim that the unity of the book is unlikely to return to the forefront of Joel studies, but it has been undoubtedly one of the most significant issues in the history of research.[61] This particular study does not propose to directly re-examine the question of compositional unity from a historical perspective, but it will speak to the issue by working through the rhetorical structure and strategies that Joel employs. By identifying the strategies through which Joel communicates a persuasive message, this study buttresses those arguments that consider Joel to be a unified composition.

Joel and the Book of the Twelve

A more recent development in the discussion of Joel concerns its relationship to the burgeoning field of studies into the "Book of the Twelve." This term refers to the twelve Minor Prophets, a corpus which has been transmitted on a single scroll and

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[59] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 8.
[60] Ahlström, *Joel*, 133. This study will examine the rhetorical effects of such reuse of imagery in detailed studies of the appropriate passages. Thompson also provides a thorough list of lexical and thematic repetitions throughout the book and argues that these are a signal of the book's literary unity; Thompson, "Repetition," 108.
[61] Coggins, "Joel," 94.

considered as a single literary collection.[62] In recent years scholars have taken an interest

in this collection as a literary corpus and examined evidence of intentional shaping in the

collection. This is a development from previous scholarly projects which tended to focus

on stripping away extraneous material to get to the "authentic" prophetic kernel of each

book.[63] Exploring the Book of the Twelve as a collection may have the potential to open

up new avenues of interpretation through consideration of how the books within the

corpus interact with each other.[64] The existence of the Book of the Twelve and the

competing theories of its composition are not at the heart of this study, but the debate

surrounding the composition of the Book of the Twelve does raise certain issues that

affect the way in which one would approach a study of the rhetoric of Joel. Specifically,

the debate surrounding the Book of the Twelve casts doubt as to whether one ought to

interpret an individual book within the corpus as its own discrete literary unit. The

following survey engages the literature surrounding the Book of the Twelve and provides

a foundation for the reading strategy that this study adopts.

The most significant theory concerning the composition of the Book of the

Twelve that relates to this study is Nogalski's work on an apparent "catchword" (or

Stichwort) phenomenon that links the various books within the corpus. He locates

keywords at the end of each prophetic book within the corpus that appear to recur at the

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[62] For further detail on the Book of the Twelve as a corpus, see, Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 2–3; Jones, *Formation*, 1–13; Fuller, "Form and Formation," 86–101; Redditt, "Production and Reading," 11–33; Schneider, "Unity," 235–41. Redditt notes that the idea of the Minor Prophets as a single volume stretches back to 200 B.C.E. and Jesus Ben Sira who mentions the Twelve alongside Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Sir 49:10); Redditt, "Production and Reading," 14.

[63] Coggins refers to the preponderance of this project by declaring, "we have all come to be disciples of, shall we say, Bernard Duhm, and the tradition that he exemplifies," Coggins, "Minor Prophets," 58.

[64] Coggins, "Minor Prophets," 65–68. Coggins organizes the trajectory of the Book of the Twelve around the themes of Israel in relation to foreign powers and the attitude towards cultic worship.

beginning of the subsequent book.[65] These keywords provide the reading logic for the broader corpus, helping the reader to keep the former book in mind when transitioning into the next book in the corpus. Applying this approach to Joel, Nogalski compares Hos 14:5–10 with Joel 1:1–12, noting shared vocabulary that includes the words inhabitants (יֹשְׁבֵי), grain (דָּגָן), wine (יַיִן), and vine (גֶּפֶן).[66] On the other end, the catchwords connecting Joel 4:1–21 and Amos 1:1–2:16 include the shared declaration of YHWH's roar (Joel 4:16; Amos 1:2) as well as names of foreign nations against whom YHWH moves (Tyre, Philistia, Edom) and Zion and Jerusalem.[67] As will be discussed in a later chapter, the way in which Nogalski uses these catchwords to integrate the contexts of prophetic books within the Twelve has significant ramifications for how the interpreter approaches an issue like the prophetic call to return to YHWH in Joel 2:12–17.[68]

Beyond the proposed existence of catchwords, Nogalski summarizes other lines of inquiry that have led to a consensus concerning the Book of the Twelve as a redactional literary composition. These include most significantly the priority of the Masoretic sequence of books over other possibilities.[69] Establishing the priority of the

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[65] See the collection of catchwords that he gathers at Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 21–58.

[66] Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 21–23.

[67] Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 24–27. There is some variation in these catchwords since Joel 4:4 employs a generic "regions of Philistia," while Amos 1:7–8 mentions specific cities including Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron, before using a blanket term "remnant of the Philistines," as a summary statement.

[68] Other theories concerning the composition of the Book of the Twelve differ in the number of redactional layers that can be found within the corpus. Schart posits several additional redactional layers including one that combined Hosea–Amos, followed by a four book collection that included Micah and Zephaniah. The four book layer presented a theological message that transgressions were perceived as directed against YHWH and that Israel's problems were a result of falling away from Israel's core identity as established in the exodus. The following layer added Nahum and Habakkuk, followed by a layer comprised of Haggai and Zech 1–8. This led to the addition of Joel, Obadiah and Zech 9–14, which was oriented around passages concerning the day of YHWH. Finally the satirical narrative of Jonah and the book of Malachi completed the corpus; Schart, "Reconstructing," 42–46; Schart, *Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*, 304–06.

[69] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 12. The third line of inquiry that Nogalski notes is the proposed existence and transmission of two literary units within the broader book of the Twelve: i) Hosea—Amos—Micah—Zephaniah; ii) Haggai—Zech 1–8.

Masoretic sequence is significant since Nogalski's catchword connections only work if the prophetic books are arranged in this way. The Masoretic sequence is compared to that of the Septuagint which lists the first six books in a variant order and one Qumran manuscript that seems to have Jonah in the final position of the Book of the Twelve.[70] Joel's location in these different sequences is significant since it shifts from second to fourth position (following Micah) in the LXX tradition. This shift is attributed to the intention of the LXX editors to preserve older prophetic writings at the beginning of the collection.[71]

The priority of the Masoretic order in the Book of the Twelve is not an entirely closed question. Jones makes the opposite case, suggesting that Joel and Obadiah were crafted specially to bridge the gap between the judgments against Israel in Hosea-Amos-Micah and the announcements of judgment against foreign nations in Nahum and Habakkuk.[72] In this understanding, the LXX sequence would have temporal priority. Although his conclusion does not appear to have been widely adopted, Jones' work at least indicates that there is credence to a dissenting view. It is not in the purview of this study to resolve the issue of canonical priority, but this issue does raise interesting questions concerning the role of Joel in the proposed Book of the Twelve. Nogalski may be correct in asserting that arguments for the priority of the LXX sequence have not succeeded in swaying the consensus, but the presence of varying sequences should at

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[70] The LXX order of the Minor Prophets is Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. The scroll 4QXII[a] may preserve an order in which Jonah follows Malachi. See Fuller, "Form and Formation," 95–97; Jones, *Formation*, 223.

[71] Schneider, *Unity*, 223–26. Schneider differentiates the LXX order from the Masoretic order by claiming that the former is determined by chronology while the latter is determined by context. See also Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 2–3.

[72] Jones, *Formation*, 239–41.

least lend some caution to approaches to unifying the Book of the Twelve that depend on all of the books remaining in their Masoretic location.[73]

Interestingly, scholars further supplement the work on proposed redactional layers with synchronic and literary studies of the Book of the Twelve. Joel plays a significant role in many of these studies. For example, Sweeney proposes that Joel in its present location in the Masoretic text balances out Hosea in presenting the program of the Book of the Twelve. Whereas Hosea is concerned with the dissolution of the relationship between YHWH and Israel, Joel shifts the concern to the fate of unnamed nations who threaten God's people.[74] Rendtorff traces the use of the day of YHWH throughout the collection, proposing that it is a dominating theme that helps unify the Book of the Twelve.[75] Again, Joel plays a vital role, presenting the day of YHWH as something for YHWH's people to fear (cf. Amos 5:18–20; Zeph 1:4–7, 14–16), as well as a potential signal of divine restoration through judgment on foreign nations (cf. Obad 15–21; Zeph 2:1–9).

Nogalski goes even further and proposes that Joel is the "literary anchor" of a synchronic reading of the collection since Joel's introduction mirrors the conclusion of Hosea by calling the audience to repentance, while Joel's final chapter mirrors the beginning of Amos by threatening judgment against foreign nations.[76] Further, the language of agricultural fertility in Joel 1–2 (cf. the triad of "grain, wine, and oil," in Joel

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[73] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 13.

[74] Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation," 59. Sweeney also contrasts Joel's position in the Masoretic order with the sequence of the Septuagint. In the Septuagint, the first three books focus heavily on the fate of Israel, before Joel interjects and shifts the scene towards Judah and Jerusalem; Sweeney, "Place and Function," 592.

[75] Rendtorff, "Theological Unity," 75–87.

[76] Nogalski, "Joel as 'Literary Anchor,'" 92. See the discussion of rhetorical strategy in Joel 2:12–17 that considers whether Nogalski is correct to import guilt from Hosea into Joel.

1:10; 2:19; 2:24) occurs in other locations in the Twelve, suggesting its significance in

drawing the corpus together (cf. Hos 2:23–25; Amos 4:9; Hag 1:10–11; 2:9).[77] Nogalski

proposes that Joel transcends the chronological context, explaining why events in later

books within the sequence of the Twelve happened as they did and grounding hope of

restoration in the call to return to YHWH.[78] This synchronic examination of Joel runs

counter to typical diachronic approaches in that it reverses the lines of literary

dependence and is also noticeably dependent on the sequence of the Masoretic text to

provide meaning for this reading.

The idea of a Book of the Twelve and theories related to its composition and

coherence have not gone unchallenged. One stream of criticism claims that Nogalski's

use of catchwords adopts too narrow of a focus in concentrating on the beginnings and

endings of prophetic books in relationship with the books that surround them. Coggins,

for example, points out several stark examples of thematic and linguistic connections

between Joel and other prophetic books that do not immediately precede or follow it.

These include Joel 1:15 and Isa 13:6 and Joel 4:10 with Isa 2:4 which are clearly in

conversation with each other.[79] Similarly, Isa 24:7 shares significant vocabulary relating

to lamentation of agricultural produce with Joel 1:10, 12, which opens up the question of

why the proposed sequential linkages between the books of this corpus should be

elevated to a privileged position.

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[77] Nogalski, "Joel as 'Literary Anchor,'" 102–04.

[78] Nogalski, "Joel as 'Literary Anchor,'" 107. Nogalski provides an extended list of examples which includes Nahum affirming that YHWH punishes the guilty (Nah 1:3) while comparing Assyria and Babylon to locusts (Nah 3:15–17). Further, Zephaniah draws on day of YHWH sayings first found in Joel to threaten disobedient Judah.

[79] Coggins, "Innerbiblical," 77–78. Mason also notes the "almost identical verbal parallels," before detailing how the two passages differ in their targets; Mason, Zephaniah, 117. Isaiah 13:6 describes the Divine Warrior's activity in defeating Babylon, while Joel 1:15 points to the devastation that the locusts wreak over the Judean countryside.

Another critique leveled against the catchword phenomenon concerns the criteria

for identifying such words. Specifically, the proposed catchwords linking Hosea and Joel

are called into question. Ben Zvi incisively notes that words like inhabitants (יֹשְׁבֵי), grain

(דָּגָן), wine (יַיִן), and vine (גֶּפֶן) are relatively common words and that it would almost

require a reader to be anticipating a connection in order for such catchwords to be noticed

and catalogued.[80] As mentioned above, words describing agricultural bounty or its lack

are found throughout the Book of the Twelve. The focus on catchwords also requires

diminishing the significance of the unique conclusion of Hos 14:10 and the introductory

phrase in Joel 1:1 which both admirably serve the purpose of marking the boundaries of

discrete literary units. Consequently, one can question whether the readers of Joel

necessarily have to import the conclusion of Hosea into their understanding of the

situation underlying that prophetic text.

Another line of critique directed against Nogalski's work challenges the viability

of the idea of the Book of the Twelve more broadly. Petersen questions how one could

examine twelve prophetic texts as an individual literary oeuvre and suggests instead that

the Book of the Twelve is a thematized anthology oriented around the idea of the day of

YHWH.[81] This permits the interpreter to examine thematic overlap between the

individual books without importing complex theories of composition and redaction. Ben

[80] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 87–89. Coggins follows Ben Zvi and asserts that the commonality of the supposed catchwords significantly diminishes their probative value: Coggins, "Joel," 90. Jones offers a similar critique of the catchword connection between Micah and Nahum, noting that many of the words occur over a hundred times in the Old Testament. The word list includes, "anger," "sea," "mountain," "rivers," and "hand." Again, Jones calls into question the value of developing redactional linkages between books based on common words; Jones, *Formation*, 38.
[81] Petersen, "Book of the Twelve?" 9–10. Petersen grounds the idea of thematic coherence as the underlying feature of the Book of the Twelve with a similar understanding of the "Major" Prophets. He suggests that the focal theme for Isaiah is Zion, for Jeremiah it is the rhetoric of lament and for Ezekiel it is the glory of God. Landy adroitly points out that one potential weakness of viewing the day of YHWH as the primary unifying theme of the Book of the Twelve is that there is no explicit reference to it Hosea and Zechariah, the two largest books of the collection; Landy, "Three Sides of a Coin," para 19.

Zvi goes even further than Petersen and disputes the usefulness of employing the title

"Book of the Twelve." Ben Zvi goes to significant effort to demonstrate the

appropriateness of reading each individual book of the Minor Prophets apart from the

broader context of the proposed Book of the Twelve.

Ben Zvi's orientation is towards ancient readers of the prophetic texts, whom he

argues would not instinctively read across the superscriptions, incipits, and other signals

that mark the introduction of individual prophetic books.[82] He claims that ancient readers

used the material to interact imaginatively with the personas of the prophets, who are

symbolically brought to life within their respective books.[83] Consequently, the Minor

Prophets speak with twelve different voices, all of whom have unique contributions to

make. Ben Zvi compares the examination of such reading communities to contemporary

synchronic approaches to the text and claims that they would not be likely to work

through proposed layers of redaction and editing in order to try to understand the

prophetic books as a single collection.[84] Ben Zvi specifically notes that there is no

superscription or incipit denoting a collection called the "Book of the Twelve." Instead,

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[82] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 58. Sweeney also captures this sentiment nicely when he declares, "No other superscription appears until the following book...The superscription marks the book of Joel as a discrete unit within the book of the Twelve." Sweeney, "Place and Function," 576.

[83] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 80–83.

[84] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 58–60. Ben Zvi asserts that the individual texts do not contain explicit statements identifying the different redactional layers and that the readers would be willing to accept that implied authors of prophetic books could use different styles and literary forms within a single body of literature. Consequently, the supposed redactional seams are less apparent than one might think. This line of argumentation bears some resemblance to Barton's "trick of the disappearing redactor," where the more one shows that a redactor seamlessly integrates bodies of text, the less one has need of that redactor to interpret the text; Barton, *Reading*, 159. In a literarily-focused reading of the text, however, the supposed disappearance of such a redactor is not especially troubling since the ability to read the text as a discrete unit is the primary concern.

the superscriptions and incipits are limited to individual books which would seem to

provide strong indications that they ought to be read as discrete literary units.[85]

Ben Zvi also goes to great length to establish the idea of a prophetic book as a

self-contained literary unit, offering the following definition:

> a self-contained written text that was produced within ancient Israel, and
> characterized by a clear beginning and conclusion, by a substantial level of
> textual coherence and of textually inscribed distinctiveness vis-à-vis other
> books, and that, accordingly, leads its intended and primary readers (and
> re-readers) to approach it in a manner that takes into account this
> distinctiveness.[86]

This definition highlights the features of individual books within the broader corpus of

the proposed Book of the Twelve, noting specifically how each book has introductory

and concluding signals and how each book establishes a unique literary and rhetorical

situation into which it speaks. These concluding signals include what Ben Zvi terms

"unique expressions," that provide a delimitation of each book as well as a signal of the

book's particular choice of expression in comparison with other books in the collection

(cf. Hos 14:10; Joel 4:21; Amos 9:15; Obad 21; Mic 7:20; Zech 14:21).[87] For example,

Ben Zvi takes issue with Nogalski's assertion that Hosea ends and Joel begins with a call

to repentance (Hos 14:1–8; Joel 1:1–2:17). Instead, Hosea actually concludes in Hos

14:10 with a unique statement calling on its readers to reflect wisely on what has been

said, while Joel commences with a superscription that associates the book with a different

prophetic figure than Hosea.[88] Ben Zvi thus highlights points of distinction within

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[85] Nogalski rightly notes that the Pentateuch does not have an overall title, yet few would dispute the interconnected nature of those books. Ben Zvi appropriately counters with an appeal to the nature of prophetic literature, suggesting that titles and incipits place the books of the Minor Prophets on the same literary level as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. See Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 16, 73–75.
[86] Ben Zvi, "Prophetic Book," 279–80.
[87] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 78.
[88] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 87.

individual prophetic books and argues that the readers would be likely to pay attention to their individualized settings.[89] This concern for the uniqueness of each prophetic book within the collection should guide further study.

Most recently, Landy addresses the debate on the nature of the Book of the Twelve, looking specifically to the contrasting views of Nogalski and Ben Zvi. Landy uses Nogalski and Ben Zvi's co-authored book, *Two Sides of a Coin: Juxtaposing Views on Interpreting the Book of the Twelve / the Twelve Prophetic Books*, as the point of departure and offers several thoughts worthy of exploration. Landy approaches the debate from a literary perspective which resonates closely with the concerns of this research project. Landy's first notable contribution concerns his analysis of the features of coherence and contrast within the Book of the Twelve. He suggests that it is incredibly difficult to find poetic unity across the Book of the Twelve since readers have to overcome the disjunctive effects of superscriptions as well as the "powerful internal coherence" of each respective book.[90] Landy also takes issue with theories of thematic coherence across different prophetic books, claiming that it is difficult to conceive of a biblical book that is *not* concerned with, "the fertility of the land, the fate of God's people, and the theodicy problem."[91] Consequently, the threshold of what an interpreter ought to consider as a shared prophetic theme probably needs to be raised.

Further, Landy notes the tension between theories of redactional layering and poetic imagination. Essentially, if one is concerned with identifying the nature and agenda of each proposed layer of redactional shaping, it is possible to sublimate the

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[89] Ben Zvi. "Prophetic Book," 287.
[90] Landy. "Three Sides of a Coin," para 17.
[91] Landy. "Three Sides of a Coin," para 19. See also Nogalski's claim that the concerns of the Book of the Twelve closely mirror those of Isaiah; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 280.

artistic interplay of nuanced arguments and disjunctive elements. While denying neither poetic creativity nor redactional activity, Landy locates himself towards the poetic end of the spectrum, raising the apt question concerning how the work of redactors, "came to be universally accepted, and how they concealed themselves so thoroughly (and yet, according to redaction critics so transparently) in the text."[92] While redactional work on the Minor Prophets continues apace, the injunction to experience the uniqueness and the fragmented nature of the twelve prophetic books provides a much needed counterbalance.

In summary, while there appears to be sufficient thematic coherence and linguistic overlap for continued research into the Minor Prophets as a redactionally shaped collection called the Book of the Twelve, it is an equally appropriate reading strategy to consider the individual books within the collection and to examine their composition and specific nuances of meaning. Effectively, one's perspective on the unity and interrelationship between the individual books of the Minor Prophets is in large part shaped by the reading strategy that one adopts.[93] This research project relies on the foundation that Ben Zvi and Landy establish and examines Joel as a literary whole in its own right. This does not deny the existence of redactional processes within Joel and the broader corpus of the Minor Prophets, nor does it preclude examination of citations, allusions, and re-interpretations of other biblical texts. This approach, however, intends to root the interpretive process in the text of Joel as a creative, poetic, and rhetorically powerful literary unit.

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[92] Landy, "Three Sides of a Coin," para 20.
[93] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 64. Note Ben Zvi's assertion that if one begins from the hypothesis that the Book of the Twelve is a redactional unit, one is likely to discover, "structures, macrostructures, general themes and other markers of textual coherence."

Reading Joel

In recent years, several important studies dealing with literary and reader-oriented

perspectives on prophetic literature have emerged that include Joel in the conversation.

These studies are relevant to this project since they concern the effects of reading the text

as a literary whole. Conrad borrows terminology from Umberto Eco's semiotic theory

and proposes that prophetic books encode information that a Model Reader should have

the capacity to comprehend.[94] For prophetic books, Conrad suggests that their openings

and superscriptions provide the key coded information that unlocks how the reader ought

to approach them.[95] He divides prophetic books into three forms, based on the opening

words of Isaiah (חֲזוֹן), Jeremiah (דִּבְרֵי), and Ezekiel (וַיְהִי). He suggests that characteristics

of prophetic books that follow the Isaianic code include diminishing the character of the

prophet and inaugurating a period of waiting for the promised restoration to come.[96] In

contrast, prophetic books that follow the Jeremianic pattern are about words from the

outside being brought into cultic reality, while prophetic books in the Ezekielian pattern

are more narrative in scope, fitting in with the introductory וַיְהִי.[97]

Conrad's attempt to apply Eco's literary theory encounters serious difficulties in

its consideration of Joel's role within the broader scheme of prophetic literature. Conrad

classifies Joel as a vision (חֲזוֹן) in the manner of Isaiah even through the word חֲזוֹן never

appears in Joel. He defends this classification on the grounds that like Isa 1:2, Joel 1:2

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[94] Eco's summation of the task states that, "the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author thus has to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them." Eco, *Role of the Reader*, 7.

[95] Conrad, "Forming the Twelve," 96.

[96] Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets*, 242.

[97] Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets*, 159, 180.

commences the prophetic discourse with a call to hear.[98] This is especially problematic

considering the actual opening of Joel which states that this book is the word of YHWH

to Joel (דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־יוֹאֵל). This opening seems to more closely resemble the

opening that Conrad attributes to Jeremiah and Amos (Jer 1:1 דִּבְרֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ; Amos 1:1 דִּבְרֵי

עָמוֹס). The parallel is not exact since Joel's opening attributes the prophetic "word" to

YHWH, mediated through the prophet Joel. Jeremiah 1:2, however, closely resembles

Joel since it also indicates that Jeremiah is receiving the word of YHWH (אֲשֶׁר הָיָה

דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו). Given the similarities to Jeremiah, if Conrad's argument is that Model

Readers will be able to decode correctly the nature of prophetic books based on their

opening lexical choices, it would seem that Joel's code is rather confusing. The Model

Reader has to ignore the initial verse, which supposedly provides the key to the code, and

instead look down to the next verse.

Other studies that focus on the reading of Joel employ the literary-critical

discipline of intertextuality.[99] Prophetic literature would seem to offer fertile ground for

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[98] Conrad, *Forming the Twelve*, 100–01; cf. also Mic 1:1–2.

[99] Intertextuality is distinguished here from what Strazicich describes as "source and influence" studies which approach interrelated texts with the primary objective of determining what texts were used in constructing the text being examined; Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 6–7. Bergler is probably the most accomplished exemplar of the "source and influence" approach in Joel studies. See Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret*. He argues that the prophet combined poems concerning drought and enemy invasion with allusions and themes from other biblical sources to proclaim a new message (p. 28). Joel's primary function is that of a *Schriftinterpret* who appropriates previous biblical texts and reapplies them in a new context. Bergler suggests that Joel's purpose in reincorporating sacred texts was to indicate that divine promises had not failed and were still in the process of coming to fruition, claiming that "Keines der Worte der Alten is dahingefallen" (p. 29). This perspective is linked to a socio-temporal location of Joel in a time where prophetic declarations were waning while linking one's material with established prophecies appeared to provide a means of authentication. Key to Bergler's approach is the identification of Joel's allusion to the Egyptian plagues, especially those involving blood, darkness and locusts. While Joel does not explicitly cite these passages, Bergler argues that they resonate in the background, informing the prophetic portrayal of the present situation. For example, Bergler finds a parallel between the description in Exod 10:14 of the innumerable locusts and the fourfold synonyms for locusts used in Joel 1:4, which also suggests a vast quantity (p. 272–76). Bergler's identification of scriptural parallels is debatable in certain instances, but his detailed examination of Joel's use of scriptural traditions establishes a useful point of departure for further research.

this approach since it often seems to be in conversation with other texts.[100] The

unpublished dissertation of Kathryn Kit-King Leung adopts this approach and focuses

specifically on how intertextuality helps to explain Joel's use of the day of YHWH motif.

She works from a definition of intertextuality as a reader-oriented approach that seeks to

find relationships between the studied text and others, which may chronologically

precede or follow it.[101] Notably, Leung attempts to rein in some of the perceived excesses

of intertextuality by claiming that intertextuality discovered by the reader needs to cohere

with the intertextuality intended by the author, while maintaining a temporal perspective

in which "prior texts" contribute to the meaning of the passages being studied.[102] Leung

further reflects on the challenges of bringing synchronic and diachronic sensibilities to

intertextual studies, noting that it is difficult to completely sever ties to diachronic

approaches when one wants to speak of a text reading an antecedent text.[103]

The majority of Leung's work considers Joel's use of covenant, theophany and

holy war motifs in the broader picture of the text's development of the day of YHWH.

She detects lexical and structural resonances to other passages which suggest that Joel

invokes these ancient traditions in order to construct the meaning of the prophetic

message.[104] The consideration of lexical references is shared by most commentaries on

Joel, which often point out the number of apparent allusions and references to other

texts.[105] This leads to lengthy consideration of the structure and form of the texts to which

[100] Speaking of the strategies that biblical prophets employ, Jemielity eloquently writes that "they allude, they repeat, they use and invert established patterns, they invoke the authority of earlier prophets—in short, they constantly employ the language of the past to strengthen their present position," Jemielity, *Satire*, 171–72.
[101] Leung, "Intertextual," 16. Leung derives this definition from Miller, "Intertextual Identity," 30.
[102] Leung, "Intertextual," 17.
[103] Leung, "Intertextual," 39.
[104] Leung, "Intertextual," 270.
[105] For example, see the lists in Coggins, *Joel*, 21; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 27–28.

Joel refers since she attempts to construct fully the meaning of those texts before

discussing their appropriation in Joel.[106] Overall, Leung offers a useful examination of

the applicability of intertextuality to biblical texts and Joel's multiple references to other

biblical passages. Her work, however, leaves room to go beyond establishing the

presence of allusions and references to other texts, offering the opportunity to examine

the intended effects of these references.

The final approach to reading Joel comes from John Strazicich, whose lengthy

monograph considers the book of Joel with detailed reference to its proposed intertextual

linkages. He considers the book of Joel to be a skillful theological response to twin crises

of locust infestation and drought. The key to Joel's response is located in its use of other

scriptural traditions, which Strazicich articulates using the categories of appropriation and

resignification.[107] Essentially, Joel displays signals that it is appropriating other texts and

placing them into a different context that intends to bring new meaning to the fore.[108]

Uniquely, this monograph attempts to address both the question of the texts that inform

the composition of Joel as well as the use of Joel in New Testament contexts. Strazicich

derives his approach to intertextuality largely from Bakhtin and Kristeva and he defines

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[106] See the lengthy discussion of Exod 32–34 in conversation with the reuse of Exod 34:6–7 in Joel 2:12–14 in Leung, "Intertextual," 106–18. In that particular case, her identification of a chiastic structural parallel between Exod 32–34 and Joel 1–2 is rather questionable. She argues that both texts move from breach of covenant to restoration of covenant with features of punishment, restoration, divine appearance and affirmation of divine character appearing within those boundaries. Her approach, however, involves omitting a number of verses in Exodus which she deems irrelevant to the discussion, which casts doubt on the validity of finding a chiastic structure. There is clearly some level of relationship between the two passages, which this project will explore in further detail in a later chapter, but for now one can state that Leung's identification of structural patterning is questionable.

[107] Strazicich, Joel's Use of Scripture, 1–2. He defines appropriation as, "the acquisition of an antecedent text or tradition," and resignification as, "the transformation of an antecedent text or tradition." Strazicich distinguishes his work from Bergler's through these definitions; whereas Bergler argues that Joel is a scripture interpreter, Strazicich maintains that Joel's approach is to resignify scripture by placing it into a different literary context. This may lead to a new understanding of the referenced passage, but it does not necessarily reflect intentional interpretation.

[108] Probably the most famous example of this process is the reversal of Isa 2:4 and Mic 4:3 in Joel 4:10.

intertextuality as "the heuristic enterprise of discerning the appropriation and resignification of antecedent texts."[109] He notes that Bakhtin and Kristeva both try to maintain a role for an author, stressing the transposition of meaning that the antecedent texts undergo when brought into conversation with the text being studied.[110]

Strazicich's work is also notable for the density of allusions and intertextual references that he attributes to Joel. He goes beyond what other scholars have previously attributed and there are relatively few verses for which he does not detect the presence of an intertextual linkage. His criteria for determining intertextuality include the use of antecedent sources to which readers would have access, signs of deliberate use of these texts, and readers assigning levels of meaning to both texts in accordance with an author's appropriation of the antecedent text.[111] Contributing to the wide range of texts that he brings into conversation with Joel is his adoption of a Kristevan perspective, borrowing her assertion that all texts are a mosaic of citations and reflect interplay and transformation of previous texts.[112]

Strazicich's examination of Joel is invaluable for the detail it provides concerning Joel's potential relationship with other scriptural traditions. The dual concepts of

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[109] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 14. For more on the theory of intertextuality that Strazicich appropriates, see especially Bahktin, *Dialogic Imagination*; Kristeva, *Recherche pour une semanalyse*. For a helpful summary of employing intertextual concepts in biblical studies, see Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 164–82.

[110] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 11–13. Strazicich provides a summary of intertextual approaches to the problem of authorship and authorial intent, which includes those theories that attempt to eliminate the author from conversation, placing the identification of intertextual linkages solely on the reader. He pulls back, suggesting that intertextuality in biblical studies must take into account how the writer intended the text to be understood.

[111] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 27. Strazicich relies on literary theorist Ziva Ben-Porat for a working definition of allusion, which she describes as, "a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts." A marker in the base text activates the context of the alluded text. Markers could include words, phrases or images that invoke another text; Ben-Porat, "Poetics of Literary Allusion," 107–08. This is an often cited definition of allusion that has also found its way into a study of how Revelation employs scriptural tradition. See Jauhiainen, *Use of Zechariah*, 129.

[112] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 60; cf. Kristeva, *Recherche pour une semanalyse*, 146.

appropriation and resignification appropriately describe Joel's use of scriptural traditions, which analysis of specific passages will reveal. His approach also resonates with Ben Zvi's understanding of reading models which suggests the intended audience reading Joel had access to "a large world of knowledge that they use to decode the meaning of the text."[113] This study parts company with Strazicich when it places a greater emphasis on the flow of rhetorical argumentation within Joel. Strazicich's analysis is painstakingly thorough, but leaves room for an approach that seeks to consider Joel's use of scriptural traditions alongside the text's other rhetorical strategies.

Summary

The preceding survey lays out some of the issues that influence this research project. The continuing lack of consensus regarding Joel's date of composition is significant since it opens the door for a synchronically-oriented approach. The research into Joel's unity is important for this project since it will attempt to trace and explore the persuasive strategies throughout the book, examining how the entire book builds its arguments. Joel's relationship to current research into the Book of the Twelve reveals the usefulness of considering larger textual units, but it also provides a reminder that it is valuable to read the constituent prophetic books in their own right. This project will explore Joel's allusions to other texts, but it does not depend on reading Joel within the framework of the Book of the Twelve. The survey of literary approaches reveals some intriguing interpretive perspectives, especially as they relate to Joel's potential

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[113] Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 91. Ben Zvi puts forward this model to argue against Schart who seems to argue for sequential limits on what texts can inform a reading of Joel; cf. Schart, "First Section," 142.

intertextual linkages to a broad scope of scriptural traditions. This research project then

seeks to move beyond the identification of intertextual connections to considering their

rhetorical purpose in the text. Overall, this survey hopefully demonstrates the vibrancy

and broad range of scholarly discussion on Joel, while orienting the study that follows in

the context of these issues.

Methodological Survey

In light of the issues discussed above, this project proposes to examine the text

through the prism of rhetorical criticism. This seems highly appropriate given the

concerns over Joel's compositional unity, as well as the discussion of how one ought to

read individual books within the broader collection of the Book of the Twelve. It also

permits this project to consider Joel's connection to other texts and the effects of reading

Joel as a literary unit. The nature of rhetorical criticism requires a close reading of the

text in order to discern and delineate how its form, structure, and use of imagery points

towards its persuasive intent. Consequently, a relatively short book such as Joel provides

fruitful ground for a rhetorical-critical examination since the interpreter can examine a

well-defined literary unit in significant detail. Further, prophetic literature is especially

receptive to rhetorical analysis since one can convincingly argue that it represents a

rhetorical *tour de force* in which the prophets attempted to persuade their audience that

what was happening to them came about as the result of divine necessity.[114] The

following is a brief survey of the origins and development of this methodological

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[114] Barton, "History and Rhetoric," 52–53. Barton sees the genius of prophetic literature in its ability to take a variety of events and successfully portray them as following the outworking of a divinely guided plan. See also Fox, "Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision," 4, who states "by any definition prophecy is rhetoric. The prophets were concerned with persuasion and they are indeed persuasive."

approach in the study of the Old Testament. This will provide the foundation for the

discussion of the specific rhetorical-critical model that this study employs and adapts for

its work on Joel.

The inaugural incarnation of a "rhetorical" approach to the biblical text is

attributed to James Muilenburg's presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature

in 1968.[115] In this address entitled, "Form Criticism and Beyond," Muilenburg

encourages biblical scholars to consider approaching the text in a fashion that appreciates

its literary character and uniqueness.[116] He calls for scholars to pay attention to the

various literary devices and structural strategies that give the text its artistic qualities and

claims that "rhetorical criticism" would be an appropriate name for this approach.[117] He

intends for this approach to move beyond identifying the text's generic elements as had

tended to be the interest of form criticism, towards appreciating each text's individual

compositional strategies and literary character.[118] While he acknowledges the continued

importance of form criticism, he views this move towards rhetorical criticism as the next

step in better appreciating the uniqueness of individual biblical texts. This discipline

draws interpreters into a very close reading of the text, calling upon them to devote

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[115] Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 1–18.

[116] Hauser correctly places this approach as a call to adopt a different program from form and source criticism, where the focus is reconstructing literary units for the purpose of reconstructing a picture of life in ancient Israel. Rhetorical criticism instead focuses on the artistry of a particular passage and the ways it would affect its intended audience; Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 9.

[117] Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 8. "What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole."

[118] Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 5. For example, he looks at Deut 32 and Mic 6:1–8 as examples of lawsuit oracles, but suggests that their stylistic differences outweigh a generic resemble. Consequently the individual features of each text are worthy of close analysis. Tull captures the tension between the disciplines, noting that form critics risk ignoring the unique features of texts within the broader categories of form, while rhetorical critics risk focusing their attention too narrowly and missing the role of other texts in shaping readers' comprehension; Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Beyond," 327–28.

significant scrutiny to the broad range of literary devices that comprise the artistry of the text.[119]

Following this seminal article, the discipline of rhetorical criticism began to make its mark in the broader field of biblical studies. Muilenburg's call essentially conferred legitimacy on literary approaches to the biblical text, which is a field that continues to grow exponentially.[120] One potential confusion in tracing the development of rhetorical criticism as a scholarly discipline concerns terminology. On one hand, following most closely in the manner of Muilenburg, rhetorical criticism has engaged in what Trible calls the "art of composition," which focuses upon the literary and stylistic features of a given text.[121] The monographs of scholars such as Bar-Efrat, Berlin, Alter, and Sternberg on Old Testament narrative and poetry reflect arguably the fullest articulation of this kind of approach.[122] This approach continues to have an impact on biblical studies through examples like Fitzgerald who explicitly adopts Muilenburg's approach in order to find markers of literary cohesion in Isa 56–66.[123]

The other trajectory of rhetoric in biblical studies is rhetorical criticism as the "art of persuasion."[124] This type of analysis has its roots in the classical works of figures such as Aristotle who defined rhetoric as a counterpart of logic. According to this definition, rhetoric is more than verbal embellishment; it reflects specific techniques of

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[119] Muilenburg, "Beyond Form Criticism," 12–13.
[120] Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 160.
[121] Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 48. Trible provides a useful list of studies that seem to fit most appropriately into the two aforementioned categories.
[122] Cf. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*; Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*; Berlin, *Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*; Berlin, *Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*; Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*. Interestingly, in their 1994 bibliography on rhetorical criticism, these are the studies that Watson and Hauser identify as the premiere examples of rhetorical criticism in the Old Testament; Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 15–18.
[123] Fitzgerald, "Rhetorical Analysis," 26–34.
[124] Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 41.

argumentation and intends to analyze texts in terms of their persuasive capacity.[125] In the

last century the study of the persuasive nature of communication returned to prominence

with the development of New Rhetoric associated with Perelman and Olbrechts-

Tyteca.[126] Their work focuses on studying the methods of proof used to secure adherence

to different concepts or ideas. It focuses on those arguments that claimed to be either

credible or plausible since their truth could not be calculated with mathematical

certainty.[127]

Throughout their lengthy monograph, they discuss many different ways of

arguing that might serve to strengthen adherence to a given proposition. Perelman defines

the task of argumentation, claiming that "the purpose of the discourse in general is to bring

the audience to the conclusion offered by the orator, starting from premises that they already

accept."[128] Consequently, the study of biblical rhetoric as the "art of persuasion," seeks to

explore and understand the strategies through which the text intends to secure the

adherence of its audience.

One of the most significant conclusions from this understanding of rhetoric is its

claim that rhetoric characterizes all of human discourse. Consequently, by elucidating the

theories and techniques of argumentation, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca demonstrate

how rhetoric can make reasonable choices available to the listeners/readers of a given

communication through its attention to an argument's persuasive force.[129] This

understanding prepares the ground for bringing their development of the techniques of

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[125] Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 6.
[126] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*; Perelman, *The New Rhetoric and the Humanities*.
[127] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 1.
[128] Perelman, *New Rhetoric and the Humanities*, 18.
[129] Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 56.

argumentation into the world of biblical literature and using them to describe how the Old and New Testaments attempt to persuade their audience of the validity of their message.

This focus on the "art of persuasion" is what now drives rhetorical-critical approaches to the Old Testament. This development represents a conscious attempt to move beyond the boundaries of Muilenburg's "art of composition." It makes use of rhetorical theories of persuasion from Aristotle to contemporary theorists such as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.[130] A sharp distinction between the two branches of rhetorical study is developing, with scholars making assertions such as "rhetoric in the Bible must not be limited to the exploration of commonplaces and the hunting down of rhetorical devices so that they can be displayed in articles, complete with Latin name tag, like exhibitions in a Victorian museum."[131] In this view, the practice of rhetorical criticism should move beyond the "art of composition" and focus its energies on the "art of persuasion."

In a well-known article that focuses on the development of rhetorical criticism in the New Testament, Wuellner provocatively states a preference for rhetoric as the "art of persuasion" by stating that this would liberate biblical rhetorical criticism from the "Babylonian captivity of rhetoric reduced to stylistics."[132] While this statement is harsh, it does call attention to the value of focusing on biblical texts as acts of persuasive communication. Wuellner then describes this persuasive branch of rhetorical studies as

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[130] For example, see Renz, *Rhetorical Function*; Duke, *Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler*; Duke, "Ethical Appeal of the Chronicler," 33–51; Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*; Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*; Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*; Patrick and Scult, "Rhetoric and Ideology," 63–83; Fox, "Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision," 1–15; Oeste, "Legitimacy, Illegitimacy and the Right to Rule"; Shaw, *Speeches*; Möller, *Prophet*.

[131] Phillips, "Rhetoric," 259.

[132] Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 457.

"rhetoric revaluated" or "rhetoric reinvented."[133] This article helps to shape the

development of the rhetorical-critical field and focuses attention on the seemingly

neglected study of the means and manner of persuasion in biblical texts.

The call to focus on rhetorical criticism as the "art of persuasion" is evident in

Old Testament studies through Hauser who states that the role of the rhetorical critic is

both to analyze the literary features of the text but further to articulate the impact of the

given unit upon its audience.[134] The second step is what separates this trajectory of

rhetorical criticism from purely literary studies.[135] Gitay adds to the chorus by

emphasizing the value of rhetorical-critical work on the "art of persuasion" and

describing it as a method that will enable the critic to systematically study the strategy

and techniques of biblical discourse in order to better understand its communicative

efficacy.[136] Gitay uses this approach to study Isaiah, which he examines through a

rhetorical method which seeks to discover the complementary roles of the author, the

text, and the audience in determining a text's persuasive power.[137]

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[133] Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 453. See also Amador who surveys the development of rhetorical criticism in the wake of Wuellner's appeal. Amador asserts that rhetorical critics have not fully followed Wuellner's call and ought to devote more time to studying the rhetoric *of* the text rather than the rhetoric *within* the text itself: Amador, "Where Could Rhetorical Criticism (Still) Take Us?" 195–222.

[134] Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 14.

[135] Howard, "Rhetorical Criticism," 103. Howard is another helpful voice in Old Testament studies who echoes Wuellner's concerns, proposing that Old Testament rhetorical critics reclaim persuasion as the principal focus of their work. He asserts that this is the correct approach, noting that all religious writings can be said to make rhetorical claims since it intends to change behaviour and convince its readers. Consequently, the strategies and efficacy of textual persuasion is an important element of truly rhetorical studies.

[136] Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," 135–52. Gitay summarizes this point of view pithily by stating "That 'how' (style, form) is as important as 'what' (message, content)," in understanding the persuasive power of biblical texts: Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," 139.

[137] Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*, 35–45 This approach raises the question of the degree of certainty with which one can successfully identify the text's author and original audience in particular. This study will address that issue at some length in the forthcoming discussion of the specific model of rhetorical criticism that it will employ.

The preceding discussion notes numerous calls for rhetorical criticism to focus on

rhetoric as the "art of persuasion." The exact nature of how one ought to engage in that

task still remains an open question. One often-discussed approach roots itself in the work

of Kennedy who engages in detailed rhetorical analysis of New Testament passages. His

most salient work on the subject is entitled *New Testament Interpretation through*

Rhetorical Criticism. Kennedy proposes that an effective program for rhetorical analysis

would first delimit the rhetoric unit under discussion by seeking to find elements that

indicate its beginning, middle and end.[138] The next stage is to determine the rhetorical

situation of the address, which Kennedy considers to be a rough equivalent to the *Sitz im*

Leben of form criticism.[139] This is then followed by an attempt to determine the rhetorical

problem with which the originator of the communication (or "rhetor") wishes to interact.

Kennedy includes at this point such problems as lack of willingness on the part of the

audience to hear the message and the potential for the message to be so far from what the

audience expects that they will not entertain the possibility of listening.[140]

The fourth step is to consider the arrangement of material in the text, or its

rhetorical strategy. At this point the interpreter searches for the subdivisions of the

rhetorical piece and attempts to determine what literary devices it employs to add to its

persuasive force.[141] The final step is to consider the rhetorical effectiveness of the piece

and to consider what impact it may have had on the speaker or audience. Kennedy asserts

that rhetorical composition is a creative act that requires its interpreters to interact with it

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[138] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,* 33.
[139] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,* 34.
[140] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,* 36.
[141] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,* 37. The concern with the wider meaning emphasized through a collection of literary or poetic devices is what keeps the discussion of rhetorical strategy in the realm of the "art of persuasion." Elements of literary artistry build dynamic tension that reinforces the appeal of the text's persuasive intent; cf. Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 16.

on deeper levels than simple mechanistic analysis of its parts.[142] He stresses the need to

pay attention to the whole rhetorical composition and to be willing to look beyond it to an

awareness of the human condition and to see how it might reveal religious or

philosophical truth.[143]

At the beginning of an extensive study on the rhetoric of Amos 1–4, Möller

suggests that Kennedy's five steps for rhetorical interpretation discussed above can serve

as a useful methodology for studying prophetic texts.[144] He believes that it is a well

articulated model that gives the interpreter something concrete to bring into conversation

with particular texts in the Old Testament. While Wuellner rightly cautions that rhetorical

criticism is a dynamic process that will defy perfect systemization because of the

tremendous creativity in form and approach of biblical literature, it is helpful to have a

basic methodological framework from which to begin.[145] Möller adapts these five steps

slightly to better fit into his understanding of Old Testament prophetic rhetoric. The

principal distinction that he makes is to combine Kennedy's second and third steps of

rhetorical situation and rhetorical problem into one. He then adds in the consideration of

rhetorical genre that Kennedy mentions, but does not make a discrete step in his own

methodological construction.[146]

After beginning with Kennedy's broad outline concerning how one ought to do

rhetorical criticism in the New Testament and taking into account necessary adaptations

for studying prophetic texts of the Old Testament, there still remain particular issues

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[142] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 38.
[143] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 38.
[144] Möller, *Prophet*, 37.
[145] Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 463.
[146] Möller, *Prophet*, 40. The discussion of the specific model that this project will employ in its analysis of Joel will delve into the usefulness of Möller's categories.

related to how the interpreter should to orient his or herself before engaging in a rhetorical-critical reading of biblical texts. First, there are difficulties in understanding the way in which rhetorical criticism interacts with other disciplines. It is difficult to properly pin down the best manner in which to frame the relationship between rhetorical criticism and synchronic and diachronic understandings of the text. Literary approaches, with which rhetorical criticism is frequently associated due to the influence of Muilenburg, tend to be more concerned with synchronic readings, arguing that the text is a worthwhile subject of analysis in its final form. Kessler emphasizes the synchronic nature of the rhetorical approach, proposing rhetorical criticism ought to be understood as "the leading candidate for synchronic criticism."[147] He makes this explicit in the methodology he puts forward which contains nine separate elements. Two of these ("authorship," "setting") set up a general diachronic background for the study but the remaining seven elements are synchronic in focus and are given much greater significance in his articulation of his approach.[148]

Many rhetorical critics, however, would not wish for their work to deal only with the text as a literary artefact. Kennedy notably proposes that rhetorical criticism can fill the void between diachronic and synchronic approaches such as form and literary criticisms by considering the text "as we have it," and how such a text would be received by an audience of "near contemporaries."[149] Renz constructs rhetorical analyses in accordance with an understanding of redactional layering within the text, thus basing his

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[147] Kessler, "Methodological Setting," 14. Howard challenges Kessler's proposal, suggesting instead that rhetorical criticism should adopt a narrower focus on the elements of persuasion, rather than attempting to serve as a generic category for studies rooted in the world of the text; Howard, "Rhetorical Criticism," 103.
[148] Kessler, "Methodological Setting," 9. His seven "synchronic" elements are: whole piece, medium, Gattung, stance, form, structure, style, metastyle, and ratio.
[149] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 3–4.

reading on previous diachronic results.[150] Consequently, what he articulates is a rhetorical

reading of redactional layers, which is a worthwhile project if he can correctly delineate

the text's growth and development. Boadt adopts a similar approach, claiming that

divorcing a text from its historical and social context makes it harder to determine its

persuasive power.[151]

In an attempt to speak to the synchronic/diachronic balance, Möller pushes

beyond Renz and Boadt and argues that rhetorical-critical studies can challenge the

results of diachronic criticisms when they discover literary seamlessness within a text that

may render unnecessary theories of complex redaction and secondary additions.[152]

Rhetorical criticism according to this view can function as a bridge between synchronic

and diachronic approaches, but it need not rely solely on the results of previous

diachronic analysis as its foundation. It can offer results that affect both the synchronic

and diachronic understandings of the text. This is a welcome development in rhetorical

criticism since it places this approach on par with diachronic approaches that developed

earlier. Essentially, both streams of interpretation can interact and offer mutual

correction.

The debate over the priority of synchronic or diachronic approaches to rhetorical

criticism also moves the discussion out into the world in front of the text, taking into

consideration the role of the interpreter in importing meaning. For example, Patrick

argues that the final form of the text is the most appropriate subject of analysis, regardless

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[150] Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 5–8.

[151] Boadt, "Poetry of Prophetic Persuasion," 1–22. Note in particular his examination of Isa 5:1–7 and Ezek 15 where he describes the poetic features of both passages, while then trying to place them in a historical location.

[152] Möller, *Prophet*, 5–10. In this way, Möller tries to show that Barton's "trick of the disappearing redactor" is wedded to the assumption that such redactors must exist; cf. Barton, *Reading*, 57.

of a text's redactional history.[153] He focuses on prophetic texts as rhetorical communication that can speak persuasively not only to its original "hearing" audience but also to later "reading" audiences.[154] This speaks to a commitment by the interpreter to select the text that he or she accepts as the appropriate subject of rhetorical analysis. Interpreters can position themselves positively towards the text as effective communication in Patrick's manner, or they can use their position in front of the text to critique its methods and messages. This is especially notable in the fusion of rhetorical and ideological criticisms.[155]

Consequently, one of rhetorical criticism's strengths is its potential to examine the three primary foci of interpretation which are the author ("the world behind the text"), the discourse ("the world of the text"), and the reader ("the world in front of the text").[156] While not all rhetorical-critical studies will attempt a project of such ambition, the history of rhetorical-critical interpretation suggests that all of these levels of interpretation are appropriate to consider. A rhetorical-critical study will need to establish its orientation towards these levels of interpretation when it studies particular texts.

Summary

The discipline of rhetorical criticism continues to branch out significantly from the vision articulated in Muilenburg's inaugural address. The examination of the literary nature of biblical text and the unique qualities that lend it aesthetic power and appeal are

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[153] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 126.
[154] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 157–58.
[155] See for example Wuellner, "Reconceiving," 23–77; Wuellner, "Rhetorical Criticism," 149–86; Schussler Fiorenza, "Challenging the Rhetorical Half-turn," 28–53.
[156] Möller, "Rhetorical Criticism," 689.

welcome additions. Beyond aesthetics, however, rhetorical criticism as the "art of persuasion," offers the most potential for further contributions as seen in the multiple appeals to scholars to further employ this orientation. The wide range of issues that it encompasses allows it significant scope for interpreting the text. Rhetorical criticism frequently tries to bridge the diachronic/synchronic dichotomy, wishing to neither abandon referentiality and social context in presenting the text's persuasive power, nor abandon its understanding of a text's rhetorical strategies to previously determined redactional levels. Further, rhetorical criticism makes forays into the world of the interpreter, considering various preconceptions that shape one's perceptions of a text's persuasive power. It is a vibrant discipline, worthy of further exploration and development.

This research project enters into the milieu of rhetorical criticism and employs it to examine the persuasive power of the prophetic book of Joel. Joel's litany of literary strategies and fascinating imagery makes it a worthy text to examine. The issues surrounding its compositional unity further make it a valuable field of inquiry for determining the flow of argumentation. This study hopes to articulate Joel's essential persuasive artistry as it engages in a detailed reading of the text. The survey of the rhetorical-critical field intends to provide the foundation for this study by laying the groundwork for the discussion of a specific model of rhetorical criticism that follows. It engages with the issues related to diachronic and synchronic approaches to the text, and offers some insight as to an appropriate location for the interpreter. It does not claim to have determined the only correct approach, but it does intend to demonstrate that it offers an appropriate reading of Joel and its persuasive appeal.

Purpose and Organization

The preceding discussions of the history of research and the development of rhetorical criticism provide the basis for this study. The thesis of this dissertation builds off that foundation and asserts that Joel is a unified work of prophetic literature that moves from scenes of devastation to promises of restoration through its persuasive evocation of divine and human responses in order to articulate the necessity of calling and relying upon YHWH in all circumstances. Essentially, this project intends to demonstrate that Joel is a coherent, self-contained, literary work that speaks persuasively to the situation that it creates.

This dissertation will explore its thesis by reflecting on the chosen method of interpretation as well as providing a detailed reading of the text. Following this introductory chapter, the first chapter contains a thorough consideration of the rhetorical-critical model that this study employs. It derives this model from Kennedy and Möller and then examines each of the proposed steps and modifies the structure to better suit the task of reading Joel rhetorically. It also considers issues of synchrony and diachrony in reading a prophetic book that does not provide any overt indication of the time and place of its composition. It offers a few suggestions for improving weaknesses in the Kennedy-Möller model concerning how to describe the rhetorical effectiveness of prophetic discourse, which it intends to test in the following analysis.

The following chapters of this project consist of a rhetorical analysis of the entire book of Joel based on the modified Kennedy-Möller model. It employs the same steps to different textual units. The second chapter contains a rhetorical analysis of Joel 1:1–14, considering issues that include the intended referent of the locust imagery, the

relationship that Joel constructs between the prophetic message and the cult, and the way in which Joel constructs its implied audience through various calls to lament. It examines the persuasive force of such imagery, considering how it could potentially affect its implied audience to respond.

The third chapter looks at Joel 1:15–20 and considers the text's use of drought imagery to reinforce the exigence of the locust plague. It also reflects on the rhetorical strategy of introducing the day of YHWH with all of its ramifications, setting the stage for further mentions of the day of YHWH in different contexts throughout the book. This chapter also explores the text's strategy of merging the prophet with the implied audience as it transitions from calls to lament to actually offering lament cries directly to YHWH.

The fourth chapter examines the rhetorical power of Joel 2:1–11. This chapter examines the strategies through which Joel reaches its nadir, heightening the picture of devastation and destruction from the previous chapter. This chapter considers the rhetorical effect of portraying YHWH as the one leading an assault on Zion in the wake of calls to appeal to YHWH in Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20. This chapter also examines how the prophet can use this revelation to set up his presentation of the proper response from the text's implied audience.

The fifth chapter examines Joel 2:12–17 and engages in an extended study of the means through which the text turns this prophecy away from despair and begins to offer hope of divine restitution. It examines the prophetic call to "turn" that hopefully leads to a divine turning in response. This chapter examines closely the relationship between Joel 2:12–17, Exod 34:6–7 and Jonah 3:9 and 4:2 as passages that reflect deeply on the character of YHWH and YHWH's relationship with Israel. It reflects on how the

response to the prophetic command to "return to me" could motivate a divine response that brings restoration out of devastation.

The sixth chapter considers Joel 2:18–27 and shows how the text systemically and effectively begins the process of "liquidating the lack" described in Joel 1:1–14, 1:15–20 and 2:1–11.[157] It examines the means through which the text describes the character and actions of YHWH as one who provides restoration from desperate circumstances and how this calls the community to trust in YHWH. It also continues to explore the idea of a conceptual gap between Joel 2:17 and 2:18 that engages interpreters and asks them to participate in constructing the text's meaning.

The seventh chapter looks at Joel 3:1–5 and explores its portrayal of a powerful outpouring of the divine Spirit that impacts the entire community. It also details the change in image-world from one in which locusts dominate, to one that reflects cosmological phenomena that respond to YHWH's interventions. This chapter also details points of contact between Joel 3:1–5 and previous material, suggesting that the persuasive strategy of the book is best revealed by viewing this chapter as intrinsically connected to its surrounding material, with the portrayal of restoration tightly linked to the images of devastation found earlier in the text.

The eighth chapter examines Joel 4:1–21 and considers the persuasive potential of pairing the removal of external threats with the guarantees of material and spiritual renewal in Joel 2:18–27 and 3:1–5. It further considers the persuasive power of a rhetorical strategy in which the text permits genuine agency to YHWH alone in the context of discussing foreign nations, whom YHWH inevitably defeats. This chapter

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[157] Credit for this phrase goes to Deist. "Parallels," 64.

looks at Joel's use of the nations, both in general and specifically named as a rhetorical foil that establishes reasons to trust YHWH's promises of restoration.

Finally, this study concludes with an examination of the preceding analysis, tracing the interplay of persuasive strategies that bind the book of Joel into a coherent, rhetorically powerful work that moves its audience from despair to restoration by persuading it to call upon YHWH in the midst of desperate circumstances. The conclusion will also reflect on the usefulness of the Kennedy and Möller model of rhetorical criticism and consider the effect of the changes proposed in the methodology chapter. It will also offer suggestions for future study, pointing towards future refinement of the model and analysis of other texts.

Chapter One: A Rhetorical-Critical Model for Studying Prophetic Literature

Introduction

Following the previous survey of the development of rhetorical-critical methods,

this chapter provides a more detailed examination of the specific model of rhetorical

criticism that this study employs. This chapter considers the contours of the model and

critiques various aspects before providing the specifics of how this study will adapt the

model to study Joel. This discussion intends to point out the strength and weaknesses of

the model, while offering some suggestions concerning how it can be improved to better

handle the challenges inherent in studying prophetic texts.

Model

The model of rhetorical criticism that this study follows began as an attempt to

function in both the diachronic and synchronic realms of interpretation. Its starting point

is the model that Kennedy proposes for New Testament studies and which Möller

employs in Old Testament prophetic literature in his work on Amos. Black helpfully

defends the broad utility of Kennedy's model for biblical studies, claiming that it

represents the most comprehensive understanding of the field of rhetoric.[1] This model,

however, is not one that an interpreter can follow slavishly. One of the outcomes of this

study will be to show where it is necessary to modify the approach of Kennedy and

Möller to deal with some of the features of Joel.[2] These modifications will demonstrate

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[1] Black, "Rhetorical Criticism," 256–57.

[2] Shaw has also used the model of Kennedy to examine Micah, but he does not adhere to the five steps of Kennedy's model as rigorously as Möller. See Shaw, *Speeches*, 22–23, for his understanding of how he is going to use this method in his work.

some of the flaws in the model as currently conceived and will hopefully offer a way

forward for continued consideration of the persuasive appeal of prophetic texts.

Möller effectively defends the applicability of Kennedy's model to the Old

Testament against charges of anachronism by arguing from the universal nature of

persuasiveness in texts. He claims that any discourse, whether written or oral, ancient or

modern, is capable of being investigated and assessed according to the categories of this

method, providing that the critic is aware of the specific qualities of the given discourse.[3]

Essentially, he argues that the categories of Kennedy's model reflect a universal approach

to rhetoric in biblical studies, even if it originates in a New Testament context. Möller's

adaptation of Kennedy's model usefully elucidates some of the persuasive elements of

Amos and thus it merits further exploration to gauge its usefulness in articulating the

persuasive strategies of other prophetic texts.

Rhetorical Unit

As currently constructed, the model consists of five stages beginning with the task

of determining the *rhetorical units* of a given text. In this phase the interpreter divides the

text in question into various subunits for study. These subunits should contain attempts to

persuade or to affect some sort of change in the audience.[4] Delineating a text's rhetorical

units requires searching for various signals of aperture and closure that demarcate the

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[3] Möller, "Rhetorical Criticism," 690. This defense is similar to the previously mentioned argument employed by Duke to justify his use of Aristotelian categories in his study of Chronicles; cf. Duke. *Persuasive*, 39.

[4] Hester. "Re-discovering," 7. Hester states that for a unit of text to be rhetorical, it must contain an argument that intends to affect its audience. This concern for argumentation is how Hester distinguishes the concept of rhetorical unit from literary unit. Further, Wuellner defines a rhetorical unit as an "argumentative unit affecting the reader's reasoning or the reader's imagination," Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 455.

discourse's prophetic oracles.[5] Within these subunits, the interpreter can articulate the

various rhetorical features through which it attempts to make its persuasive impact. The

analysis can then examine the interrelationship of the different subunits, with an eye

towards articulating their function in building the argument of the larger rhetorical unit of

the book.[6] In Möller's application of the model, the largest unit that he considers is the

individual prophetic book, although he leaves room for a future extension of his

investigation to consider the role of an individual prophetic book within larger complexes

such as the Book of the Twelve or the Old Testament canon.[7] Möller, however, is not

very specific in describing how this could be accomplished and thus bringing the

discussion up to the level of the individual prophetic book is probably optimal for this

model.[8]

Rhetorical Situation

The second step of the model is to determine the *rhetorical situation* of the

discourse in question. Kennedy provides the basic formulation of rhetorical situation for

biblical studies when he describes the rhetorical situation as roughly analogous to the *Sitz*

im Leben of form criticism.[9] In other words, the purpose of determining a text's rhetorical

situation is to look behind the text and examine the society, circumstances and historical

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[5] For one proposal of how to determine these signals, see Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 24–70. Since Wendland uses Joel as a test case for his criteria, this study will interact with his work in some detail as it progresses. For a synopsis of his conclusions concerning the organization of Joel's rhetorical units, see Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 19–20.

[6] See the list that Wuellner provides that begins with parables and metaphors and increases unit levels until it reaches the entire biblical canon; Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 455.

[7] Möller, *Prophet*, 37. A preliminary consideration of the issue would suggest that this is probably intended to be a synchronic move where one considers how the persuasive appeal of a book such as Amos or Joel affects the broader message of the Book of the Twelve.

[8] See also the discussion in the previous chapter concerning the usefulness of reading prophetic books as unique literary compositions.

[9] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 34.

era that produced it. For Kennedy, rhetorical situation is a diachronic step that seeks to root the text in a particular time and space which the interpreter can use as a backdrop to explain why and how the rhetor composed the text. The distinction between rhetorical situation and *Sitz im Leben* is that the rhetorical critic's primary objective is to consider the text's premises as an appeal or argument.[10] This still leaves the rhetorical situation rooted in the "world behind the text," but considering the text's argumentative premises begins to move the consideration of rhetorical situation away from simply establishing the text's historical and social background and towards deliberating its persuasive appeal in that context.

Kennedy derives his understanding of rhetorical situation from the influential work of communications theorist Lloyd Bitzer, which is very much rooted in a diachronic approach to rhetorical discourse. Bitzer's three criteria for establishing rhetorical situations are: i) exigences, which are problems and defects requiring solutions; ii) an audience capable of being constrained to act on the exigence; and iii) sets of constraints that influence the rhetor and the audience.[11] For Bitzer, determining the rhetorical situation requires an analysis of these three factors and how they interrelate. First, the idea of exigence is essential for rhetorical communication. If there are no problems in the present environment, no questions needing answers, no objects or ideas awaiting discovery, then there is no need for rhetorical tasks such as persuasion, advocacy or

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[10] Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 456.
[11] Bitzer, "Functional," 23. Although these criteria provide the framework for rhetorical communication, Bitzer attempts to leave space for the creativity of the rhetor by asserting that the situation does not predetermine the discourse.

mediation.[12] Thus, Bitzer ties the rhetorical situation to a problem in a specific time and space that a rhetor believes requires addressing.

The second criterion concerns the rhetor's relationship with their audience regarding the exigence's factual conditions and the interest that it generates among the audience. Bitzer proposes four scenarios in which these criteria can interact: i) the rhetor and the audience can have the same understanding of the factual conditions and interest in the topic; ii) the rhetor and audience agree on the factual conditions but disagree on the level of interest; iii) the rhetor and audience have the same level of interest but disagree on the factual conditions; and iv) the rhetor and audience disagree on *both* the level of interest and the factual conditions.[13] These different scenarios require different approaches based on the relationship of interest and agreement between the speaker and the potential audience. In situations where the rhetor and the audience disagree on either the existence or nature of an exigence, it is practically impossible to persuade them to respond.[14] Essentially, the situation becomes rhetorical when the audience and speaker acknowledge a common exigence that a given discourse could modify.[15] In this way, one facet of the rhetor's role can be to guide an audience towards recognition of that exigence as well as propose a fitting response.

One important factor to note in the discussion of audience is that Bitzer has in mind the audience that hears/reads the discourse in its original context; his formulation of rhetorical situation does not take into account later reading audiences who may still be

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[12] Bitzer, "Functional," 25–26.
[13] Bitzer, "Functional," 29–30.
[14] Garrett and Xiao, "Rhetorical," 38.
[15] Hester, "Speaker," 78–79. Hester uses this definition to distinguish a "rhetorical situation" from an historical situation, which is comprised of factual components that an investigator can identify and study. The perception of an exigence and the sharing of common interests are what binds the speaker and audience together, allowing for rhetorical communication to occur.

moved by its persuasive appeal even if the original exigence is no longer operational. This merits consideration when studying the biblical text since it derives much of its significance from its ability to speak persuasively to audiences in situations far removed from its original exigence. The discussion of "rhetorical effectiveness" below will consider a more nuanced view of audiences called to respond to a text's persuasive appeal.

The different degrees of relationship between rhetor and audience help to demonstrate the subjective nature of determining exigence. Binton takes Bitzer to task for promoting a mostly "objective" look at exigence, where Bitzer takes exigence to be a genuine defect in the world that a rhetorical act can modify.[16] This largely denies the creative role of the rhetor in establishing the situation for the audience since it is patently not the case that everyone will perceive a given situation as flawed, or have a complementary understanding of how to remedy the supposed deficiency. Vatz echoes this critique, arguing instead that "meaning is not discovered in situations, but *created* (italics his) by rhetors."[17] This leads to a higher level of responsibility for rhetors since the situation(s) that they strive to create will greatly affect the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of the audience.

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[16] Binton. "Situation," 242–43. Binton considers some "odd consequences" of a thoroughly objective understanding of exigence, suggesting that this would mean that only a rhetor with a correct grasp of the facts of the situation is engaging in rhetoric. Since it is not possible for rhetors to know every conceivable fact about a given situation, clearly there is some space for rhetorical communication based on beliefs and perceptions. Binton is probably engaging in *reductio ad absurdum* here since Bitzer does permit a distinction between the "factual component" and the "interest component" of a rhetorical situation. The basic critique of an overreliance on objective criteria, however, is a useful caution in this discussion; cf. Bitzer, "Functional," 28.

[17] Vatz, "Myth," 157. This is a thoroughly subjective understanding of situation that contrasts with Bitzer's concern for objectivity. Vatz permits the rhetor to shape the reality of the situation that they intend to address.

In the case of prophetic rhetoric it often appears that the prophet has a much higher degree of interest in the topic and claims that YHWH is sending a message that the audience should heed. A significant part of the prophet's task is to persuade the audience that they should consider the prophet's analysis of the situation seriously.[18] Prophetic literature strives to bring the horizon of divine discourse into the reality of daily existence and to communicate this wider perspective to the audience. This gives a rather significant role to the prophetic rhetor who must persuade an audience that the situation they address is worthy of deliberation, reflection and action.[19] Prophetic literature often derives its exigence from the gap between the audience's understanding and the divinely mediated message that the prophet possesses.

The third factor in Bitzer's definition of rhetorical situation is the constraints that surround a rhetorical situation. For Bitzer these include: the degree of interest in the topic that the speaker and audience possess, the capacity for modification of the situation, the risk incurred in responding, the obligation and expectation of a response, the familiarity with a topic, and the immediacy of the situation.[20] All of these factors determine the nature of the rhetoric necessary for the rhetor to persuade the audience to respond appropriately. For example, if the solution that the rhetor proposes is beyond the capacity of the intended audience, then it is unlikely that the rhetor will succeed in swaying his

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[18] Sandy, *Plowshares*, 73. Sandy recognizes this disparity of interest when he claims that part of the prophet's task is metaphorically to turn up the volume to communicate with an audience that is presented as deliberately deaf.

[19] See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 21. The authors claim that, "the speaker should depart from his premises only when he knows that they are adequately accepted: if they are not, the speaker's first concern should be to reinforce them with all the means at his disposal." In other words, the creation of a shared interest in a given exigence is one of the first requirements of successful rhetorical communication.

[20] Bitzer, "Functional," 31–33.

audience in the direction that he or she hopes.[21] Similarly, the level of authority that an audience grants to the rhetor will have a significant influence on the rhetor's persuasive potential. Consigny correctly uses this understanding of constraints to show that Vatz overstates the freedom of rhetors in constructing situations. There are still particularities related to persons, actions, and agencies that surround the proposed rhetorical communication that will guide the shape of a fitting response.[22] Rhetors may help in establishing the rhetorical situation, but they do not begin with a blank slate; the consideration of constraints reveals the limitations of the situation that they can construct.

The previous discussion has brought forward some of the factors to be considered when attempting to establish the rhetorical situations that frame the analysis of persuasive discourses. Arguably the most significant challenge to using the concept of rhetorical situation as articulated by Bitzer and his interlocutors for studying the biblical text is the reliance on getting to the "world behind the text," or conflating the rhetorical situation with an objectively identifiable historical situation.[23] Bitzer's illustrations of rhetorical situations derive from either recent history or politics, which means that there are significant other resources to construct the exigence that gave rise to the rhetorical situation. While no later description can perfectly encompass all facets of a given situation, the critic can argue with some degree of certainty that they have captured its essential elements. Similarly, the critic can make reasonable assumptions concerning the

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[21] Bitzer, "Functional," 33.

[22] Consigny, "Rhetoric," 175–85. Consigny deftly moves between the poles of situational particularities and rhetorical creativity, noting that the job of the rhetor includes both articulating specific problems out of indeterminate rhetorical situations, and being receptive and engaged in the given situation so that the problems that the rhetor addresses remain relevant. He finds a middle ground between Bitzer's assertion that the rhetorical situation governs the rhetor's choices and Vatz's understanding of the rhetor's freedom to create a variety of exigences out of a given situation.

[23] Although Hester and Wuellner try to keep distance between historical and rhetorical situations, this proves to be difficult to achieve in practice.

nature of the audience (and may even know the composition of the original audience) and the constraints that faced the rhetor since there is sufficient secondary evidence.

Following Kennedy, biblical scholars who utilize the concept of rhetorical situation typically attempt to accomplish a similar task, in spite of the added difficulty of a tremendous temporal and geographical gap between the world that produced the text and the world of the interpreter. Kennedy's approach to the idea of rhetorical situation highlights the dynamic nature between the speaker's construction of text, the rhetorical problem and the audience, but maintains a heavy emphasis on reconstructing "real" history and finding an historical author.[24] The interpreter thus focuses on the text as an argument or an appeal from within the historical and social context that the interpreter determines.[25] The chronological distance and paucity of supporting evidence, however, means that it is not always possible to establish the "world behind the text" with certainty. At the very least, it is precarious to use this idea of rhetorical situation for analyzing the Old Testament in which theories over the date of a text's composition may span centuries.[26]

In prophetic studies of the Old Testament, Shaw and Möller work most closely with the concept of rhetorical situation and it is helpful to review their approaches.[27]

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[24] Stamps, "Rethinking," 195–96; cf. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 12, who states that "The ultimate goal of rhetorical analysis, briefly put, is the discovery of the author's intent and of how that is transmitted through a text to an audience." Kennedy's "goal" is heavily predicated upon the assumption that it is possible to recover the original author and historical-cultural situation into which that author wrote.

[25] Wuellner, "Where," 456.

[26] The difficulty of determining the date of composition is especially prevalent in Joel where interpreters put forward theories that locate Joel anywhere from the ninth to second centuries B C E. See the previous chapter for a discussion on the range of dates of composition for Joel and the difficulty of resolving that issue.

[27] Gitay also brings the concept of rhetorical situation into his work on Deutero-Isaiah, but his approach essentially mirrors that of Kennedy. He devotes one short chapter to the rhetorical situation of Isa 40–48 in which he takes a diachronic stance and tries to describe the political, social and spiritual situation that prompted Deutero-Isaiah's discourse; Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*, 50–60.

Their adaptations of the concept will help to reveal some of the challenges of employing

rhetorical situation in the sense that Kennedy, following Bitzer, proposes for biblical

studies. This review will also point out some of the challenges that future studies will

encounter in using the concept of rhetorical situation. It will conclude with a proposal for

a way to move forward.

In his work on Micah, Shaw acknowledges that "we have no account of the

situation which has given rise to each discourse."[28] Essentially, he admits that the text

does not explicitly reveal when the prophet spoke, the nature of his audience or the

occasion prompting the discourse. Further, there is not enough available evidence from

outside the book of Micah to engage in a comprehensive reconstruction of its situation.

Consequently, he searches for the rhetorical situation by reflecting on clues within

discourse itself; in other words, the elements of the prophetic speech reveal the issues that

created the need for the discourse.[29] Shaw divides the book of Micah into his

understanding of its composite rhetorical units and proposes to determine a plausible

rhetorical situation for each discourse. Shaw acknowledges that this is a somewhat

subjective undertaking, requiring him to "attempt to judge when the speaker is setting

forth the facts of the case and when he is exaggerating and using hyperbole."[30] Given the

range of rhetorical strategies found in prophetic speech, this judgment process is fraught

with peril.

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[28] Shaw, *Speeches*, 25.
[29] Shaw, *Speeches*, 25. This approach to rhetorical situation is based on the assumption that "the close connection between the rhetorical situation and the discourse makes it inevitable that the major elements of the rhetorical situation are reflected in the discourse itself."
[30] Shaw, *Speeches*, 27.

In his analysis, Shaw divides the elements that make up rhetorical situations into "objective," and "subjective factors." He derives both sets of factors primarily from the text of Micah itself, which could easily lead to questions concerning the objectivity of his "objective factors." For example, in Mic 2:1–13, Shaw asserts as an objective factor that some particular social group in Israel is oppressing others. Reading between the lines of various descriptions he eventually narrows this down to say that the "oppressors" in this situation are a powerful, well-defined group whose primary crimes include violently dispossessing and harassing a group that has "turned away from war."[31] Arriving at this conclusion requires significant exegetical work and many interpretative decisions. In Mic 2:8 Shaw acknowledges that he reads against the majority opinion in claiming that the reference to "stripping off the cloak of the poor," is not a reference to debt slavery.[32] Given the extent of the argument and discussion surrounding this and other issues, it is difficult to grant the title of "objective factor" to this element of the rhetorical situation that Shaw identifies.

While not quarrelling with Shaw's exegetical prowess, this short survey highlights some of the difficulties of relying primarily on the text itself as the primary witness for constructing a "world behind the text" rhetorical situation. The interpreter's judgments on what constitutes "stating the case" and "hyperbole" are necessarily visible throughout the process which makes the terminology of "objective factor" somewhat misleading. The prevalence of interpretive judgments renders it very difficult to say that Shaw has managed to peer behind the text and accurately glimpse the world behind it. Shaw's concept of the text's rhetorical situation may fall victim to the danger of which

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[31] Shaw. *Speeches*, 84.
[32] Shaw, *Speeches*, 80. He cites Willis, "Micah 2:6–8," 82, as an example of the "majority opinion."

Linville warns when he comments, "there is a certain circularity to the process: the

historical reality of the book's composition is derived from the text and the text is then

interpreted in view of those conclusions."[33] Shaw may have established the situation that

the text of Micah claims to address, but it remains a conceptual leap to claim that this

accurately reflects an identifiable historical context.

Möller takes the discussion of rhetorical situation in a slightly different direction.

He states that Shaw's approach will not work for Amos since he does not think that the

book preserves "original" prophetic speeches.[34] Consequently, he does not try to trace the

rhetorical situation of given passages. Instead, he examines rhetorical situation on the

level of the whole book. This is still predominantly a "world behind the text" approach

with the emphasis shifted from the original speaker and original audience to the book's

"compilers" and how they frame the book for a later (but still historically locatable)

audience.[35] This requires him to engage in the discussion of the book's date of

composition and redactional history so that he can find a *terminus ad quem* for the book's

compilation. He also considers geographical location as part of the book's rhetorical

situation. Since he is not investigating the rhetorical situation behind its original

utterances, he is not wedded to Samaria or the context of the northern kingdom. Instead,

he prefers to view Amos against the backdrop of the Judahite tradents that preserved it

after the Assyrian conquest.[36]

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[33] Linville, "Bugs," 286. Linville makes this claim in his discussion of scholarship that assumes that the events described in Joel reflect an identifiable historical scenario. Instead he examines Joel using solely the text's word-world and argues that this is the only "Joel ben Pethuel" with whom contemporary interpreters can interact. See below for further consideration of this particular understanding of rhetorical situation.

[34] Möller, *Prophet*, 105. Instead, he considers Amos as an edited collection of prophetic oracles and visions, but does not necessarily subscribe to complex theories of redactional development and growth.

[35] Möller, *Prophet*, 106.

[36] Möller, *Prophet*. 119.

Essentially, Möller locates the rhetorical situation of Amos in the world of the

southern kingdom of Judah during the period between the Assyrian conquest of Israel and

the Babylonian conquest of Judah. The exigence that occasioned the book's compilation

is the opportunity to use the fulfilled messages of doom to Israel found in Amos as

warnings in the Judahite context; if the Judahites did not listen to this preserved prophetic

word, they would suffer the same fate as Israel.[37] Möller argues that in this situation, the

travails and ultimate failure of Amos to convince Israel to reform would be particularly

poignant since the Judahite audience could find evidence of the veracity of his message in

the ruins of their northern neighbour. Möller bases this conclusion on the results of his

research into the probable date of compilation, arguing that reading it as a product of this

time minimizes interpretive difficulties.

While this approach nuances the presentation of rhetorical situation by moving

away from the explicit referents of the text to its transmission history, it remains

grounded in the diachronic world behind the text.[38] Möller's construction of the rhetorical

situation in Amos depends upon his geographical-temporal theory of Amos' compilation

and promulgation. In fact, establishing the validity of his theory concerning Amos'

composition is one of his stated objectives since he is using this rhetorical-critical

methodology to challenge the findings of redaction critics who propose a complex theory

of composition for the book of Amos.[39] Möller may have put forward a likely scenario

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[37] Möller, *Prophet*, 119. For a slightly different construction of the intended hearing audience, see Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 158, who argues that "The book is designed for an audience that does recognize the legitimacy of the Davidic scion, but which is not being ruled by a Davidide."

[38] One can also find indications in the text that suggest a shift to a Judahite readership, notably in the equation of Zion with Samaria in Amos 6:1 and in the promised Davidic restoration of Amos 9:11–12. The consistent focus on the Northern Kingdom and its iniquities, however, suggests that one would identify an Israelite rhetorical situation at the heart of this book.

[39] Möller, *Prophet*, 8. Möller challenges Barton's critique of rhetorical criticism as a discipline that goes to great lengths to preserve the text's compositional unity, despite the weight of evidence from historical-

that adequately handles the majority of the text's rhetoric and imagery but his proposal

still remains hypothetical and subject to challenge from those with different theories

regarding the text's transmission history.

A rhetorical study of Joel greatly exacerbates the difficulties noted in Shaw's and

Möller's conceptions of the rhetorical situation. Micah and Amos at the very least have a

prophetic superscription that includes the names of the reigning kings during the period

of their prophetic ministry. This offers at least one potential location in space and time in

which to anchor an understanding of the situation that the text addresses. While Möller

nuances the discussion by declaring that he is not looking for the rhetorical situation

behind the original utterances, he at least has one chronological marker from which to

begin his work. Joel has no such date formulae and, as mentioned previously, suggestions

for its date of origin vary tremendously.[40] The dearth of date formulae and historical

references make it difficult to construct a viable spatial and temporal backdrop against

which to read the book. Conceivably, one could argue for one of the proposed dates of

the book's compilation and try to reconstruct a historically-based rhetorical situation

from that foundation.[41] Similarly, one could follow Möller and try to establish the

situation of a later audience that preserved Joel's prophecy. Such attempts, however, are

unlikely to withstand the weight of criticism since one can easily dispute any proposed

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critical disciplines. Barton claims that, "when rhetorical criticism comes in at the door, critical probing into the text's unity or disunity tends to go out the window, the demonstration of its unity being taken as an absolute imperative." Barton, *Reading*, 201. Möller responds, "The underlying assumption of Barton's criticism is that the 'traditional' historical-critical findings are correct after all, and that the text in question is *not* a unity. This, however, is precisely the disputed issue." For a more extended look at Barton's critique of rhetorical criticism, see Barton, *Reading*, 201–05.

[40] See again the summary of the debate surrounding the date of composition in the preceding chapter.

[41] This also has ramifications for the interpreter's understanding of the text's composition. Those who argue that Joel 3–4 stems from an entirely different time and place than Joel 1–2 would develop a completely different understanding of the text's rhetorical situation than those who argue for it as a unified work.

date of composition or compilation. Criticism in this vein would render it difficult to

discuss the persuasive character of the text in that proposed hypothetical situation.

The difficulty of constructing a viable "world behind the text" understanding of

the rhetorical situation for Joel leads to the consideration of whether it is possible to

modify this concept so that it can work with a text like Joel that effectively camouflages

its historical situation. Joel seems to have a "dehistoricized" nature since it lacks

references that could anchor it in time and space, such as regnal formulae or even a

statement of the specific cause of the current catastrophe.[42] The only piece of information

that the text provides about the prophet is his patronymic. The text may even de-

emphasize that piece of personal information by placing it at the end of Joel 1:1, a verse

fronted by דְּבַר־יְהוָה; the status of this communication as the "word of YHWH" is more

important than the identity of its messenger or date at which Joel delivered the message.

Essentially, Joel's cultic and mythic themes are general enough to be applicable at many

different times of crisis, which leads to the conjecture that Joel as a whole is either a

liturgical text intended for examples of national lament or an example of one such

lament.[43] Consequently, in looking at a text that obscures its original situation, it is

appropriate to try to understand the text's rhetorical situation in a manner that depends

less on establishing a hypothetical "world behind the text."[44]

An alternative proposal to the issue of determining a text's rhetorical situation is

to try to nuance the concept by using it in a synchronic sense. This involves viewing

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[42] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 21.
[43] Mason, *Zephaniah*, 122; Dillard, "Joel," 243.
[44] Cf. Prinsloo, *Theology*, 92. Prinsloo comments on the wide range of proposed dates of compositions for Joel before admitting that the historical context probably cannot be reconstructed, and asserts instead that, "the book has to be expounded within its intrinsic literary context."

rhetorical situation as a phenomenon that occurs on the level of the "world of the text,"

and examining the situation or exigences that the text appears to create and to which it

responds. Such an approach potentially offers a way past the frustration of trying to lock

Joel into a specific historical context. Instead, it hopes to highlight the timelessness of its

literary quality and potentially permits its persuasive power to have influence beyond the

time and place of its original utterance.[45] Working out of the New Testament, Thurén

argues that a synchronic approach to rhetorical situation is helpful, especially in cases

where historical knowledge is deficient. Thurén makes the further thought-provoking

point that even if the interpreter can objectively determine the situation of the addressees,

there is no guarantee that the text's author understood their situation in the same way.[46]

These considerations open the door for a reformulation of the concept of rhetorical

situation. This study intends to explore the workings of a synchronic approach to

rhetorical situation given the issues related to bringing a diachronic approach into the

discussion of Joel.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that moving towards a synchronic

approach to rhetorical situation undeniably cuts against Bitzer's original concept since in

his article he makes a distinction between "real" and "fictive" situations, arguing that the

situation created in a work such as a narrative or drama is not rhetorical since it is not

historical in nature.[47] Bitzer, however, does acknowledge the existence of persistent or

recurring rhetorical situations which no single rhetorical communication can resolve.

These situations evoke texts that "exist as rhetorical responses *for us* (italics his)

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[45] Dillard, "Joel," 244.

[46] Thurén, *Rhetorical*, 71.

[47] Bitzer, "Rhetorical," 257. However, he does acknowledge that a drama or a narrative can be a response to a real life rhetorical situation.

precisely because they speak to situations which persist—which are in some measure

universal."[48] It is not too much of a stretch to assert that a text such as the Bible could be

included in this body of "truly *rhetorical* (italics his) literature."[49] While Bitzer's concern

is demonstrably with actual historically locatable situations, his acknowledgment of

persisting situations and literature that seeks to respond to these situations may help to

open the door to considering rhetorical situation in a different light.

This "world of the text" or synchronic approach to rhetorical situation has some

similarities to Shaw's approach to Micah where he sought to determine the rhetorical

situation of the text primarily from the text itself, but it differs since it deliberately

remains at the textual level and does not presume to capture the world behind the text.

Focusing on the "world of the text" would help to eliminate Shaw's potential overreach

in claiming that the situations which the book of Micah constructs are reliable reflections

of an actual historical situation in ancient Israel. Instead, he could articulate the situation

that the text of Micah creates in constructing its prophetic addresses. Wuellner pushes

towards this approach in a study of Luke 12:1–13:9 in which he attempts to separate the

rhetorical situation from an historical situation. He describes a "narrative story world"

created by the author and its influence on readers, both past and present.[50] This

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[48] Bitzer, "Rhetorical," 259. His examples include: the Gettysburg Address. Burke's Speech to the Electors of Bristol and Socrates' Apology.

[49] Bitzer, "Rhetorical," 259.

[50] Wuellner, "Jesus' Sermon," 99–100. Gitay tries to find a middle ground between synchrony and diachrony in his discussion of the rhetorical presentation of Jeremiah. He claims that he is not interested in whether the prophet presented in Jer 1 reflects a historical figure or reflects a later textual presentation. He, however, is concerned with whether this presentation of Jeremiah would persuasively impact an actual historical audience as well as later readers; Gitay. "Rhetorical Presentation," 42. Notably, Gitay allows for a textual creation of the prophet, but tries to maintain an extratextual understanding of the audience, which is a rather difficult line to maintain.

entextualized world is what gives rise to the persuasive capacity of the text upon its

hearers and readers.[51]

Stamps helpfully defines a synchronic approach to rhetorical situation as, "the

situation embedded in the text and created by the text which contributes to the rhetorical

effect of the text."[52] For this to be effective, the sender must construct the situation in

such a way that elicits correspondence with some, if not the majority, of the audience.

The persuasiveness of the argument is linked tightly to the literary presentation of the

situation; if there is correspondence then the text may be capable of eliciting a fitting

response from its audience.[53] The textual presentation of the situation becomes the basis

for the argument of the whole communication and its individual rhetorical units. In

positing its rhetorical situation, the text conditions the speaker and the audience to accept

a new reality in which the discourse operates.[54] This new reality should provoke the

audience to response.

The role of the rhetor is to affect the audience through discourse and to persuade

them to make right the exigence by reacting in the way that the rhetor proposes.[55] The

rhetor thus shapes the rhetorical situation through the discourse and constructs the

exigence that requires a rhetorical response. The textuality of the rhetorical situation in

this construction means that the speaker and the audience are literary constructions who

only meet in the "world of the text." In meeting on this level, however, they have the

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[51] Wuellner, "Jesus' Sermon," 100. Wuellner emphasizes the essential nature of the present tense of the verb "give rise" as opposed to the past "gave rise." In doing so he highlights that in this construction of the rhetorical situation, the emphasis is on the textual world that exists in a perpetual present.

[52] Stamps, "Rethinking," 199.

[53] Stamps, "Rethinking," 200.

[54] Stamps, "Rethinking," 210. See the discussion of rhetorical effectiveness for further analysis of how one ought to use the concept of audience in a synchronic reading of the rhetorical situation.

[55] Patrick and Scult, Rhetoric, 34.

capacity to construct a persuasive text that continues to draw in reading and hearing

audiences whom the text can influence.

The consideration of the rhetorical situation is a dynamic process in this

synchronic configuration since the argument of the discourse evolves throughout the text.

Hauser's concept of the life-cycle of rhetorical situations is applicable to this approach.

Essentially, rhetors affect the life-cycle of rhetorical situations, either by proactively

trying to move the audience to a desired opinion or action, or by reactively adapting their

discourse as the situation shifts.[56] The rhetorical situation does not remain stagnant

throughout the course of a discourse. As the argument of a discourse unfolds, the

situation changes according to the nature of the response.[57] In other words, a discourse,

whether rejected or accepted, has an impact upon those who hear it and this receptivity

has an influence on the nature of the situation that the text constructs.[58]

In studies of biblical texts, several interpreters have noted how rhetorical

situations can develop over the course of a text. Thurén develops the life-cycle of a

rhetorical situation in his work on 1 Peter and notes that "an argumentative text is seldom

so static that the rhetorical situation would remain the same throughout the text."[59] This

claim receives further support from Hester who considers the interplay between situation

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[56] Hauser, *Rhetorical*, 60.

[57] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 491. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca speak of the "argumentative situation" rather than "rhetorical situation," but the terms are roughly parallel if rhetorical situation is understood synchronically. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's understanding of the argumentative situation encompasses the rhetor's persuasive intent and the challenges that s/he will face in gaining adherence. The argumentative situation is dynamic, shifting to accommodate the audience's responses to the discourse's progress. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca also use the idea of argumentative situation to discuss the ordering of arguments in a persuasive discourse, demonstrating that a rhetor's choice of organization has an impact of the effectiveness of the discourse; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 96, 460–61, 490–91.

[58] Consigny, "Rhetoric," 181. The discussion of the dynamism of the rhetorical situation is similar to Consigny's condition of receptivity for the rhetor, permitting the rhetor to engage the different stages of the situation as they arise, not predetermining the problems and challenges that they will create.

[59] Thurén, *Rhetorical*, 70.

and audience in the construction of epistolary literature. Hester notes that in an epistle, the author has to anticipate the effect of the communication on the audience and consider how this effect might shift the situation.[60] This potential for development in the situations guides the construction of further parts of the text. In a prophetic book such as Joel, one sees a similar dynamic. The prophet moves from describing a situation and calling for a response to describing its aftermath. Consequently, it might be helpful to look at different passages as progressive stages in the life-cycle of the rhetorical situation, where the text responds to different developments in the rhetorical situation while leading towards final resolution.

In summary, using rhetorical situation on the level of the "world of the text" indisputably conflicts with the majority of interpreters who import the concept of rhetorical situation into biblical studies. The interpreter cannot claim that the exigence or deficiency, critical to Bitzer's understanding, is an actual defect in the real world that the discourse intends to address. Instead, this use of rhetorical situation is more in line with arguments concerning the role of the rhetor in constructing the situation.[61] Similarly, it is possible to conceive of the audience in a broader sense than those who first heard the discourse. It also opens the door for the criticism that such an understanding of rhetorical situation neglects the context necessary to understand a text's construction. In the case of Joel whose actual historical exigence and date of composition are beyond our grasp, however, approaching the situation of the text from the textual perspective it presents is an appropriate way to proceed. Ultimately, the entextualized understanding of rhetorical

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[60] Hester, "Kennedy," 146. Hester attempts to put this proposal into practice in a reading of Galatians. See pp. 149–53.

[61] See Vatz, "Myth," 160. Vatz asserts that rhetoric is, "a *cause* not an *effect* (italics his) of meaning. It is antecedent, not subsequent to a situation's impact."

situation that Stamps and Wuellner propose offers the best way forward in examining a text where it is extraordinarily difficult to establish the "world behind the text."

Rhetorical Genre

The third step in the model is to consider the *rhetorical genre* of the text. Reaching back to Aristotle, rhetorical critics typically distinguish a triad of genres differentiated by the responses demanded by the audience.[62] Judicial rhetoric asks hearers to judge past events, while deliberative rhetoric invites the audience to consider what would be beneficial for its future. Finally, epideictic rhetoric aims to reinforce certain values or beliefs. Epideictic rhetoric seeks to increase the degree of adherence to a set of values shared by both audience and speaker, with a view to future action to harmonize these values with the audience's circumstances.[63] Kennedy explicitly relies on these categories since he distinguishes his examples according to his identification of their rhetorical genre.[64] Kennedy places a high priority on determining the appropriate rhetorical genre since each genre has it own particularities and argumentative style that will shape the text's persuasive intent.[65] The genre of the text guides Kennedy's analysis since it provides the framework against which he will interpret the text.

Möller mentions these basic rhetorical categories, but nuances the way in which they are applied to the biblical text. Specifically, Möller is less interested in dividing a text's rhetorical units into constitutive rhetorical genres and more concerned with how

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[62] Black, "Rhetorical Criticism," 254; Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 36–37.

[63] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 52–53.

[64] "Deliberative" texts include The Sermon on the Mount and The Sermon on the Plain, the "epideictic" example is John 15–17, and the "judicial" example is 2 Corinthians.

[65] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 36. Kennedy's concern for rhetorical genre comes out most strongly in his discussion of Galatians which he tries to assert is deliberative rhetoric, in which Paul seeks to persuade the Galatians to respond appropriate to the gospel.

such genres advance the text's persuasive strategies.[66] This is in keeping with

developments in the field of genre criticism that push towards a functional interpretation

that explores the range of communication that is possible within the constraints of a

genre. Brown defines genre as, "a socially defined constellation of typified formal and

thematic features in a group of literary works, which authors use in individualized ways

to accomplish specific communicative purposes."[67] This definition nicely captures the

idea that there should be common features that bind a collection of texts together as a

genre category, while leaving sufficient space for individual creativity and adaptation

within the confines of that category.[68]

Möller brings the consideration of rhetorical genre to another level when he

distinguishes between the rhetorical genre of specific passages and the rhetorical genre of

the broader prophetic book.[69] Thus, in his own work Möller describes most of Amos'

oracles as judicial rhetoric, condemning Israel for its past misdeeds, but he argues that the

overall strategy of the book is actually deliberative, attempting to bring about a change of

attitudes and actions in the text's situational audience through these words of

condemnation.[70] Möller's conception of a text's rhetorical genre as a part of the rhetorical

strategy is tied tightly to his construction of Amos' rhetorical situation. The book of

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[66] Möller, *Prophet*, 40.

[67] Brown, "Genre Criticism," 122.

[68] Similarly, Hester considers rhetorical genre a response to a text's audience and exigences. It is a functional part of the text's communicative strategy. See Hester, "Speaker," 84.

[69] See Brown, "Genre Criticism," 137–40. Brown discusses the ability of literary genres to "contain" shorter literary forms within their bounds, mentioning specifically the propensity of the Gospels to contain parables, proverbs and prayers within the boundaries of an overarching narrative.

[70] Möller, *Prophet*, 40. For more on the proposed prophetic ability to use oracles pronouncing judgment as attempts to modify current behaviour, see Möller, "Words," 352–86; Eagleton, "J. L. Austin," 231–36; and Houston, "Speech Acts," 167–88.

Amos is deliberative rhetoric if it addresses a Judahite audience prior to the Babylonian

captivity, where the possibility of return and redress is available.

Borrowing terminology from speech-act theory, the deliberative slant that Möller

brings to the rhetorical genre of Amos effectively emphasizes the *perlocutionary* intent of

the text to provoke response, rather than its *illocutionary* act of activating judgment.[71] In

other words, Möller demonstrates that focusing on the rhetorical genre of the individual

units within a prophetic book can be misleading after taking into consideration the book's

broader persuasive strategy. In the case of Amos, identifying the condemnatory nature of

the individual units could cause the interpreter to miss what Möller believes is a call to

response and return in an identifiable rhetorical situation.

Moving from the genre of individual units to the genre of the broader discourse

opens up a potential pitfall in this step of the methodology since it may be too easy to

categorize all prophetic books as ultimately deliberative attempts to modify future

behaviour or belief. This concern for the text's continuing impact is an integral part of

what it means to read a text as authoritative scripture. If one's philosophical or

theological predispositions require reading the text as active in all contexts, it will have

an impact on the consideration of a text's genre.[72]

Amador proposes the possibility of "hybrid genres" in the biblical text as one

solution for moving past this particular trap. Amador argues that for example, 1

Corinthians should be understood as deliberative-forensic with the ultimate aim of

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[71] Möller, *Prophet*, 40.

[72] Garrett and Xiao's work on the concept of discourse tradition elucidates this point. A discourse tradition encompasses the presuppositions and beliefs that rhetors bring to their communication; Garrett and Xiao, "Rhetorical," 34–38. Identifying a prophetic book as a prophetic book casts it into a certain discourse tradition that provides both the source and the limits of the communicative strategies. The freedom to construct the discourse is limited by the fundamental values and presuppositions of prophetic texts.

educating its audience.[73] This identification permits him to break free of the constraints of

genre categories when passages within the text do not match the expectations of one

specific category. A slightly different approach is to connect rhetorical genre to the

exigences of a rhetorical situation. If one identifies multiple exigences for a rhetorical

situation, it may be difficult to determine one controlling rhetorical genre. Further, a

complex text tends to have a "dynamic rhetorical situation" that shifts throughout the

discourse, again rendering it difficult to establish an overarching genre category.[74]

Consequently, identifying the rhetorical genre of a larger work may prove difficult and

perhaps not as helpful in determining its persuasive force as has been thought.

After discussing the limitations of genre categories in determining the persuasive

appeal of a text, it is important to note that Möller differs greatly from Kennedy in the

significance attached to the rhetorical genres identified in given texts. Möller essentially

abandons the category of rhetorical genre in his discussion of Amos.[75] He devotes

lengthy chapters to determining the text's macrostructure, rhetorical situation, and

strategy before delving into exegetical analysis in the latter half of his monograph.

Rhetorical genre does not reappear in the discussion of the different rhetorical units,

suggesting that for Möller, establishing a unit's rhetorical genre does not necessarily help

to determine its persuasive strategy.

In the case of Joel, it is unclear whether determining the rhetorical genre of given

units of the discourse will definitively improve our understanding of the text's persuasive

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[73] Amador, "Where," 198. For the educational role of epideictic rhetoric, see Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, New Rhetoric, 51–54.

[74] Hester, "Speaker," 86.

[75] Similarly, "rhetorical genre" is completely absent from Shaw's discussion of Micah. Shaw pares the method of Kennedy down to "rhetorical unit," "rhetorical situation," and "rhetorical strategy." Also missing is a discussion of the text's "rhetorical effectiveness."

strategies and effects. Broadly speaking, it would seem that the text employs deliberative

rhetoric in the rhetorical units where there is a heavy concentration of imperatives

directing the implied audience to react or respond in a given manner (cf. Joel 1:1–14;

2:12–17), epideictic rhetoric in passages describing the character of YHWH (cf. Joel 2:1–

11; 2:18–27), and potentially judicial rhetoric in passages condemning foreign nations

(cf. Joel 4:1–21). Even within these units, however, one cannot make hard and fast

distinctions since the text may contain features of multiple genres in a given passage.[76]

Consequently, this study intends to follow Möller and while it will mention features that

suggest a generic orientation for each particular rhetorical unit, it will subordinate such

discussion under the rhetorical strategies that the text employs to make its persuasive

appeal.

Rhetorical Strategy

The fourth step of this method of rhetorical criticism is to look at the *rhetorical

strategy* employed within the particular text. It is at this stage of the analysis that the

concerns of rhetorical criticism as the "art of composition" and as the "art of persuasion"

are most closely intertwined. Essentially, rhetorical analysis must delve into stylistic

concerns in order to draw out the tropes and figures that the rhetor employs to affect the

audience.[77] The rhetorical critic here examines how the text is structured as well as what

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[76] For example, Joel 2:12–17 calls for the audience to respond in a certain way in order to avert the
calamity described in the previous rhetorical unit, which would probably classify it as deliberative rhetoric.
However, the primary reason that the text gives for calling for this response revolves around its description
of YHWH, which aims to reinforce the audience's belief in his gracious and compassionate nature. Hester
aptly states that "it is important to understand that the selection of genre is itself an inventional choice and
has to be set into the context of the interaction between and among speaker, audience and situations."
Hester, "Speaker," 91–92.

[77] Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion,* 40–41.

sort of imagery and metaphor it contains that gives the text its persuasive power. The goal

is to determine how the particular choices of language and imagery organize the

argument through different stylistic techniques. This involves identifying literary devices

such as chiasmus, inclusio, metaphor or rhetorical questions in a given text.[78] In

rhetorical criticism as the art of persuasion, however, the interpreter does not simply

articulate these devices as literary ornamentation but rather seeks to demonstrate how

they relate to the process of gaining adherence to the argument in question.

Prophetic texts appear to be particularly amendable to analysis of their persuasive

intent. In a discussion of word order choices, van der Merwe and Wendland note that

prophets and preachers typically try to modify the behaviour of their audience; their

poetic constructions rarely convey information for its own sake.[79] The information

embedded in the stylistic flourishes contains data that ought to motivate an audience to

give heed to the prophetic speech directed towards them.

The analysis of different approaches to persuasion also fits into this category. It

may activate the classical distinctions of *ethos, pathos,* and *logos,* which correspond

roughly to the character of the rhetor, the frame of mind the text evokes, and the details

of the text itself.[80] Employing these concepts allows the critic to explore the full range of

persuasive approaches, from the rational and cognitive dimensions to those driven by

emotion and imagination.[81] In particular, it is interesting to notice the relative absence of

rhetorical *ethos* in Joel. The text hides the character of the prophet, offering no call or

commissioning narrative for the prophet to establish his *bona fides*. The relative

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[78] Möller, *Prophet,* 41.

[79] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 114–15.

[80] Möller, *Prophet,* 41.

[81] Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 461.

anonymity of the prophet in Joel makes some sense given the status of a prophet as

YHWH's messenger; their will and character are subjugated ultimately by their status as

one who claims to speak for YHWH.[82] In contrast to *ethos*, both *logos* and *pathos* are

visible throughout Joel. The prophet claims to have a grasp of the situation and proposes

seemingly fitting responses to it (*logos*), while conjuring up startling images of both

desolation and blessing that will result if the audience either rejects or heeds his call

(*pathos*). Thus, these categories are useful in providing insight into the different strategies

that a text can use to construct its persuasive appeal.

Möller extends his consideration of rhetorical strategy beyond examining the

internal structure and devices of each rhetorical unit. He states that the critic's task is to

examine how the various rhetorical units work together to achieve unified purpose, or

how they fail to accomplish this.[83] The relationship between the rhetorical units is

important to consider in the case of Joel given the debate over the text's essential unity. If

there is a discernible strategy or purpose that binds together all of the rhetorical units,

then it may help move forward the debate. Thus, the analysis of rhetorical strategy needs

to be able to step outside of the techniques employed within particular rhetorical units in

order to examine how the text uses that material to create the broader rhetorical strategy

that informs the persuasive appeal of the entire discourse.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The fifth and final stage of the model of Kennedy and Möller is to consider the

rhetorical effectiveness of the particular text. The purpose of this step is to determine

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[82] Darsey, *Prophetic*, 28.
[83] Möller, *Prophet*, 42.

whether the unit in question could function as effective persuasion within the situation to which it is being applied. Kennedy uses rhetorical effectiveness to look back and examine the strength of the rhetorical strategies that the text employs and how well they fit the rhetorical situation. He considers the final step as one in which interpreters broaden their perspective and reflect upon the overall effect of the rhetorical unit. This step essentially permits Kennedy to briefly summarize the previous discussion and to expand its implications beyond the narrow boundaries of the text in question. For example, in his reflection on the Sermon on the Mount, Kennedy claims that his analysis reveals that it has unity of thought, that Jesus maintains audience contact, and that the employed rhetorical devices are not ornamental, but functional in creating audience contact and intensity.[84] Kennedy notes Matthew's claim that the audience was astounded at Jesus' speech and then asserts that "it has continued to startle and challenge readers for two thousand years."[85] Consequently, Kennedy views it as an example of "effective" rhetoric, emphasizing its continued ability to astound and confront its readers despite the passing of millennia.

Despite Kennedy's example, rhetorical effectiveness remains a nebulous concept. On a diachronic level, it is hard to gauge effectiveness since rarely do we have recorded the response of the audience that heard the message.[86] Even in cases where the text does provide an account of an audience's response, including Kennedy's example of the

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[84] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 63. Interestingly, Kennedy has a much more negative judgment of Luke's parallel "Sermon on the Plain." He concludes his analysis by claiming that Luke 6 is an ineffective speech and that any rhetorical impact it may have is due in large part to the *ethos* of Jesus, its speaker; Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 67.
[85] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 63.
[86] Fox, "Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision," 4. In addition to the lack of information concerning audience response to a prophetic message, Fox also points out that prophets often tended to portray their audiences in a very negative light, presumably to try to spur them to hear their message.

Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:28–29), one could understand it as both an account of the text's effectiveness on a particular audience and as a further rhetorical strategy to convince a later reading audience that Jesus' words ought to impact them in a similar fashion.

In an attempt to move rhetorical effectiveness beyond a search for records of audience response, Möller proposes considering whether or not the utterance is a fitting response to the exigence underlying the communication. He cannot state for certain whether the rhetorical work successfully modified the exigence since that depends on factors external to the text; instead he proposes to consider if it has the potential to modify it on the basis of its internal logic and persuasive thrust.[87] This criterion is vague and potentially self-fulfilling since an interpreter is likely to conclude that the text to which they have devoted a great deal of time and energy is capable of modifying whatever circumstances created its rhetorical situation.

Möller's own attempt to apply the "fitting response" criterion requires further reflection and development since he devotes only the final two pages of his study to considering the potential effectiveness of Amos' rhetoric. He concludes that although it obviously did not successfully modify the exigence of Judah's improper behaviour, its depiction of Israel's behaviour and ultimate fate certainly had the potential to do so.[88] In other words, the fault for Amos' ineffectiveness in Möller's construction of its rhetorical situation lies with the audience rather than with the rhetor or the message. One wonders

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[87] Möller, *Prophet*, 42–43.
[88] Möller, *Prophet*, 295–96. He allows for the potential that Amos's message may have persuaded some of those who heard it, but admits the highly conjectural nature of that proposal. He suggests that the preserved oracles of Amos may have worked in concert with an Isaianic condemnation of Judahite elites. Again, however, even if this were the case, the oracles of Amos still failed to effectively persuade that audience to reform and avoid divine judgment.

how a text can be construed as "effective" if it fails to fulfill its primary rhetorical

function, that is, to persuade its audience to modify their behaviour or to adopt the text's

point of view. Ultimately, the paucity of Möller's analysis indicates that if this model of

rhetorical criticism intends to keep rhetorical effectiveness as a category, it must consider

the concept more thoroughly. As a result, one of the contributions of this particular study

will be to explore the idea of "rhetorical effectiveness" in greater detail.

The need to develop a more nuanced approach to rhetorical effectiveness cuts to

the core of rhetorical criticism as a discipline. One of the repeated refrains of rhetorical

critics is that the discipline too frequently remains content with describing a text's

rhetoric, without moving to consider its actual persuasive impact. Wuellner laments the

"ghetto" of biblical stylistics that he claims imprisons critics in a functionless, contextless

approach to the biblical text.[89] Similarly, Hester appeals for rhetorical studies to move

beyond analysis to actual criticism, or from descriptions of a text's arguments to

consideration of how it maintains its persuasive power.[90] In Kennedy's and Möller's

approaches, rhetorical effectiveness could provide the potential for the interpreter to

move from describing the text's rhetorical arguments to critiquing its persuasive potential

and effect. The risk of a rhetorical approach remaining primarily in the realm of stylistics

is evident in critiques of Muilenburg whom some consider to have essentially divorced

the text from its rhetorical environment in his consideration of the text's rhetorical form

and figures.[91] Consequently, a category like rhetorical effectiveness that seeks to delve

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[89] Wuellner, "Where," 462.
[90] Hester, "Kennedy," 154. His proposal is to examine ancient and modern theories of rhetoric in order to ground rhetorical strategies into the frameworks that help to explain their persuasive power.
[91] Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Beyond," 330.

deeply into the text's persuasive power offers the interpreter a significant opportunity to enhance the scope of the analysis.

In order to further develop the analysis of rhetorical effectiveness, it may be helpful to consider the notion of the audience whom the discourse seeks to affect in more detail. This chapter mentions above that "audience" was one of the three criteria that Bitzer uses to determine a discourse's rhetorical situation, but that Bitzer focuses almost exclusively on those who actually heard a particular discourse or whom a particular text addressed. Audience, in the discussion of rhetorical situation, is significant since it guides the rhetor in the rhetorical strategies and approaches that they ought to adopt. The concept of audience, however, is also vital in considering a text's rhetorical effectiveness since this category requires that a text achieve its effects on someone or some group.[92]

Möller clearly indicates that he does not want the effectiveness of prophetic rhetoric to rest solely on the actual response of an historical audience. Instead, his proposal to examine its capacity for modifying an exigence expands the boundaries of the audience who can judge a prophetic text's persuasive force. If Möller claims that Amos is "effective" rhetoric despite the fact that its original audience did not heed its message, it would appear necessary to appeal to another audience who found it persuasive.

Prophetic literature as a broad category may even lend itself to a consideration of how it affects a wider audience. Alter helpfully notes that since biblical prophecy employs poetic language it can elevate its utterances to another level of significance, where what the text says in response to a given situation can be aligned with an

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[92] Gitay, "Prophetic Discourse," 24. Gitay locates rhetorical study in the relationship between the text and its audience. He has in mind the original hearing audience of a prophetic speech, which may prove difficult to isolate in other instances.

archetypal horizon.[93] According to this perspective, a prophetic message seemingly

located in a given space and time can continue to speak and invite people from very

different times and places to locate themselves within the text and to allow it to impact

them.[94]

Considering rhetorical effectiveness beyond an immediate historical audience

involves determining diverse levels of audiences that operate within the different

orientations towards the text. A rhetor may craft a text to speak in a certain time and

setting, but this particular situation does not encompass the full extent of the text's

persuasive capability; there are other "audiences" whom the text may persuade. The

process of articulating the other levels of audience is shaped by the orientation that the

interpreter brings to the discourse in question. An introductory step in this process may

be found in an article by rhetoricians David M. Hunsaker and Craig R. Smith who

attempt to bring clarity to the categorization process when they differentiate between a

"situational audience" who perceive a given issue or exigence, a "rhetorical audience"

who may act on the rhetor's appeals, and an "actual audience" whom the rhetor chooses

to address.[95] In other words, the immediate audience who first hears the discourse is only

a small part of those whom the rhetor seeks to persuade. Hunsaker and Smith's use of the

term "situational audience" is rooted firmly in the diachronic realm. They define the

situational audience as, "*witness* (italics theirs) to the rhetorical situation: knowledge of

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[93] Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 146. He uses the example of prophetic condemnation of exploitation of the poor and oppressed as an example of a theme that can resonate to an audience beyond the one to which it was originally addressed.

[94] Fox argues similarly and points to an example like the Gettysburg Address to indicate that the rhetorical force of a given discourse may far exceed its impact on its original audience. See Fox, "Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision," 4.

[95] Hunsaker and Smith, "Nature," 148–52.

the rhetorical exigence is direct."[96] Essentially, the situational audience is composed of

those who share a common perception or interest concerning a particular exigence.

Hunsaker and Smith's situational audience accounts for those who were not part of the

actual audience for a given discourse, but this audience is still locatable in time and

space.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's concept of the "universal audience" may also

help in more thoroughly considering rhetorical effect. They describe the "universal

audience" as the compilation of those capable of judging the truth-claims of an

argument.[97] This universal audience exists primarily as an imaginative construct that the

rhetor ought to keep in mind when putting together an argument. Arguments persuasive

to the universal audience must be "of compelling character...self-evident, and possess an

absolute and timeless validity, independent of local or historical contingencies."[98] The

primary purpose of the universal audience is to serve as a check on the rhetor when they

construct their arguments for particular audiences.[99] In other words, the rhetor ought not

to employ any argument that could sway an audience if that argument is objectionable or

repugnant to a broader construction of a universal audience. Scult characterizes the

relationship between audiences as one in which a particular, concrete audience keeps the

concept of the universal audience from becoming an abstract irrelevancy or a product of

the rhetor's own eccentricities, while the universal audience prevents the rhetor from

succumbing to the temptation to go to any length to persuade a particular audience.[100]

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[96] Hunsaker and Smith, "Nature," 148.
[97] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, New Rhetoric, 31.
[98] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, New Rhetoric, 32.
[99] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, New Rhetoric, 31.
[100] Scult, "Universal," 159. Scult's example is that of a rhetor who may employ arguments designed to sway a racist audience. The test of the "universal audience" ought to persuade that rhetor that such arguments are unlikely to stand close scrutiny.

The universal audience, therefore, exists in the "world of the text," as the complex of readers upon whom the text can have persuasive appeal.

While they acknowledge that the universal audience can never be defined perfectly, Patrick and Scult adeptly argue that this concept can be used to articulate the rhetorical power of the biblical text. They claim that by examining the text's arguments from the perspectives of both the historical audience which it affected and the universal audience that its truth-claims hope to persuade, the critic is in a better position to analyze its rhetorical power.[101] This approach allows the interpreter to more fully explore the transactions between text and reader that shape the text's persuasive appeal on both historical and epistemological levels.[102] Patrick and Scult view the universal audience as an effective check of the rhetor's capacity to manipulate specific audiences since the truth-claims that the text makes must withstand scrutiny from the universal audience.[103] Thus, the concept of universal audience may provide a way to speak of a text's rhetorical effectiveness beyond the time and place of its original composition.

Kennedy provides a view similar to Patrick and Scult in the final stage of his methodology by claiming that this stage permits the interpreter to not only bring the analyzed text into clearer focus, but also to look beyond to its awareness of the human

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[101] Patrick and Scult. "Rhetoric and Ideology." 79.

[102] Patrick and Scult, "Rhetoric and Ideology." 79. See also Scult, "Relationship between Rhetoric and Hermeneutics." 226. Scult argues that one of the effects of reading a "sacred" rhetorical text is that its original rhetorical situation remains dormant so that the text's effects on the present can come to the forefront. Scult probably states the case too strongly since much of biblical interpretation revolves around determining the "original" situation of the text, but he is on the right track when he notes how the interpreter must move towards finding commonalities between the "original" situation and interpreter's own situation in order to properly unleash the rhetorical power of the text.

[103] Patrick and Scult make the fascinating move of considering God to be part of the biblical text's universal audience. In making this move, they argue that a primary purpose of the biblical text is to bear faithful witness to the deity who called forth this discourse. They argue that considering God as part of the universal audience should mean that "the narrators and prophets did not consciously manipulate information and emotions to win their audience. They could not be 'base rhetors' in the presence of this conception of the universal audience." Patrick and Scult, "Rhetoric and Ideology." 80.

condition and perhaps even to religious or philosophical truth.[104] This move may be

especially relevant to a book such as Joel where we have little evidence of its particular

audience or their response to the text's rhetorical power. The book of Joel is constructed

as a prophetic message from YHWH to a particular audience at a particular time

responding to a particular exigence that is difficult to locate in history. Consequently, it is

incredibly difficult to talk about the rhetorical effectiveness of this text to its original

audience. This text, however, continues to exist and have an impact on further reading

audiences. In this way, it may be possible to consider the text's rhetorical effectiveness as

it seeks to communicate across time and space to this more universal audience.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's concept of the universal audience has parallels

to the idea of the "implied reader" or "implied audience" found in narrative criticism.

Both are text-immanent moves that hold that a discourse gives clues concerning who

would be its ideal readers or audience.[105] The implied audience is bound to the text and

functions as a communicative instance that guides the rhetor in the process of shaping his

or her discourse.[106] If one can outline the parameters of this audience from the directives

found within the text, one can also perhaps pass judgment on how a given discourse

intends to affect it.[107] A preliminary consideration of the nature of an implied audience

for Joel would consider the strategies through which the text appeals for response.

Specifically, the text employs imperatives directed at specific groups that may begin the

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[104] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 38.

[105] Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 20. See also the discussion of Conrad's use of the "Model Reader," in the previous chapter.

[106] van Wieringen, *Implied Reader*, 25.

[107] Powell differentiates between rhetorical-critical approaches and narrative criticism by claiming that the "real" audience is of less concern in narrative criticism. It is the implied audience or reader that is all that needs to be determined. He later claims, however, that he does not want to divorce the study of the Bible from "referentiality," arguing that historical and narrative approaches need to be laid side by side; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 15, 98.

process of constructing an implied audience (cf. Joel 1:2, 5–14; 2:1, 15–17; 4:4–8). This study will further examine the construction of implied audiences and the persuasive appeal of the text's rhetoric to these audiences in its discussion of individual passages.

Patrick and Scult further employ the idea of an implied audience in their call for a "hermeneutics of affirmation" when reading biblical texts. This orientation toward the text permits it to have a persuasive impact on interpreters who read it many centuries after its original composition by allowing them to situate themselves as among those to whom the text speaks and intends to persuade.[108] They argue that "the interpreter should assume that the text seeks to persuade an intellectually, emotionally and morally competent audience, and judge as best one can whether it succeeds in doing so."[109] This orientation connects the interpreter to an appropriate understanding of the text's implied audience, which should help the interpreter experience the persuasive appeal of the text. This echoes the presentation of the literary nature of a text's situation to its implied audience since the implied audience must consent to the text's presentation of the situation in order for it to be able to be persuasive.[110] When an audience accepts a text's presentation of the situation, its persuasive appeal can come to the forefront.

Patrick and Scult derive their approach from their understanding of all interpreters as "situated" with pre-existing conditions and commitments that they bring to the text. They are responding to readings that employ a "hermeneutic of suspicion" and seek to read against the grain of what appears to be the text's meaning. For example, the Bible

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[108] Patrick and Scult, "Rhetoric and Ideology," 66. See also Iser who views the ability of the reader to enter the world of the text as an essential element in what allows literature to transcend its time and place in history; Iser, "Indeterminacy," 44.
[109] Patrick and Scult, "Rhetoric and Ideology," 65, note 4.
[110] Stamps, "Rethinking," 200.

and Culture Collective critiques Kennedy's model of rhetorical criticism by claiming that

it could be employed in an anti-critical agenda, in which demonstrating the rhetorical

strategies of the text passes too easily into assuming the success of those strategies,

thereby arriving at the "truth" of the text and closing off further discussion or critique.[111]

The potential silencing of dissenting voices is worth considering when discussing biblical

rhetoric since it is, "a rhetoric with immense power in that it assumes that that world view

is the only viable one for humanity to accept."[112] In other words, there is a significant

collection of interpreters who worry that arguing that a biblical text succeeds in

persuading its audiences (whether situational, implied or universal) could close down

further debate over the meaning or ethical import of the given text.

This concern has some legitimacy since it reminds interpreters of the rhetorical

nature of all discourse. Tull artfully encapsulates the nature of critical inquiry by claiming

that "the very practice we are analyzing, we are also ourselves exercising, since any

stance that an interpreter takes concerning the text is by nature a rhetorical stance."[113]

One can assert, however, that it is also a valid approach to read the text as the "best text"

it can be, allowing the potential validity of its truth claims to shape and guide the

interpretation.[114] This approach does not necessarily seek to subsume all other

orientations towards the text. It does demand, however, the same privilege of being

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[111] Bible and Culture Collective, "Rhetorical Criticism," 182.

[112] Phillips, "Rhetoric," 259.

[113] Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 163.

[114] The call to read the text as the "best text" creates a fascinating duel of definitions. Patrick and Scult use the concept of "best text" to call the interpreter to measure the different meanings that a text has had against the interpreter's judgment as to what the text, in its fullest, most consistent and most natural sense could communicate; Patrick and Scult, Rhetoric, 21. In practice, this usually leads them to an approach that affirms the text's religious authority and significance as they encounter the text as Scripture. In contrast, the Bible and Culture Collective claim that the "best text" is one resists pressures to "reify and commodify" exegesis; Bible and Culture Collective, "Rhetorical Criticism," 183–85. In other words, the "best text" should critique overarching systems of interpretation. As mentioned above, this makes them highly suspicious of any approach that seems to support a "conservative" interpretive tradition.

explored accorded to "suspicious" readings of the text. Patrick and Scult suggest that this

approach offers the advantage of promoting "a view of human existence in which the

knowing subject is open to being taught by others. The interpreter can only *receive*

(italics theirs) truth from a text if he or she is willing to entertain the possibility of its

being true."[115] This perspective helps to demonstrate that a rhetorical-critical approach

can incorporate the stance of interpreters who position themselves as readers capable of

being swayed by its persuasiveness.

In light of the preceding discussion, this study will explore rhetorical

effectiveness through two interrelated frameworks. First, it will consider the signs and

signals in the text that suggest a rhetorical effect on the text's implied audience and see

how the text guides the implied audience through the course of the book. Secondly, it will

consider rhetorical effectiveness through the idea of the universal audience who

experiences this text beyond its original time and place. This approach opens up the

scope of rhetorical effectiveness so that one can consider the continuing persuasive

impact of a text.[116]

In retrospect, the discussion of rhetorical effectiveness demonstrates the

interrelated nature of the different stages of this rhetorical-critical model. The

interpreter's consideration of the rhetorical unit's effectiveness is tightly tied to how one

constructs the rhetorical situation and its implied audience. It is also further reliant on

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[115] Patrick and Scult, "Rhetoric and Ideology," 77.

[116] Black, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 74–75. Black comes close to this understanding of rhetorical effectiveness when he argues for opening up the category to consider audiences other than the immediate hearing audience. He proposes numerous possibilities for further examination, suggesting that the critic can "assess all the differences that a rhetorical discourse has made in the world, or will make, and how the differences are made and why." While he adopts a diachronic approach for discussing multiple audiences for considering effectiveness, his imaginative illustration of the concept provides the chance to push it even further in this study.

how one assesses the text's potential impact on a universal audience who can be persuaded of its truth and rhetorical power. It also permits an assessment of the construction and arrangement of the argument that considers the effect of the various persuasive strategies that the text employs. If the interpreter can consider these elements, then the category of rhetorical effectiveness is a vital summary step in rhetorical analysis. The interpreter engages in the process assessing the impact of the constituent parts as they work together to create the broader message of the whole discourse.

Conclusion

Rhetorical criticism as the "art of persuasion" is a valuable approach for studying prophetic literature. Prophetic literature functions as intermediation between the divine and earthly realms, with the prophetic figures themselves operating as agents intending to persuade their earthly audience of the importance of the divine message.[117] Consequently, studies of prophetic literature that seek to draw forth its various means of persuasion are helpful in deepening our understanding of this corpus. Contemporary interpreters such as Gitay, Shaw, Möller, and Patrick offer examples of persuasive studies of prophetic rhetoric, but there remains much of this corpus that is available for rhetorical study.

Given the history and development of rhetorical-critical studies in the prophets, the book of Joel provides an appealing test case for demonstrating the usefulness of rhetorical analyses in the prophets and for a modified version of Kennedy's and Möller's models. This potential is visible when Joel shifts image-worlds from one apparently

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[117] Barton, "History," 64. Barton makes the claim that one of the signs of the persuasive power of prophetic rhetoric is that these texts became normative in scriptural history and tradition. The general acceptance of the prophets' portrayal of Israel and Judah's sin, and the necessity for divine punishment reflects the rhetorical skill of the prophets.

rooted in natural catastrophes such as locust infestations and drought towards

eschatological judgment oracles. The rhetorical effects of this progression are well worth

considering. Further, the development of the text's imagery helps to establish its

structural divisions. Within these textual units, one can explore the various rhetorical

strategies and literary devices at work that create its persuasive impact. One can also

show interplay between the rhetorical genres that inform the structure of different oracles

as the prophet moves from exhortation of his audience, to promises of comfort and

blessing, and challenges addressed to other nations.

Joel's lack of historical specificity creates an intriguing challenge for working

with the concepts of rhetorical situation and rhetorical effectiveness since it is incredibly

difficult to determine the audience to whom it was originally addressed or what impact it

could have had. This virtually demands an extension of these concepts so that rhetorical

situation and rhetorical effect can be used to discuss the persuasive impact of the text

beyond a presumed historical location. Instead the interpreter can focus on the text's

potential to speak to an implied audience that is constructed as capable and willing to be

persuaded by the argument of the discourse. This project intends to discover and

articulate the means of persuasion employed within the book of Joel and to place these

within the context of rhetorical situations that the discourse constructs while also

considering their continuing persuasive impact.

To summarize, the intention of this study is to demonstrate that Joel is a unified

work of prophetic literature that moves from scenes of devastation to promises of

restoration through its persuasive evocation of divine and human responses in order to

articulate the necessity of calling and relying upon YHWH in all circumstances. To

achieve this goal, this study employs a rhetorical-critical method that consists of four

elements. First, it will determine the text's rhetorical units. This step involves locating the

signals of aperture and closure that demarcate these units. Secondly, this study will

investigate the rhetorical situation of the text. Since it is incredibly difficult to look

behind the text of Joel and locate it in time and space, this study will consider rhetorical

situation as it is constructed in the "world of the text." Thirdly, this study will examine

the rhetorical strategies employed within the various rhetorical units that evoke divine

and human responses. The discussion of rhetorical genre, which for Kennedy is its own

discrete step, will be subordinated to its role in the development of the text's strategies.

Discussing rhetorical strategy will also involve considering the literary devices, themes

and imagery that the text invokes in order to persuade its audience. While the bulk of the

discussion will focus on the individual rhetorical units, this study will also consider how

they connect to build the persuasive thrust of the entire book. Finally, this study will

examine the rhetorical effectiveness of the text. This will involve considering the

persuasive impact of the text's rhetorical strategies in its entextualized rhetorical situation

on the implied audience whom the text constructs, as well as its influence on the

universal audience for whom the text maintains its persuasive power.

Chapter Two: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 1:1–14

Introduction

This chapter intends to explore the persuasive strategies and effects of Joel 1:1–14. It locates the initial rhetorical situation against the backdrop of the text's use of locust imagery and agricultural devastation. It examines how the text uses a series of imperatives to construct its implied audience and motivates them to respond to the situation that it describes. Joel 1:1–14 deftly gathers the whole community into its implied audience by addressing it both as a whole and in its individual components, calling each part of the implied audience to respond. The appeals to the members of the implied audience culminate when the prophet directs the whole community to gather under priestly leadership and cry out to YHWH. Joel 1:1–14 effectively takes a natural disaster in the locust plague and uses it to direct the implied audience to respond by maintaining its commitment to YHWH, even amidst difficult circumstances.

Rhetorical Unit

The first stage of the rhetorical-critical model that this study employs is to determine the boundaries of the rhetorical units within the text. At this stage the goal is to divide the book into discrete passages in order to see both how they communicate their message and how they fit into the broader shape of the entire book.[1] As mentioned in the discussion of theories concerning Joel's compositional unity, Joel 2:18 is frequently viewed as a major break in the book since it begins the process of reversing the pictures

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[1] For a summary of all of these different structural proposals, see Crenshaw, *Joel*, 29–34.

of devastation and destruction articulated in previous verses.[2] Another recognizable

disjunction occurs at Joel 3:1 (Eng: Joel 2:28)[3] where the image-world shifts from

locusts, armies, agricultural devastation, and restoration, to broader eschatological visions

of the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit and a day of judgment against the nations.[4]

Essentially, Joel 3–4 appears to shift the focus of the day of YHWH from a day in which

Judah's existence is threatened to a day of restoration and salvation from its external

enemies. The majority of interpreters base their analysis on one of these two points of

division.[5]

Beyond the question of the book's principal hinge, there are several different

proposals for determining the subunits of the book. Joel 1:1 is clearly its own distinct unit

since it is the superscription for the whole book. Superscriptions stand as structurally

independent from the body of the book and they introduce and identify the material that

follows.[6] Joel's superscription differs from many other prophetic books since it only

reveals that what follows is the communication of YHWH. The superscription gives no

other details that would help in the process of placing the book within the context of its

original utterance such as location of the utterance or regnal formulae to provide a

historical context.

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[2] See Allen. *Joel*, 39–42; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*. 7; Ahlström. *Joel*. 130–32; Wendland. *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 20.

[3] Joel 3:1–5 and 4:1–21 in the Hebrew text are equivalent to Joel 2:28–32 and Joel 3:1–21 in English Bibles. Hereafter this study will use the Hebrew versification without making reference to the English.

[4] Nogalski states that dividing Joel 1–2 from Joel 3–4 is a division by content, while dividing Joel 1:1–2:17 from 2:18–4:21 is a division in terms of form; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 2. For a recent example of an interpreter who places the "hinge" between Joel 2:27 and 3:1, see Simkins. *Yahweh's Activity*, 99, 201.

[5] Prinsloo is an exception, arguing for an incremental building of the argument, with each unit related to its predecessor through shared vocabulary and phraseology. See Prinsloo, *Theology*, 122–27.

[6] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 152. See also Stuart who refers to this verse as the simple title of Joel, limiting our knowledge of him to his patronymic and his identification as a prophet. Stuart. *Hosea—Jonah*. 237.

The intention of this study is to keep these structural proposals in mind, while

beginning on a smaller scale and building towards a picture of the discourse as a whole,

rather than offer any firm conclusions at this juncture.[7] Consequently, the place to begin

is with a consideration of the text's first principal rhetorical unit that follows the

superscription. The most viable place to demarcate the end of the first rhetorical unit that

follows the superscription is at Joel 1:14. Joel 1:1–14 reflects a call to communal

complaint or lament concerning the locust plague described within this section.[8] The

prophet uses imagery of locust attacks and agricultural devastation in order to set up his

appeal to his implied audience to lament and cry out to YHWH. Joel 1:15–20 moves from

a call to communal gathering of lament to offer up actual prayers of lamentation, which

sets it apart from the material found in Joel 1:1–14.[9]

Joel 1:14 also provides two signals that it concludes this first rhetorical unit. First,

it forms an inclusio with Joel 1:2 by directing the final calls to assemble to the "elders"

(זְקֵנִים) and the "dwellers of the land" (יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ). Joel 1:2 begins the prophetic speech

by addressing these groups before moving into appeals to specific sub-groups within the

broader community. By returning to the "elders" and the "dwellers of the land" in Joel

1:14, the text signals the completion of its series of appeals to gather its audience.

Secondly, the final imperative of Joel 1:14 calls the community to cry out to YHWH

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[7] Coggins comments on the divergent proposals concerning structure, likening them to a form of reader-response criticism; they are welcome if they help a reader better interpret the text, but should not necessarily be granted any objective status; Coggins, *Joel*, 18. Consequently, this study does not claim that the divisions it employs are the only way to divide the text, but it does assert that they reflect the progression of the text as a persuasive argument.

[8] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 154; Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 239. See also Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 20.

[9] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 28.

(וְזַעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה). This succinctly encapsulates all of the previous imperatives and marks the emotive peak of this first rhetorical unit.[10]

After delineating the boundaries of the first rhetorical unit for investigation, what follows is an application of the other elements of the rhetorical-critical model discussed in the previous chapter. It will prove necessary to make further sub-divisions within the boundaries of this rhetorical unit. Joel 1:1 is the superscription that introduces the remainder of the discourse while 1:2–4 details the nature of the reason for the prophetic message. Joel 1:5–14 then calls elements of the community to lament, culminating in the final command to cry out to YHWH. These smaller units combine to provide a full picture of the persuasive intent of Joel 1:1–14.

Rhetorical Situation

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study proposes to use the category of rhetorical situation in a different way than the majority of previous rhetorical-critical studies. The inability to determine the situation of the "world behind the text" with any degree of certainty drives the interpreter towards an understanding of the rhetorical situation of this prophetic book from criteria internal to the text. While this approach may not prove satisfactory for placing the book into a specific historical situation, it can at least locate the passage in the situation which its words describe and reveal the concerns that the rhetor intends to address. From this understanding of the rhetorical situation of Joel 1:1–14, it will be possible to commence considering how the prophet's rhetorical

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[10] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 120.

strategy would impact the situation that the text describes.[11] The situation develops as the

text proceeds, but we can hopefully derive an understanding of the text's initial rhetorical

situation from Joel 1:1–14.

Locust Infestation

First, the situation of this passage is closely linked to the metaphor of locusts in

Joel 1:4–7, which also recurs explicitly in Joel 2:25. Scholars propose two possible

image-worlds that inform the portrayal of the locusts in Joel 1:1–14. They view the

locusts as either: i) a metaphor for a foreign invader; or ii) a depiction of an actual locust

infestation.[12] Adiñach, Stuart, and Ogden are among those who assert that the locusts are

best understood as symbols for a foreign invader. Adiñach suggests that the use of locusts

as an image for human armies was frequent in ancient Near Eastern literature and that the

language and imagery that Joel attributes to locusts resembles other biblical descriptions

of military activities (cf. Judg 6:3–5; 7:12; Jer 46:23; Nah 3:15–16).[13] Stuart argues that

the hyperbolic language that Joel employs raises the relatively familiar occurrence of a

locust plague to purely figurative heights. Consequently, Stuart claims that the text would

be giving a locust plague far greater weight than it would typically deserve.[14] Stuart

proposes that Joel has in mind the Babylonian army since the death and destruction that it

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[11] Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 226. Stuart argues that the general message of the text and its impact remains strong despite the difficulty in locating it historically. This indicates that it may be possible to put forward some proposals as to what sort of situation might most impacted by the message that follows. Dillard also suggests that the ambiguity of Joel's historical situation would actually favour its reuse in the face of ensuing calamities; Dillard, "Joel," 243.

[12] Andiñach, "Locusts," 433–44. Andiñach details the opposing position before arguing for the theory of the foreign invader. This study will have occasion to revisit the identity of the invading force in its discussion of Joel 2:1–11, which appears to blend locust imagery with more overtly militaristic images.

[13] Andiñach, "Locusts," 433–44.

[14] Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 242.

caused during its invasion of Judah was much greater than any conceivable invasion of locusts.[15] Ogden also asserts that the locusts of Joel 1:1–14 are representative of a foreign enemy. He argues that the book of Joel has its origins in a lament setting and that laments typically reflect military/political crises.[16] The text also explicitly refers to nations and peoples in Joel 1:5–6 and 2:2, which in Ogden's mind points to human invaders represented by locust imagery.

There are two difficulties with the theory that the locust images in Joel 1:1–14 create a rhetorical situation rooted in a foreign invasion. First, Stuart's insistence that the locust plague can only be a symbol since the effects of a locust invasion could not have been that devastating does not give proper credence to the potential of prophetic hyperbole. On the contrary, one can also argue that the prophet seized upon the idea of a natural disaster and used it to move the people's perspective from the natural to the supernatural as the text makes the transition from a description of the locusts to the coming day of YHWH.[17]

Secondly, the language that Joel employs to describe the activity of the locusts in this passage fits well with a literal report of an actual locust infestation. Joel 1:7 describes the activity of the locusts in destroying two of Israel's most important agricultural resources: vines and fig trees. The picture of the locusts stripping off the bark so the bare branches become bleached (הִלְבִּינוּ שָׂרִיגֶיהָ) in that verse appears to be an accurate description of what happened in a locust infestation.[18] While one could argue that Joel

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[15] Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 240. He does not attempt to distinguish between the invasions of 597 B C E and 586 B C E. Presumably, either would be traumatic enough to trigger the images of devastation that Joel employs.

[16] Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 11.

[17] Simkins, "God, History and the Natural World," 437.

[18] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 130. He references a description of a 1915 locust infestation in Jerusalem which describes their activity in similar terms.

includes this description simply to make the metaphor more striking, the specificity of the prophet's description is potentially a sign that the locusts in Joel 1:4–7 are more than symbolic of a foreign invader.[19] The text's approach is to construct an image-world that describes a known phenomenon and to use it as a precursor to move towards more explicitly theological concerns.

Overall, it is more probable that the prophet pictures an actual locust infestation that creates a striking backdrop for the prophetic message that he hoped to communicate. The locusts begin to threaten the text's implied audience and drive the text towards the prophetic call for response.[20] In this text-immanent construal of the rhetorical situation, it is not necessary to engage in the incredibly difficult search of trying to locate an actual historical locust invasion; instead, this study will focus on the text's use of this image-world to create the backdrop against which the text puts forward its rhetorical strategies.[21] The locust backdrop of Joel 1 essentially permits the prophet to portray the saving power of YHWH in further oracles, thus the detail with which the prophet paints the gravity of this locust invasion is particularly striking.[22]

[19] Interestingly, Boda identifies a possible parallel in Jer 14:1–15:4 where he sees that a liturgy concerning a siege brought about by foreign invaders has been incorporated into a liturgy regarding a drought (also found in Joel 1:15–20); Boda, "From Complaint to Contrition," 296. This parallel may add some support to the view that Joel is employing locust and drought imagery in conjunction with the threat of a foreign invasion. The situations differ, however, in that Jer 14:17–21 clearly shifts the context from drought to siege with its description of those slain by the sword in the countryside, while those who remain in the city experience disease and hunger (Jer 14:18). Joel 1:6a does describe "a nation" invading YHWH's land, but the calamity is first ascribed to locusts (Joel 1:4) and the ravages of the invader clearly resemble locusts (Joel 1:6b–7). Consequently, it is more likely that Joel intends for the images of locusts to be sufficiently frightening in their own right; it is not necessary to look for a foreign invader lurking behind this imagery.
[20] Linville, "Bugs," 296.
[21] See Deist, "Parallels," 63–79, for further arguments on why the locusts should be understood as literary, not literal, in nature.
[22] Prinsloo, Theology, 127.

The Cult

Another significant element of the rhetorical situation in Joel 1:1–14 concerns the

relationship that the text constructs between the prophet and the cult in Jerusalem. It is

clear that this is an important theme in Joel, especially in this rhetorical unit. Joel 1:1–14

contains repeated references to temple offerings and priests (Joel 1:9, 13) and calls for

lament and sacred fasting (Joel 1:13–14). The nature of this relationship, however, is a

matter of debate. Many, following the lead of Kapelrud, claim that the text portrays Joel

as a cultic prophet, closely associating him with the temple in Jerusalem.[23] The text's

assertion that YHWH will protect and restore Jerusalem in Joel 3–4 and the repeated calls

in this passage for the people to engage in lament led by the priests indicate that the text

portrays the prophet as standing in some degree of solidarity with the cultic leadership.[24]

One can nuance the presentation of Joel as a cultic prophet somewhat by arguing that

while the social standing of the prophet cannot be located, the text provides "access to the

terminology and characteristic concerns of the Jerusalem cult."[25] Consequently, there is a

strong tradition of interpreting Joel as having close connections to the Jerusalem cult.

In contrast, some argue instead that while Joel is concerned with cultic matters,

the text intends to portray the prophet as one who stood outside it and possibly even

[23] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 177. A unique interpretation of Joel's cultic connection comes from Conrad who suggests that the text is referring to Bethel in Joel 1:14–16 since YHWH does not respond positively. Conrad posits a parallel to YHWH's refusal to intercede in the time of Amos. Conrad draws a distinction between "the house of our God" (בית אלהינו), in Joel 1:16 and the explicit references to Zion in Joel 2:15–16; Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets*, 202. This interpretation, while creative, is extremely unlikely. There are many examples where בית אלהינו refers to the Jerusalem Temple, meaning that in this verse the phrase is probably not making an oblique reference to another sanctuary (Ezra 8:17, 25, 30, 33; Neh 10:33–40; Ps 135:2). Further, in the progression of the prophetic narrative, the temple in Jerusalem seems to be a better fit. YHWH's silence in Joel 1 sets up the divinely-sanctioned assault on Zion in Joel 2:1–11 before the text presents the possibility of salvation in Joel 2:12–17.

[24] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 151. Sweeney goes even further and suggests that Joel may even have been a prophetic temple singer. This claim however stretches the available evidence of the text to a degree that it cannot sustain.

[25] Coggins, "Alternative," 89–92.

represented a group that was relegated to the periphery of the society in part as a result of his critiques. Wolff claims that the text's call to "return to YHWH" is reflective of a cult consumed by "pious self-sufficiency" that refused to understand that the day of YHWH would fall on Jerusalem itself.[26] Ahlström suggests that Joel saw the cult in Jerusalem as impure, even letting elements of idolatry taint the proper worship rituals.[27] The remedy for this situation is, "a true cult that gives a true *tsĕdāqāh*."[28] Ahlström and Kapelrud appeal frequently to Canaanite fertility cult imagery to describe the worship practices found in this book. For example, Kapelrud puts forward the argument that the call to weeping in Joel 1:5 resonates with liturgical weeping for the slain deity Baal.[29] This seems speculative, however, given the gravity of the situation that the prophet presents. Calls to lament in the house of YHWH in the wake of an economic and agricultural disaster may well reflect a response congruent with appropriate worship of YHWH.

A different approach is to suggest that Joel's orientation towards the cult changes throughout the text. Redditt suggests that the book of Joel came together over a lengthy period of history and that those who added to it took an increasingly negative view of the cult. In the present passage the prophet begins to decry the cessation of sacrifice in Joel 1:9, 13. A later redactional addition then eventually circumvents the cult by democratizing the Spirit of YHWH in Joel 3:1–5.[30] Allen, however, offers a trenchant critique of Redditt's theory, noting that the lapse of sacrifices would be inevitable in the wake of the agricultural disaster and that the text does not appear to affix any more blame

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[26] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 13.
[27] Ahlström, *Joel*, 25–26. His strongest evidence comes from the command in Joel 2:12 for the community to "return to me" (שֻׁבוּ עָדַי). The suffixed prepositional phrase עָדַי suggests to Ahlström that there is the potential for idolatrous worship since the prophetic call highlights that the audience must return to YHWH.
[28] Ahlström, *Joel*, 61.
[29] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 21.
[30] Redditt, "Book of Joel," 226.

on the priesthood than it does on the farmers or vine-growers who are also unable to do

their jobs.[31] This renders suspect Redditt's judgment concerning the relationship with the

cult in Joel 3:1–5. In addition, if a rhetorical reading of Joel can demonstrate that the text

makes sense as a unified composition, then Redditt's understanding of Joel's growth

becomes even less likely to be useful in explaining the rhetorical situation of the

relationship between the prophet and the priests found in this text.

In response to the arguments suggesting Joel's disapproval of the cult, it is helpful

to take deeper notice of the value that the text places on cultic ritual in Joel 1:1–14. The

text effectively casts the message of Joel into a priestly worldview where their rituals and

rhythms are understood as part of the proper response to the difficult situation that is

presently afflicting the implied audience.[32] In response to the devastating locust

infestation and the subsequent agricultural failures, the text calls the people to enter the

cultic world and lament and fast in the house of YHWH itself. This is part of the natural

response to tragedy, where the people seek solace in the familiar and expected in order to

try to gain perspective on what is happening.[33] In this case, the text's repeated commands

for the community to engage in ritual lament in the house of YHWH demonstrate that it

portrays the cult as a place of reorientation and response.

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[31] Allen, "Prophetic Antecedents," 21. Allen rightly asserts that the text does not shape the crisis in such a way that points to priestly culpability. Instead, the text dwells on the gravity of the situation in order to stress that only YHWH can provide the remedy. Prinsloo also challenges Redditt's use of an anthropological model that relies on the categories of peripheral and central prophecy, suggesting that this extratextual reality does not capture the context of Joel; Prinsloo, "Unity," 68–69; cf. Cook, Prophecy and Apocalypticism, 207.

[32] Linville, "Day of Yahweh," 106.

[33] Linville, "Day of Yahweh," 103. Linville draws on the theory of normalizing response of ritual to tragedy put forward by Bell, Ritual Theory, 108–09. This seems to articulate a plausible understanding of why the text would call for cultic response, even if the standard practices of the cult are non-functional.

The locust plague and subsequent agricultural ruin create a powerful scenario of doom and destruction. The insistence in Joel 1:1–14 on returning to the Temple and its rituals suggests a way of appropriately understanding this threat in the context of the relationship with YHWH.[34] The locutionary commands to seek YHWH at his house directed to both priests and community also have the illocutionary purpose of reminding the community of the central role that the temple and the worship of YHWH plays in the community's own identity.[35] The passage describes considerable lament concerning the cessation of the worship rituals of the community and calls for the people to cry out to YHWH from the house of YHWH (Joel 1:14). Essentially, the text's presentation of its rhetorical situation draws in the world of the cult and portrays it as a means through which the implied audience can respond to the exigence of the locust infestation.

The Implied Audience

Another significant element in the rhetorical situation that the text constructs is related to its implied audience. Joel 1:1–14 goes into significant detail to assemble the various facets of the implied audience for this particular prophetic oracle. This process begins in Joel 1:2 when the text employs the merismus of "elders" and "dwellers of the land." As mentioned above, this merismus is also found in Joel 1:14, signaling the conclusion of this rhetorical unit. This merismus sets the boundaries of the implied audience, drawing in the entirety of the community from its leaders to regular citizens.

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[34] Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 171.

[35] Möller, "Words," 365–66. Möller attempts to make sense of the potential gap between the specific words and the meaning of prophetic communication by distinguishing between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. A locutionary act concerns the exact nature of the words spoken, while illocution concerns the intended purpose of the words and perlocution concerns the effects of the words.

Following the broad description of the implied audience in Joel 1:2, several verses within

Joel 1:1–14 highlight certain subsections of the audience. Notably, many of the groups

that the text identifies have intimate ties to the land.[36] The first groups that the text

identifies are the drunkards (שִׁכּוֹרִים) and wine drinkers (שֹׁתֵי יָיִן) in Joel 1:5, who depend

on agricultural produce to find the escape that they seek. Joel 1:11 then addresses the

farmers (אִכָּרִים) and vinedressers (כֹּרְמִים) whom the locust plague directly affects because

the locusts are devouring their produce.[37] The text also links the other subsections of the

community to the land and its bounty in several locations within Joel 1:2–14. Joel 1:13

calls the priests to lament because the lack of agricultural produce has rendered the

sacrificial system inoperative, while the text also fleshes out the generic call to wail in

Joel 1:8 with a list of devastated crops in 1:10.

The text's attempt to catalogue a cross-section of its implied audience helps to

develop the exigence of the rhetorical situation. While the text draws in the broadest

possible audience with the merismus found in Joel 1:2, the process of identifying smaller

entities within that audience adds immediacy to the crisis that it describes. By focusing

on groups whom the locust plague directly affects, the text expresses the severity of the

rhetorical situation and the necessity for appropriate response. The exigences of the

locust plague have specific effects on the implied audience that create the milieu for the

rhetorical strategies that the text employs to move this implied audience.

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[36] Interestingly, the text uses a slightly different approach to construct its implied audience in Joel 2:1–11 with its description of an all-encompassing assault against Jerusalem. The agrarian focus of Joel 1 gives way to a picture of "fortress Jerusalem" succumbing to an attack.

[37] See Thompson, "Joel's Locusts," 53–54. Thompson notes examples of Egyptian artists who depicted locusts devouring grape vines and wheat, while finding an Assyrian parallel to the locusts devouring the produce of a fruit tree. Consequently, the text is probably drawing from the realm of likely victims when it calls these specific agricultural workers to cry out.

Summary

While the lack of historical data precludes placing this unit into a specific historically-locatable rhetorical situation, the clues derived from the text itself suggest that the rhetorical situation that the text creates is one that seeks to provide an appropriate response to the exigence of a terrible locust plague and subsequent agricultural hardships. Further, the situation presupposes a functioning and genuine cult since the prophet directs the addressees to go to the priests and the house of YHWH to respond to this situation. Although the cult faces serious challenges as a result of the locust plague, it still is the place to which the prophet directs the community as the appropriate means of addressing the disaster. The close relationship of the prophet's implied audience to the land also drives the rhetorical situation of Joel 1:1–14. This rhetorical unit details the effects of the locust infestation throughout the society, depriving many of sustenance and livelihood while threatening the sacrificial system. Ultimately, this scene of devastation creates a rhetorical situation where the only course of action is to cry out to YHWH.

Rhetorical Strategy

After articulating the text's rhetorical units and describing the entextualized rhetorical situation against which the text can be read, it is now appropriate to consider the rhetorical strategies that govern these units. This is the third and most detailed step of the methodology that this study uses. At this stage, rhetorical criticism as the art of persuasion most closely resembles Muilenburg's art of composition. The interpreter now looks for the structural clues and literary devices that the text uses to more effectively

communicate the intended message. This study, however, differs from Muilenburg's

program in that the rhetorical situation and genre play a greater role in describing the

passage's communicative intent. The goal is to move beyond simply articulating the

aesthetic appeal of the passage. Instead, this analysis seeks to capture how the passage's

construction reveals its persuasive force. This ability to describe the text's persuasive

appeal is what moves this approach from rhetorical analysis to rhetorical criticism.[38]

Consequently, the study of a text's rhetorical strategies needs to keep its persuasive

potential at the centre of the analysis.

Joel 1:1: Prophetic Superscription

Joel 1:1–14 begins with a prophetic superscription that roots the discourse that

follows in the tradition of YHWH's prophets. A prophetic superscription can be defined

as, "a title, sometimes expanded, over a book, a portion of a book, or a poem."[39] Such

superscriptions are not standardized throughout prophetic literature and different books

provide varying degrees of information concerning the nature of the communication, the

speaker, and the time and place of the prophetic utterance.[40] Joel 1:1 provides the reader

only with the name of the prophet, his patronymic, and the claim that what follows is the

word of YHWH.[41] Five other prophetic books in the broader collection of the book of the

Twelve (Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi) echo Joel in not providing a

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[38] Hester. "Kennedy," 154.

[39] Watts. "Superscriptions and Incipits." 111.

[40] For a detailed analysis of varying forms of prophetic superscriptions and their development, see Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions," 56–70.

[41] Joel 1:1 identifies the prophet as "Joel, the son of Pethuel." Pethuel is a name otherwise unattested in the Old Testament. The LXX identifies the name of Joel's father as Bethuel, a name which occurs notably at Gen 22:22–23; 24:15, 24, 47, 50. That Bethuel is the father of Rebekah and the nephew of Abraham. Although it is impossible to say for certain, it seems most likely that the LXX tradition took a previously unknown name and brought it into line with a name that did occur elsewhere in the Old Testament.

regnal formula that would help to define the provenance of the prophecy. These books

stand in contrast to the remainder of the Twelve (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah,

Haggai, and Zechariah) which employ regnal year formulae to locate their message

spatially and temporally.

The rhetorical function of the superscription in Joel 1:1 is to establish a sense of

prophetic commissioning, articulating that the prophet has received words from the

divine that he is supposed to communicate.[42] This verse stands distinct from the

remainder of the prophetic communication, introducing the nature of material to follow

and the name of the prophet to whom the work is ascribed.[43] The phrase דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר

הָיָה ("The word of YHWH came to…"), which is common to the openings of Joel, Hosea,

Micah, and Zephaniah, provides the primary identity for the following message as

communication given by YHWH.[44] Of that group, Joel alone does not contain an ensuing

regnal formula.[45] The rhetorical effect of the uniqueness of the superscription could be

that through its sparseness, it intensifies the identity of the book as divine communication

from YHWH since this particular superscription subordinates both the intermediary

figure of the prophet and any concern over the time and place of its composition to the

declaration that this book is "the word of YHWH."

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[42] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 79.

[43] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 152.

[44] Tucker notes that classifying speech as "the word of YHWH" is reserved for prophetic revelation, but argues that this idea has a different sense when used as part of a superscription. In that case, it encompasses the whole of the prophetic word that was committed to writing. See Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions," 63–64.

[45] Watts, "Superscriptions and Incipits," 121. Watts' concern in investigating prophetic superscriptions and incipits is to try to argue how they show redactional shaping in the Book of the Twelve. Essentially, he argues that where superscriptions and incipits overlap, there is evidence of redactional activity attempting to connect the various corpora of the Book of the Twelve. This may prove to be a fruitful field of inquiry, but for the purposes of this project it is more important to focus on the rhetorical effect of commencing prophetic communication through the specific superscription of Joel 1:1.

The strategy of subordinating the person of the prophet is in keeping with the prophetic tradition which emphasizes the surrender of the prophet's will to YHWH (Isa 49:5; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:8), although the silence of Joel 1:1 concerning the prophet's time of ministry goes even further in that regard. This silence may strengthen the timelessness of the message since no particular time period can conclusively be attached to it. While the text employs all manner of strategies to persuade its audience, the heart of its authority rests in its identity as the word of YHWH. On this basis, the prophetic text can attempt to persuade its audience to respond. Essentially, the superscription in Joel 1:1 establishes the prophet as the agent of such divine communication.

Joel 1:2–4: The Crisis Revealed

The text's prophetic discourse commences following the superscription of Joel 1:1 that establishes the divine origin of the prophetic text. First, Joel 1:2–3 introduces the content of the oracle that is to come in 1:2–14. The text begins with two parallel imperative commands directed towards the elders (שִׁמְעוּ־זֹאת הַזְּקֵנִים) and all the dwellers of the land (וְהַאֲזִינוּ כֹּל יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ) to hear what the text is about to declare. The prophet's dual commands for the audience to pay heed to the forthcoming message is a common rhetorical technique that introduces multiple literary forms including wisdom instruction (Prov 4:1; 7:24), diplomatic discourse (2 Kgs 18:28–29), and prophetic oracles (Hos 4:1; Amos 3:1; Mic 6:1; Isa 1:10; Ezek 6:3).[46]

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[46] Sweeney. *Twelve.* 155. Wolff highlights the connection to wisdom literature. referring to the commands in Joel 1:2 as the ancient "call to receive instruction" (*Lehreröffnungsruf*). However. the wide-ranging varieties of literary contexts which employ this type of construction suggest that one cannot locate its provenance within the wisdom tradition. See Wolf. *Joel.* 20. and Crenshaw. *Joel.* 84.

The text's use of imperatives in this verse also lays the foundation for the style of persuasion that Joel 1:1–14 employs. Imperatives dominate this rhetorical unit until Joel 1:15 which suggests that the text is drawing from a deliberative rhetorical genre to guide its audience towards a certain course of action in response to the rhetorical situation (Joel 1:2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14).[47] The deliberative orientation of this passage creates the context through which the text intends to address the situation. By issuing a series of commands rooted in the prophet's knowledge of the situation, the text attempts to persuade the implied audience that it offers the proper manner of response to the devastating locust plague that occurs in the context of a functioning temple.

The two terms denoting the scope of the implied audience form a merismus that summons the entire nation since these terms bring together the leaders of the people at the local village or town level with the whole of the people themselves.[48] In other parts of the Old Testament, elders appear on the national stage where they could act as counselors (Judg 9:2; 1 Kgs 12:6), elect kings (1 Sam 8:4; 1 Kgs 12:1–15), and represent the people in cultic service (Lev 9:1–2; 1 Kgs 8:3).[49] Further, elders are those with the most connection to traditional knowledge and thus are those who could both affirm the

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[47] See Griffin's analysis of the proportionally high use of "verbal instruction" in Joel. He notes that this may seem to make the activity of the book potential rather than realized, but the progression of the book indicates that the implied audience could have responded appropriately to these instructions; Griffin, *God of the Prophets*, 140.

[48] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 155. Some argue that the text employs "elders" in a non-technical sense, meaning only elderly people who would have the ability to recall the past and acknowledge the uniqueness of the situation that is now unfolding around them; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 86; Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 313. However, taking "elders" in the sense of the people's leaders makes more sense given the following appeal to the "dwellers of the land." In this way, the text calls both the leaders and the remainder of the people to hear the prophetic word. For more on the role of elders as local authorities who performed judicial, representative and cultic functions, see Willis, *Elders of the City*, 307–08. Conrad, "זקן," 126–31; McKenzie, "Elders," 522–40; van Dam, *The Elder*, 41–60.

[49] Ahlström, *Joel*, 35. Some commentators take notice of the lack of reference to a king in this call and use it to place Joel in a time after the end of kingship, though again such an approach remains an argument from silence.

incomparability of the current situation and inaugurate a new tradition of passing down this scenario.[50] The phrase "dwellers of the land" encompasses the rest of the inhabitants, signifying that the whole collective group is the implied audience (cf. Jer 10:18; Hos 4:1). Thus, the scope of Joel's call deliberately stretches out across the entire people, attempting to garner the largest possible audience.

After making the broad appeal for everyone living in the land to view themselves as part of the implied audience, the text then seeks to draw this audience into the message by employing a strategy of delay to increase the tension in the prophetic communication. The text first uses a rhetorical question in 1:2b, asking הֶהָיְתָה זֹּאת בִּימֵיכֶם וְאִם בִּימֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם ("Has this been in your days or in the days of your fathers?"), which refers to the event only through the demonstrative pronoun זֹאת. A rhetorical question is an effective device to command the attention of the audience despite the ambiguity of the question since a rhetorical question "invites active participation in the dialogue, whether spoken out or silent, on the part of the hearer, thus arousing his attention and interest in the matter under discussion."[51]

The participation that the question in Joel 1:2b invites draws upon the call to the elders in the previous clause and emphasizes their age; on account of their many years they could affirm the incomparability of the events that the text proceeds to describe.[52]

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[50] Linville, "Day of Yahweh," 105. Van Dam further notes the instructing function of the elders in the phrase, "counsel of the elders," that occurs alongside the vision of the prophets and the teaching of the priests (Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26); van Dam, *The Elder*, 60.

[51] Muraoka, *Emphatic*, 118.

[52] Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 313. Garrett also detects an echo of Deut 4:32–34 in how Joel 1:2b uses rhetorical questions to set up the incomparability of the present situation. Deut 4:32–34 uses similar rhetorical questions to emphasize the uniqueness of YHWH selecting Israel as the deity's own people. Thus, for Garrett, Joel's use of a similar form challenges YHWH's claim over the audience. Crenshaw, however, notes that "appeal to the unprecedented" seems to be a literary *topos* of the ancient world. He cites Sumerian texts that employ incomparability as a strategy to gain an audience; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 86. Thus, while Joel 1:2 may employ a similar rhetorical device as Deut 4:32–34, one cannot conclude that this verse is explicitly reversing a claim found in Deuteronomy.

By urging them to participate in this process of reflection, this rhetorical question draws

the implied audience into the prophetic communication by guiding them towards

accepting the perspective on the situation that the text intends to present.[53] Joel 1:2b thus

establishes the exceptionality of the current situation and calls the audience to listen to

the forthcoming prophetic word.

The prophet then delays the revelation of the event again in Joel 1:3 when he

gives the injunction for the witnesses to communicate this message to their children and

for their children to carry it down to the next generation and for that generation to retell it

yet again to a fourth generation. The reference to future generations in Joel 1:3 works in

tandem with the reference to prior generations in the final clause of 1:2. These references

set apart the current situation for continual remembrance. The text thus stresses the

incomparability of what is occurring by using intergenerational appeals that look both to

the past and to the future.

The rhetorical strategy of Joel 1:3 also draws from Exodus traditions in its use of

the motif of instructing the children and the retelling of the deeds of YHWH for the

people of Israel.[54] It is probable that just like in the Exodus traditions the prophet intends

for the message to continue through more generations than just the ones he mentions. The

image of telling this story to multiple generations sets up the prophet's desire for the

community to unfailingly retell this prophetic word throughout its existence. By engaging

in this preliminary conversation concerning the originality of his message and its lasting

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[53] Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," 137. Gitay argues for the importance of finding a common perspective as a key feature in the effectiveness of a given text. Joel's invitation for the implied audience to dwell on the incomparability of the situation begins the process of convincing the implied audience to adopt the same point of view.

[54] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 155. Sweeney draws parallels to Exod 12:26–7; 13:8, 14; and Deut 6:20–3.

significance the prophet heightens its impact when he finally reveals the exact nature of

this momentous event. The text's rhetoric of delay is an effective means of drawing

attention to the prophetic communication since it draws in the implied audience with its

depiction of a unique occasion but requires the implied audience to continue listening if it

wants to learn the exact nature of the event in question.[55]

In Joel 1:4 the text finally reveals the specific nature of the devastation that it

foreshadows in Joel 1:2–3. This verse introduces the image-world of locusts that plays

such an important role.[56] Joel 1:4 is connected to what precedes since the text again uses

a pattern of repetition involving succeeding generations. In this case, it is not a command

to relate the message to future generations, but rather a description of the severity of the

event that the text makes evident by referring to multiple "generations" or waves of

locusts. The stylized way in which Joel 1:4 describes the onslaught of multiple waves of

locusts intensifies the magnitude of the disaster.[57] Joel 1:4 uses four synonyms for locusts

(הֶחָסִיל ;הַיֶּלֶק ;הָאַרְבֶּה ;הַגָּזָם) in a pattern that is repeated three times. Each clause of this

verse begins with the construct noun יֶתֶר ("remainder") followed by one of the four

words for locust. The verb אָכַל ("it ate") occurs next, followed by the next locust

synonym.

The intended effect of the repetitious clauses is to paint a picture of total

destruction.[58] Joel 1:4 creates an image in which whatever remains after the first wave of

locusts is eaten by the second, third, and fourth waves in succession, dramatically

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[55] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 88.

[56] See under "rhetorical situation" for a discussion of the potential historicity of the locust plague. At the very least, what Joel presents is a plausible depiction of a locust infestation. In the discussion of the rhetorical strategy the focus is on the way in which the prophet utilized this imagery.

[57] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 117.

[58] Thompson, "Repetition," 106.

emphasizing that nothing would escape the rapacious horde of locusts. Sellers speculates

that the different terms for locust refer to various stages in the development of the desert

locust, which was the species most likely to visit Israel.[59] This claim, however, is dubious

since it is difficult to identify the text's words for locust with particular stages of locust

development.[60] Fortunately, the text's potential lack of concern regarding insect

entomology does not detract from the rhetorical power of Joel 1:4. The three clauses in

Joel 1:4 effectively emphasize the nature and scope of the desolation. A massive multi-

wave infestation of locusts visits the land and devours everything in its path. Combining

the rhetoric of delay in Joel 1:2–3 with the description of the locusts' devastation in Joel

1:4 effectively secures the attention of the implied audience.[61] Essentially, the gravity of

the situation as portrayed in Joel 1:2–4 provides the foundation for the prophet's future

calls to response.

Joel 1:5–14: Calls to Lament

Joel 1:5–7: Call to Lament I

A series of subunits that begin with imperative verbs follow this depiction of the

locust infestation (Joel 1:5–7, 8–10, 11–12, 13–14). The prophet issues different

commands to various groups within the implied audience, communicating the prophet's

strategy of evoking the proper response to the crisis created by the locust invasion. The

preponderance of imperatives in Joel 1:5–14 is part of the text's broader rhetorical

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[59] Sellers, "Stages of Locust," 81–95.
[60] See the detailed discussion of locust development in Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 101–20. Thompson, "Joel's Locusts," 54, argues that the desert locust has six stages of development instead of four.
[61] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 21. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca indicate the rhetor's first duty is to reinforce a sense of shared understanding of the situation between the speaker and the audience. Establishing the nature and scope of the devastation in Joel 1:2–4 admirably performs that function.

strategy. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest that imperatives are as effective as the degree of adherence that the rhetor can command from the audience; if that adherence is lacking, an imperative assumes the tone of a plea or a prayer.[62] In the case of the imperatives found in Joel 1:5–14, the text constructs the prophet's authority over the implied audience through the identification of the divine source of this communication (Joel 1:1) and through the incomparability of the situation (Joel 1:2–3). The text portrays the locust infestation as so grave that a response articulated by YHWH is appropriate. Thus, when the text begins to issue imperatives calling for a response, the authority that it has established over the implied audience should increase its persuasive potential.

Wolff helpfully characterizes the different imperative-led subunits as stages in an elaborate call to lament that contains three elements: i) the call to lament, ii) a vocative describing who is to lament, and iii) clauses detailing the reasons for lament.[63] The first stage of the call is found in Joel 1:5–7. Joel 1:5 begins with a series of imperatives commanding drunkards (שִׁכּוֹרִים) and wine-drinkers (שֹׁתֵי יָיִן) to awake (הָקִיצוּ) and then to weep (וּבְכוּ) and wail (וְהֵילִלוּ). The close proximity of multiple imperatives is an emphatic device, highlighting the gravity of the situation.[64] The specific imperatives that the text employs show the shape of the rhetorical strategy found in this verse.

Beginning with an appeal for the drunkards and wine-drinkers to awaken and lament is a rather unlikely rhetorical strategy but it is appropriate on two levels. First, the drunkards or wine-drinkers are the ones who are most affected by the lack of wine mentioned in the latter half of Joel 1:5 and the destruction of the vine in 1:7.[65] The locusts

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[62] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 158.
[63] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 21–22.
[64] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 16.
[65] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 125.

have destroyed the fruit of the crop that they desire most. There is also possibly a further

cultic connection in this appeal, where the lack of wine renders it impossible to properly

engage in cultic celebrations, thus strengthening the reason to lament since what should

be a joyous celebration will lack the fruit of the harvest.[66] Secondly, the use of the

imperative הָקִיצוּ ("awake") pushes the idea of drunkenness into the metaphorical realm

where it denotes inability to comprehend the situation.[67] While הָקִיצוּ typically refers to

awaking from sleep (1 Sam 26:12; Isa 29:8; Pss 3:6; 7:20), it also appears in Prov 23:25

where it denotes waking from a drunken stupor.[68]

One might ask if using derisive terminology to address a subset of the implied

audience is a viable rhetorical strategy. This approach, however, effectively combines

punitive and persuasive elements of prophetic speech. Ridiculing drunkards reinforces

the necessity for the majority of the implied audience to insist that they are not part of

that category and may increase the likelihood that they will respond as the prophet

requires in order to avoid this demeaning classification.[69] Consequently, calling for

drunkards and wine-drinkers to awake is appropriate and even necessary for them to

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[66] Nash, "Palestinian," 84. Kapelrud tries to connect the calls for weeping and wailing to the mourning rites of the Tammuz/Baal fertility cult, but others note the ubiquity of calls to weep and wail in many contexts surrounding death, suggesting that Kapelrud's interpretation is unnecessary; cf. Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 17–30; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 94; and Dillard, "Joel," 258.

[67] Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 242. In this case it is also possible that the text is not referring to a specific subset within the community, but rather classifying the entire audience as those who refuse to comprehend the situation. Jemielity adopts this perspective when he refers to Joel's audience as, "indolent, lolling drunken elders," cf. Jemielity, *Satire*, 89. The difficulty with this universal extension of "drunkards," is that the following verses refer to specific subsets within the community including agriculturalists and priests. Consequently, the exact identification of the "drunkards" remains ambiguous, but its rhetoric effect lies in its shock value of commencing the prophetic call to response with an apparently pejorative term.

[68] Dillard, "Joel," 258.

[69] Jemielity, *Satire*, 81. Jemielity does excellent work in demonstrating how punitive and persuasive strategies can co-exist in prophetic literature, linking it to the *pathos* of the prophet. He claims, "Satire and prophecy thus seek and despair of reform at the same time, urge change and yet expect none." The intermingling of motives and expectations demonstrates while the prophet may employ a derisive term to describe part of the implied audience, the prophetic intent is still to persuade this group to follow the prophet's program.

come to grips with the gravity of the situation. Once the prophet goads these drunkards and wine-drinkers to "awaken," the calls to weep and wail provide the appropriate response to the situation.

Following the triad of imperatives the latter half of Joel 1:5 explores the reasons for lamentation. The text commands the drunkards and wine-drinkers to weep and wail "on account of the sweet-wine" (עַל־עָסִיס), which is probably a reference to a slightly less fermented, though still potentially intoxicating, beverage (Isa 49:26). The final clause of Joel 1:5 indicates that this beverage has been "cut off" from those who desire it (כִּי נִכְרַת מִפִּיכֶם) on account of the activities of the locusts. The second person plural suffix on "from your mouths" (מִפִּיכֶם) corresponds with the imperatives that began this verse. The text commands the drunkards and wine-drinkers to lament since the locust infestation is going to directly and severely affect them. The text calls them to emerge from drunkenness and note what is metaphorically occurring right in front of their faces.

Joel 1:6–7 provides a more detailed picture of the need for lament by going into greater depth concerning the nature of the destruction. The first clause of Joel 1:6 personifies the locusts as an invading nation going up against YHWH's chosen land.[70] The first person pronominal suffix on "my land" (אַרְצִי) is somewhat confusing considering that this unit also makes reference to YHWH in the third person (Joel 1:9, 14–15), but referring to YHWH in the first person briefly places YHWH on the same level as the implied audience as targets of the locust infestation.[71] This brief snippet of divine speech here reminds the drunkards that YHWH also suffers loss because of the

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[70] See the discussion in the "Rhetorical Situation," section concerning the metaphorical use of "nation" in this verse.

[71] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 96.

locusts' depredations, which reinforces the relationship between YHWH and this facet of the implied audience. The locusts have cut off the wine from its drinkers and in doing so they wreak havoc on the land that YHWH claims.

The remainder of Joel 1:6 focuses on heightening the locusts' destructive potential. Not only are the locusts a "nation," they are a powerful and innumerable nation (עָצוּם וְאֵין מִסְפָּר). The verse next compares their power and might to the devouring teeth and jaws of a lion and lioness, emphasizing the ferocity with which locusts devour crops. These two images poetically describe the two most distinctive features of locust infestations: vast numbers and voracious appetite.[72]

Joel 1:7 moves from describing the locusts to detailing the actual results of their assault on the land.[73] In doing so, the prophet also again invokes YHWH's claim to the land through first person suffixes on "my vine" (גַּפְנִי) and "my fig tree" (תְאֵנָתִי). In combination with the reference to "my land" in Joel 1:6, these suffixes suggest that YHWH remains connected to his people and his land which suggests that YHWH will understand the reasons for the call to lament and may be motivated to act to remedy the situation.[74] Around the first person suffixes, Joel 1:7 paints a vivid picture of the savagery of the locusts' attack.

The choice of vine and fig tree is significant since an abundance of these two crops often symbolizes security and prosperity (1 Kgs 5:5; 2 Kgs 18:3; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10). Consequently, the destruction of the vines and fig trees points to catastrophic

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[72] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 129. Simkins points to contemporary examples that show that locust swarms can have upwards of a billion members and can consume incredibly vast quantities of grain in a very short period.
[73] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 118.
[74] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 17.

circumstances.[75] Joel 1:7 emphasizes the destruction through the paranomastic

construction חָשֹׂף חֲשָׂפָהּ ("fully stripped bare), which describes removing bark from the

branches.[76] As a result, the bare branches turn white (הִלְבִּינוּ), bleached by the sun as a

final sign of their death. Thus, the first call to lament in Joel 1:5–7 builds the implied

audience as it commands the attention of those who may be oblivious to the situation. It

then employs vivid imagery to emphasize the severity of this locust infestation while

offering subtle reminders of YHWH's continued presence in the land.

Joel 1:8–10: Call to Lament II

The next call to lament is found in Joel 1:8–10. The feminine singular imperative

אֱלִי ("wail!") introduces this next call to lament. The referent of this verb is not

immediately apparent although it does agree in gender with the call for the community to

mourn in the manner of a young woman or virgin (בְּתוּלָה) who has lost her betrothed.

This proximity suggests that the simile affects the gender of the imperative. The lack of

specific vocative addressee to the imperative verb is unique in Joel 1:5–14, although it is

possible to argue that a likely referent is probably Jerusalem itself, personified in female

form (Isa 51:7; 52:1; Jer 4:14; 6:8; Zeph 3:14).[77] The potential invocation of Jerusalem in

Joel 1:8 prefigures the text's transition to the Temple as the location of mourning in the

following verse.

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[75] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 87. Wendland argues for an underlying irony that becomes visible to the reader when the text reverses these images of supposed blessing; cf. Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 251.

[76] Waltke and O'Connor §35.3.1b refers to this construction as an "intensifying infinitive." See also Muraoka on the emphatic sense of the paranomastic infinitive absolute. He asserts that this grammatical structure guides the reader to give special attention to the verbal idea; cf. Muraoka, *Emphatic*, 87–92.

[77] Dillard, "Joel," 261; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 131–35. Wolff attempts to deal with the lack of referent by proposing an elaborate textual reconstruction in which he places 1:9b in front of 1:8 in order to specify that the priests are the ones commanded to wail; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 18. However, his construction is unnecessary since the text is still eminently readable as it occurs in the Masoretic text.

Following the imperative call to lament, Joel 1:8 employs the simile of a virgin

mourning the loss of her husband to express the manner in which the implied audience

should lament. This simile creates an evocative image of distress through reversed

anticipation as donning the garb of ritual mourning (חֲגֻרַת־שַׂק) cruelly replaces the

prospect of marriage and entry into a new family unit.[78] The image of widowhood is

devastating since it threatens a woman's standard role in society as one who bears and

rears children for the advancement of the family unit (Gen 30:1; 1 Sam 2:5; Pss 127:3–5;

128:3–4).[79] The loss of a husband would leave a woman facing an uncertain future,

unable to guarantee a source of social and economy stability.

After opening with the call to wail in this manner, Joel 1:9 begins to articulate the

reasons for lamentation. On account of the devastation of the landscape, the tithe of the

nation's crop of drink and grain offerings is no longer being offered to YHWH.

Consequently, the Temple and the priests who depend on those offerings are cut off from

their primary source of sustenance, which could easily lead them into mourning and

lament (cf. Lev 27:30–33; Num 18:12; Deut 14:22–29; 18:1–8; 26:1–15).[80] Further, the

cessation of these offerings indicates that the means of sacrificial communion with

YHWH has come to a standstill which is a frightening prospect in the context of the

community's current situation.[81]

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[78] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 98.

[79] Perdue et al, *Families in Ancient Israel*, 181–82. Perdue aptly summarizes the social and economic threat that Joel 1:8 borrows, stating, "Divorce and widowhood before any children were born were especially threatening to women, if they did not later remarry…Pragmatically speaking, the mother produced the children who would provide the labour and the heirs for the household's (and her) survival." The potential for remarriage is not an issue that this verse intends to address. Its focus is to transpose the devastation of widowhood into the situation of the locust infestation.

[80] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 158. Sweeney notes that since the priests and Levites could not hold land of their own, the cessation of sacrifices would quickly have a deleterious effect on their level of sustenance.

[81] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 20. Prinsloo here emphasizes the continuity between cultic and agricultural realms, noting that serving YHWH and gathering crops cannot be placed into separate compartments.

This subunit concludes in Joel 1:10 with five agricultural images that emphasize the scope of the destruction. Alliteration and concatenation characterize this verse as each of the five descriptions contains only two words. Each of the five images begins with an affix verb describing destruction or lament, followed by its subject. Only the explanatory particle כִּי between the second and third sequence interrupts the hammering rhythm of this verse. The structure of these short, staccato phrases helps to paint a thorough picture of the devastation wrought by the locust infestation.

The content of the images also emphasizes the gravity of the situation. The first two images are woven together through the use of similar words and sounds (שֻׁדַּד שָׂדֶה אָבְלָה אֲדָמָה).[82] The first image is passive, with the unmentioned agency of the locusts destroying the fields while the second image is active, with the earth mourning in response. There is an interweaving of human and natural responses to the destruction since the text employs the same verb of mourning in Joel 1:9 to describe the response of the priests (אָבְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים).[83] Invoking the natural realm alongside its human inhabitants demonstrates the overwhelming nature of the devastation; nothing living, whether human, animal, or agricultural product, can escape the scope of the disaster. The final three images then detail the specifics of the destruction that has caused the earth to mourn. Following the כִּי the text describes the devastation of grain (דָּגָן), new wine (תִּירוֹשׁ), and

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[82] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 99. On the aural repetition, see Mallon, "Stylistic Analysis," 541. Mallon argues for the existence of a subunit that stretches from Joel 1:10–12 based on shared agricultural imagery and grammatical structure. While the images of agricultural products certainly occur in these three verses, this theory of textual division ignores the governing role that imperatives play throughout Joel 1:5–14.

[83] Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 192. There is some discussion over whether there is a second root אָבַל with the meaning "to dry up" related to an Akkadian cognate *abālu* when this verb has a non-human subject. There are several passages (Jer 12:4; 23:10; Joel 1:10; Amos 1:2) where אָבַל occurs in close proximity or in parallelism to the verb יָבֵשׁ ("to wither"). Clines, however, points to texts where the non-human subject is clearly portrayed as mourning (Isa 3:26; Jer 12:10–11; Lam 1:4; 2:8), which weakens the case for positing a separate root; Clines, "'bl II," 1–11. Instead, it is better to conclude that the primary meaning, "to mourn," encompasses the sense of "drying up," as an activity that the earth performs amidst dire circumstances; cf. Hayes, "When None Repents," 128.

oil (יִצְהָר). These three crops represent the three primary types of agricultural produce in ancient Israel and their inclusion here articulates the totality of the destruction at hand as well as again reinforcing that the people cannot offer the appropriate sacrifices to YHWH since such sacrifices would require these crops.[84]

Joel 1:11–12: Call to Lament III

The third call to lament in this section occurs in Joel 1:11–12. Again, the text shifts focus to a different segment of the broader implied audience that it attempted to gather in Joel 1:2. It is now the farmers (אִכָּרִים) and vine growers (כֹּרְמִים) whom the text calls to lament on account of the loss of their crop. In this section the text expands the range of the destruction that has come upon the land. In Joel 1:11 the text lists a series of both cereal and fruit crops that the locust invasion has destroyed. Specifically, the text references grain and barley, along with the previously mentioned vines and fig trees. Joel 1:12 expands on the list and adds other fruit crops including the pomegranate, date-palm and apple trees. Joel 1:11–12 may reflect the progression of a year of agricultural failure based on the times when the crops should have been harvested, moving from the period of winter rains to the summer harvest and climaxing around the time of the celebration of Sukkoth.[85] The text concludes this list with a summative declaration that all the trees of the field have experienced this destruction which suggests that the list mentioned above is representative, rather than comprehensive. By referring to crops from different stages of the agricultural cycle, however, these examples demonstrate the all-encompassing nature of the devastation that the locust invasion causes.

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[84] Dillard, "Joel," 262.
[85] Nash, "Palestinian," 68.

Lexeme repetition and an elaborate word play further characterize the rhetorical

strategy of these verses. Joel 1:11 begins with an imperative from the root בּוֹשׁ ("to be

ashamed") while the first two lines of 1:12 contain affix forms of a root that is similar in

appearance (יָבֵשׁ, "to dry up"). Joel 1:12 then concludes with an affix form from the root

יָבֵשׁ.[86] The meanings of these two roots fuse together in the final line of Joel 1:12, tying

together both the ideas of shame and withering to the cessation of expressions of joy

(כִּי־הֹבִישׁ שָׂשׂוֹן) that are supposed to emerge from the community in its cultic worship

practices.[87]

The joy mentioned in Joel 1:12 probably has a cultic connotation. On account of

the cessation of sacrifices the community cannot properly engage in a festival celebrating

the collection of a bountiful harvest. Essentially, the withering of agricultural produce

leads to shame on account of the community's inability to offer the proper sacrifices to

YHWH.[88] The similarity of the two roots is another facet of how the text draws together

the natural and human realms since both realms lament what they have lost.[89]

Consequently, Joel 1:11–12 effectively persuades another element of the community to

enter into mourning while stressing the pervasive nature of the destruction on both human

and natural realms.

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[86] The previous call to lament foreshadows this dual root rhetorical strategy when it also employs a verbal form of יָבֵשׁ (דָּגָן הוֹבִישׁ) in Joel 1:10.

[87] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 20.

[88] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 144–45. Frankfort puts forward a somewhat contrarian argument, claiming that the final clause of Joel 1:12 (כִּי־הֹבִישׁ שָׂשׂוֹן מִן־בְּנֵי אָדָם) indicates that the previously mentioned fruit trees wither on account of "joy" departing from those who should be tending the trees. Frankfort roots this argument in the scarcity of fruit-bearing trees in Israel and the necessity for almost daily solicitous care; if depression over the locusts' destruction of the grain crops afflicts those who take care of the trees, then the trees will suffer; Frankfort, "le כי de Joël 1:12," 445–48. This argument, however, seems to over-read the evidence of Joel 1:11–12. Images of the devastation wrought by the locusts and the subsequent threat of drought (developed in Joel 1:15–20) are more than sufficient to explain the loss of fruit trees.

[89] Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 194. See the above discussion of Joel 1:8–10.

Joel 1:13–14: Call to Lament IV

The final subunit of Joel 1:1–14 again shifts the context of the call to lament. It

moves from the agricultural world to the world of cultic ritual in Joel 1:13–14. The text

employs three imperatives from the realm of lament in the first half of 1:13 in which the

prophet explicitly calls for the religious leaders of the people to cry out (חִגְרוּ וְסִפְדוּ

הַכֹּהֲנִים הֵילִילוּ מְשָׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ). The first command is חִגְרוּ ("gird on") which is missing its

object. The subsequent imperatives that call for mourning activities and the presence of

sackcloth (שַׂקִּים) in Joel 1:13b suggest that חִגְרוּ calls the priests to put on their own

mourning garb. This command may reflect the gravity of the situation since priests often

were not permitted to mourn for the dead without compromising their ritual purity (Lev

10:4–7; 21:10–12).[90]

The following two imperatives (הֵילִילוּ; וְסִפְדוּ) are synonymous and they indicate

that the prophet is calling for audible sounds of lament. The objects of these imperatives

explicitly identify cultic personnel. Joel 1:13 sets the common word for priests (הַכֹּהֲנִים)

in parallel with a unique phrase, "ministers of the altar" (מְשָׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ). This phrase echoes

similar titles in Joel 1:9, which calls on the "ministers of YHWH" (מְשָׁרְתֵי יְהוָה), and Joel

1:13b which appeals to the "ministers of my God" (מְשָׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהָי). The mention of the altar

in this phrase probably has the rhetorical effect of reinforcing the declarations of the

previous verses concerning the cessation of sacrifices; the priests who minister at the altar

have nothing to offer to YHWH.

Joel 1:13b draws a parallel to 1:8 since the text commands the priests to don the

same garb of mourning as the young woman. This verse commands the priests to spend

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[90] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 159–60.

the night (לֽינוּ) in sackcloth in the Temple, emphasizing the gravity of a situation that

requires continual lament (cf. 2 Sam 12:16; 1 Kgs 21:27).[91] The text again describes the

situation as so grave that the ritual offerings of grain and drink (מִנְחָה וָנֶסֶךְ) cease.[92] The

grain and drink offerings occur at the end of Joel 1:13, well displaced from the verb נִמְנַע

("withheld") for which they are the subject.[93] Consequently, this separation marks the

מִנְחָה וָנֶסֶךְ for constituent focus which is especially appropriate given that the greatest

crisis facing the religious leaders was the inability to correctly sacrifice.[94] Beyond the

cessation of sacrifice, commanding the religious leaders to don sackcloth also emphasizes

the gravity of the situation since it is a powerful symbol of the failure of proper cultic

ritual when they set aside their usual garments of service and dress symbolically to lead

the community into greater mourning.[95]

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[91] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 103; Barton, *Joel*, 55. Crenshaw suggests that this command is for the priests to keep a ceaseless vigil at the temple, voicing their lamentation. In contrast, Barton proposes that it simply means that the priests are not to take off their sackcloth garments while the need for lamentation continues. In either case, the essential point is that the call to spend the night in lamentation reflects the severity of the situation and the necessity for the priests to commit themselves fully to the response that the prophet proposes.

[92] Hurowitz identifies an interesting parallel to the devastation that the locusts create in an Assyrian hymn to the goddess Nanaya that is attributed to Sargon II. Notably, the hymn also describes the cessation of sacrifices on account of the locusts' activity. Hurowitz does not claim that Joel depends on the Assyrian text, but he does posit the potential existence of a body of shared liturgical literature that could be employed in the wake of locust infestations; Hurowitz, "Joel's Locust Plague," 597–603.

[93] Some see a contrast between the claim that sacrifices are "withheld" (נמנע) in Joel 1:13 and the declaration that they are "cut off" (הכרת) in Joel 1:9. Simkins suggests that there is a volitional aspect here, where the community refuses to part with the meagre provisions that have escaped the locusts; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 145. In contrast, Barton suggests that the implied subject of the verb is YHWH, which would mirror 1:9; Barton, *Joel*, 55. The verb נמנע is in the niphal, which helps to render ambiguous its subject. The root מנע occurs in the niphal in three other locations (Num 22:16; Job 38:15; Jer 3:3). The Jeremianic reference is interesting since it refers to withholding rain in the wake of Judah's iniquity. Although, no subject is identified, context makes it likely that YHWH is the one doing the withholding. In Joel 1:13, the context reflects the cessation of sacrifice as a result of the ravages of the locusts. Consequently, it makes the most sense to attribute the "withholding" of sacrifices to the situation that the community faces. It is not necessary to import a sense of reluctance to offer sacrifice to capture the situation.

[94] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 120.

[95] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 159.

Joel 1:14 pushes forward the calls to lament by trying to evoke a response from the implied audience to the devastation of the situation. Joel 1:14 articulates a plan of action that calls for the priests to sanctify a fast (קַדְּשׁוּ־צוֹם) and call a sacred assembly (קִרְאוּ עֲצָרָה) that encompasses the entire community. Fasting is a standard element of both private and communal cultic expressions, thus it is typically associated with other cultic terms to give it context.[96] In this case, Joel links the call to fast with the noun עֲצָרָה, which refers to ritual observance in general terms that gain specificity from the surrounding context.[97]

The unifying element in these calls to response is that the command to call a sacred assembly requires a cessation of all normal activity to concentrate on the cultic observance (Lev 23:36; Num 29:35; Deut 16:8; Neh 8:18).[98] Joel's command to call an עֲצָרָה thus calls the implied audience to focus its activities and attentions on appealing to YHWH. Interestingly, Joel's call for a sacred assembly contrasts with other prophetic perspectives, especially in Amos 5:21 and Isa 1:13.[99] Those passages castigate the ritualized nature of sacred assemblies when they are not performed in the correct spirit. In contrast, Joel 1:14 requires sacred assemblies as the proper means of response to a crisis that threatens continued cultic functions.

This verse describes the recipients of these commands through the same merismus of elders (זְקֵנִים) and dwellers of the land (יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ) that it called to hear the prophetic

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[96] Preuss, "צום," 298.
[97] Wright and Milgrom, "עצר," 314; Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 296–97. Mentions of a "sacred assembly" range from prophetic condemnation of Israel's religious festivals in general (Isa 1:13) to non-Yahwistic cultic gatherings (2 Kgs 10:20). These "sacred assemblies," seem to imply communal convocations which may refer to established gatherings (cf. Lev 23:36 and the Feast of Booths), but also can refer to the apparently *ad hoc* gatherings that Joel commands (cf. Joel 1:14, 2:15).
[98] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 160.
[99] Coggins, *Joel*, 32–33.

message in Joel 1:2. Essentially, the text has come full circle, with all of those whom it summoned to hear now implored to act as the text commands. There is a strong element of irony at work here in the call to fast since Joel 1:11–12 claims that the lack of agricultural produce is so severe that it ends cultic offerings at the temple. The community and the temple are engaged in fasting whether they wish to or not but the text adds another layer to this description of want in order to create a call for cultic sanctification of the people's hunger.[100]

Joel 1:14 spells out explicitly the purpose of this assembly in the final clause of the verse when it directs the assembly to cry out to YHWH (וְזַעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה). This final imperative is "the emotive climax" and "the thematic peak" of Joel 1:1–14 since all of the devastation mentioned in these verses leads to only one possible response that the prophet requires: crying out to YHWH for relief.[101] The calls to fasting and sacred assembly provide the context for crying out to YHWH since they emphasize the communal nature of the cry.[102] Essentially, this final call to lament sets the tone for the appropriate response. It commands the community to go to the house of YHWH and submit itself to the cultic guidance of the priests hoping that their lament cries can elicit a response from YHWH.

Overall, Joel 1:5–14 provides a series of calls to lament in the wake of the announcement of the locust invasion and the commands to preserve the memory of this event throughout the following generations. Each of these calls draws in a different

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[100] Linville, "Day of Yahweh," 107. Linville notes how the sanctification of the community's hunger returns it to ritual space and time, where it becomes a symbol of communion, rather than a sign of devastation and destruction.
[101] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 120.
[102] Muddiman, "Fast," 773. Muddiman notes that fasting can be conjoined with supplicatory prayer to emphasize the commitment to seeking divine response (Ps 35:13; 1 Kgs 21:27).

subset of the implied audience and provides them with reasons to lament. Joel 1:14 then draws together all of these different groups since it addresses the priests but calls on them to lead the elders and inhabitants of the land in crying out to YHWH. One can detect a strategic parallel between Joel 1:4 and 1:5–14 since both rely on "cumulative overkill" to emphasize the gravity of the situation.[103] The multiple waves of locusts and the variations in the calls to lament emphasize repeatedly the severity of the situation that the implied audience faces. It also begins to establish the necessity of responding in the manner that the text directs.

Summary

In Joel 1:1–14, the text presents a prophet who employs a broad range of rhetorical strategies in order to heighten the impact of his message and to bring the audience to a place where they can accept his communication as normative. The text introduces the prophet first in Joel 1:1 as one who communicates the word of YHWH. Then, Joel 1:2–14 constructs the prophet as one who exhorts his implied audience through the regular use of imperatives, calling on different elements of the community to respond. The text first calls the entire community to listen before detailing the locust infestation that has afflicted the land. It then calls upon those most affected within the community to lament, beginning with the drunkards or wine-drinkers who are the most in need of realizing the gravity of the current situation. Joel then addresses the agriculturalists whose livelihoods are threatened. After this, the text calls out to the

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[103] Linville, "Bugs," 294. The declaration that four waves of locusts overwhelmed the land and the repeated appeals for every social group in the community to enter into lament make evident the text's fixation on the gravity of the situation it describes.

priests and charges them with leading the community in lament to YHWH in spite of the

fact that the regular cultic communication with YHWH ceases on account of the locusts

in the land. The final imperative (וְזַעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה) encapsulates the only possible response

to the situation; under priestly leadership, the implied audience must cry out to YHWH.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The final step of the rhetorical-critical model is an investigation of the unit's

rhetorical effectiveness. As the previous chapter articulates, this study will consider the

rhetorical effectiveness of the text in view of its audiences, noting particularly the text's

implied audience and the idea of a universal audience. The root of the text's rhetorical

strategy is to take the image-world of a locust infestation and link this natural disaster and

the workings of the divine world. This approach could persuade the text's implied

audience since an ancient Judahite context would not maintain rigid barriers between the

natural and the cosmological worlds. Simkins argues that "Yahweh acts in the totality of

the natural world in order to achieve his purposes in the history of creation."[104] His

observations reveal the potential effectiveness of the text's approach. Essentially, the

persuasive potential of Joel 1:1–14 hinges on the text's ability to link images drawn from

the realm of natural catastrophes to the working of YHWH in the world.

Identifying the connection between events in the natural world and YHWH's own

actions elucidates the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 1:1–14 on the implied audience. The

call in Joel 1:14b to cry out to YHWH fits this worldview (cf. Joel 1:19), guiding the

implied audience to seek divine causality for their current circumstances, even though

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[104] Simkins, "God, History and the Natural World," 436.

they are rooted in natural phenomena. In doing so, the implied audience ought to follow

the prophet's repeated exhortations to lament and cry out to YHWH in the midst of these

circumstances.

Another facet of rhetorical effectiveness involves reflecting upon the

understanding of Patrick and Scult concerning the appropriate stances that interpreters

can take, discussed in detail in the above chapter on methodology. Patrick and Scult

suggest that one possible approach is to connect the text's rhetorical power with its truth-

claims.[105] They argue that from the perspective of a "hermeneutics of affirmation,"

interpreters can receive truth from the text since they acknowledge the possibility that it

could be true.[106] This permits them to construct a picture of the audience that is both

specific to the situation and also interested in the universal nature of a text's truth-

claims.[107]

Adopting Patrick and Scult's hermeneutics of affirmation, this passage paints a

powerful picture of destruction and devastation among its implied audience. It tightly ties

the activity of the natural world to the activity of YHWH and demonstrates that YHWH

does act discernibly in the broader world. YHWH's power is visible in destructive

occurrences in the natural realm as he demonstrates his power and authority over nature.

It is also significant to note that the prophet's call in this situation is for the community to

attempt to return to YHWH and to go to YHWH's house in order to cry out even though

the regular form of divine communication through daily sacrifice is no longer

operational. In spite of the seeming distance between YHWH and the implied audience,

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[105] Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*. 66.
[106] Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*, 77.
[107] Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*, 79.

the prophet urges the community to gather in the place of YHWH's presence and speak the lament that is on their lips.

The rhetorical effectiveness of this realization has significant application on a universal audience who affirms the possibility that this text can communicate truth. It reveals that there is space for protest and lament within the confines of worship of YHWH.[108] The fact that the prophet calls the people to lament in response to his depiction of the natural world presaging the coming day of YHWH suggests that YHWH is interactive and might hear and respond to these cries of lament. Although YHWH's response does not occur in this rhetorical unit, later parts of the book bear witness to the validity of crying out in this manner.

Rhetorical effectiveness thus functions on two levels. First, it requires a consideration of the ability of the given text to persuade its implied audience in the suggested rhetorical situation to adopt its point of view. Secondly, rhetorical effectiveness can also address the ability of the text to affect a universal audience that grants the premise that the text can contain truth that speaks across audiences and contexts. In the case of Joel 1:1–14, the repeated calls to lament reflect its intention to gather all elements of the implied audience and persuade them to listen and adopt the text's perspective of the climactic events that it describes. On the level of the universal audience, Joel 1:1–14 demonstrates that YHWH acts in the natural world and that appealing to YHWH even in times of weakening worship is still the most appropriate course of action.

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[108] Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*, 204. For a thorough discussion on the role of speaking back to a sometimes silent YHWH in context of lament, see Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 333–72.

Conclusion

Joel 1:1–14 provides an excellent point of departure for applying this particular rhetorical-critical methodology. Although there are different proposals, the delineation of Joel 1:1–14 as the first rhetorical unit for study is the best interpretation of the text's structure and content. This unit creates a threat to the community's continued existence through the exigence of locust infestation and ensuing agricultural disasters. It identifies its implied audience both generally through the merismus in Joel 1:2, but also highlights subsections through the different imperatives found in Joel 1:5–14. This unit's rhetorical strategy is deliberative in its genre, using imperatives to persuade its implied audience to both note the scope of the disaster and respond in lament. Notably, the rhetorical strategy of this unit brings its audience under the aegis of the priests, who are to lead the community in lament and fasting, crying out to YHWH for restoration. The text demonstrates its effectiveness by establishing that divine action affects the natural world while also guiding Joel 1:1–14 to a climactic conclusion when the prophet implores the implied audience to beseech YHWH, hoping for a divine intervention in the situation.

Chapter Three: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 1:15–20

Introduction

Joel 1:15–20 moves away from the repeated appeals to the implied audience to

gather and cry out to YHWH. Instead, these verses provide actual lament speech that

reflects on the situation. Key to this transition in Joel 1:15–20 is the cessation of

imperative verbs, which indicates that the text is not directly commanding the implied

audience. Instead, the text seeks to bring together the perspectives of the prophet and the

implied audience in the laments that it presents. These laments have the further function

of communicating that what the implied audience is experiencing is nothing less than a

harbinger of the day of YHWH. This presents the implied audience with further reason to

embrace the prophet's appeals and call out to YHWH. The text concludes by appealing

for divine response, indicating that YHWH is the one who can ameliorate the situation.

Rhetorical Unit

Joel 1:15–20 opens with a powerful expression, "Alas for the day" (אֲהָהּ לַיּוֹם)

which sets the stage for the following verses. This exclamatory utterance is a sign of

aperture, particularly since it shifts the tone of the discourse away from calling people to

lament to actually beginning the process of crying out to YHWH (cf. Hos 5:1; 8:1).[1] It

also marks a shift in the perspective of the prophet who now identifies with the implied

audience and speaks in the first person plural in Joel 1:16, describing how food is cut off

from "our eyes" (עֵינֵינוּ), and joy and gladness "from the house of our God" (מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ).

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[1] On the use of exclamatory utterances and shifts in the type of discourse to mark the aperture of a rhetorical unit, see Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 38–41.

Thus, while Joel 1:15–20 continues to portray scenes of devastation, it changes its approach sufficiently to warrant separate consideration.

At the end of this rhetorical unit Joel 1:19–20 contains two significant features that indicate closure. In Joel 1:19a there is a shift in addressee when the prophet ceases from calling the implied audience to lament concerning the devastation that has occurred. He now turns his cry to YHWH and again describes the devastation using first person language. In a study of boundary markers in prophetic discourse, Wendland argues that inserting a snippet of direct address has a dramatizing effect and demonstrates that the rhetorical unit has reached a peak (Hos 2:1; 8:2; 14:3).[2] The prophet's cry to YHWH is a signal that the rhetorical unit is closing, having reached the peak of its appeal with this interjection of the prophet's own voice.

Secondly, following the cry to YHWH, the next clause in Joel 1:19 and the final clause of Joel 1:20 are almost exactly identical (Joel 1:19b כִּי אֵשׁ אָכְלָה נְאוֹת מִדְבָּר). This phrase differs in Joel 1:20 only by placing the definite article in front of מִדְבָּר. This is an example of epiphora, a literary device which uses the repetition of key words or phrases to signal the end of a text unit.[3] Buttressing the identification of epiphora is its probable reoccurrence to conclude other discourse units, most notably Joel 2:26–27 (cf. Hos 1:9; 2:25).[4] As a result, this repeated clause and the first person interjection of the prophet indicate that this rhetorical unit closes at Joel 1:20.

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[2] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 54–55.
[3] Thompson, "Repetition," 107.
[4] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 50.

Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation of Joel 1:15–20 changes slightly from that portrayed in Joel 1:1–14. In these verses, the text no longer concentrates on assembling the implied audience by appealing to its individual subgroups. Instead the prophet strategically identifies himself with the implied audience from Joel 1:1–14, indicating that he is suffering alongside it.[5] This eventually culminates in the prophet's direct address to YHWH in Joel 1:19–20 that draws YHWH into the audience of this unit. Thus, the text fuses the prophet and the implied audience created by Joel 1:1–14 and reveals that the proper response for this audience is to implore YHWH to act restoratively.

One key element of the rhetorical situation of Joel 1:15–20 is its introduction of the day of YHWH.[6] The exclamatory utterance that the day of YHWH is near adds a sense of urgency to the exigence of this rhetorical unit. Joel 1:15–20 begins to tie the devastation mentioned in 1:2–14 into the broader theological context of what this means for YHWH's relationship with the implied audience. This relationship is in view since the announcement of the day of YHWH targets those whom the text commands to assemble at the house of YHWH and cry out to YHWH. This heightens the exigence of the locust infestation and gives it another, more terrifying layer. The remainder of the book will develop the concept of the day of YHWH in greater detail as it progresses.

Alongside the announcement of the day of YHWH, the spectre of a devastating drought also plays a part in creating the exigence of the rhetorical situation in Joel 1. Joel 1:17–20 make reference to the withering of crops in significant detail by describing fields aflame and animals suffering from the lack of water. This may reflect a connection

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[5] Allen, *Joel*, 61.

[6] This study will address the day of YHWH further in the discussion of the rhetorical strategy of Joel 1:15.

between the imagery of Joel 1:17–20 and the effects of a sirocco wind following a period without rain. Nash suggests that this combination could so lower the water table that it would be possible for fires to rage unchecked.[7] The images of drought and flame thus appear to reflect a conceivable situation in the mind of the implied audience.

This study diverges from Nash in that she uses the drought imagery to try to establish the "world behind the text" and to suggest a time for Joel's oracles when a drought ravaged the land.[8] Her proposal, however, is highly speculative and what is of greater significance for the purposes of this study is how the image-world of drought contributes to the rhetorical situation of this prophetic communication. The images of drought build upon the lengthy recounting of how the locusts ravaged the land in the previous rhetorical unit. This combination powerfully heightens the picture of the threat to the community's survival.[9] The earlier mentions of the locusts and the vivid images of drought in this rhetorical unit establish the exigence of an unfolding catastrophe that provides the motivation for actions to which the text calls its implied audience.

Rhetorical Strategy

Joel 1:15 begins with the cry אֲהָהּ ("Alas!") which is the standard particle used to indicate lament or mourning (Josh 7:7; 2 Kgs 3:10; 6:5; Jer 4:10; 14:13; Ezek 9:8; 11:13).

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[7] Nash, "Palestinian," 56.

[8] Specifically, she suggests that the prophet uttered his oracles at the end of summer, just prior to the autumn rains, where insufficient winter rains combined with a dry summer would create powerful drought conditions. See Nash, "Palestinian," 59.

[9] Simkins addresses the issue of whether locust and drought imagery are likely companions. He suggests that while locusts require a certain amount of vegetation in order to support the growth of a swarm, the aftermath of a locust infestation could easily be thought to resemble that of a devastating drought since the various plants and vines would be devoid of foliage. He posits that the locust invasion coincided with the coming of the hot, dry summer, which would create a connection between the locust and drought imagery; Simkins, "God, History and the Natural World," 441–42. While this study is less concerned with determining a specific time for these calamities, Simkins' theory does help to explain why the text may fuse locust and drought imagery in this chapter.

This interjection is especially appropriate given the repeated commands in Joel 1:5–14 for the community to cry out to YHWH. This cry breaks the sequence of imperatives that introduced the various lament calls in Joel 1:1–14 and begins to provide the content of the lament.[10] Joel 1:15–20 adds further detail to its description of the ruin of the land, emphasizing the lack of food and water for both human and animal.[11]

The lack of imperative verbs in this section distinguishes Joel 1:15–20 from Joel 1:1–14 and suggests a change in rhetorical genre. Joel 1:15–20 is primarily descriptive, detailing the state of the land and its inhabitants before issuing a first person appeal to YHWH in Joel 1:19–20. Probably the most appropriate way to classify the rhetorical genre of Joel 1:15–20 is to locate it in the educational function of epideictic rhetoric. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca see epideictic discourse as the means of strengthening adherence to an accepted set of beliefs and reinforcing a disposition to act.[12] In this case, Joel elaborates on the well-attested prophetic theme of day of YHWH, providing the implied audience with a picture of its devastation. This leads to the prophet's own cry in Joel 1:19–20, which may provide a model which the implied audience ought to follow, especially in the wake of the direct command to cry out in Joel 1:14.

Joel 1:15–20 contains three short prayers (Joel 1:15–16, 17–18, 19–20) where the first two are communal cries in which the prophet joins the implied audience, before concluding with an appeal from an individual, namely, the figure of the prophet.[13] These cries elaborate upon the appeal to call out to YHWH, providing the next step in

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[10] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 42; Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 18.

[11] Ellul, "Introduction," 428.

[12] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 54.

[13] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 120. See the plural first person suffixes in Joel 1:16a (עֵינֵינוּ), 1:16b (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) and the singular first person verb in 1:19 (אֶקְרָא).

persuading the implied audience to respond properly to the prophetic exhortations. Alongside the shift in verbal mood, these verses also shift the image-world to one of drought and desiccation, no longer mentioning the locust infestation. The situation described in Joel 1:15–20, however, is equally grave.

Joel 1:15–16: First Communal Cry

Joel 1:15 ties the disaster explicitly to the theologically rich concept of the day of YHWH which continues to occasion much discussion concerning its origins, development and meaning.[14] Joel is indisputably an important resource for discussing the day of YHWH given the frequency with which the exact phrase יוֹם יְהוָה appears (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14), while also using other expressions that likely invoke the day of YHWH (Joel 3:2; 4:1, 18).[15] While it is beyond the purview of this study to delve deeply

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[14] Most of the research related to the day of YHWH focuses on tracing its origins and transmission in the traditions of the Old Testament. Mowinckel and von Rad offer the two most discussed views, with Mowinckel locating the day of YHWH as part of a cultic enthronement festival, while von Rad proposes an original setting of holy war; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 130–45; von Rad, "Origin of the Concept," 97–108. Further proposals interact with these foundations in different ways, with Černý questioning the existence of a cultic enthronement festival, and Cross attempting to find points of contact between Mowinckel and von Rad; Černý, *Day of Yahweh*, 35–103; Cross, "Divine Warrior," 11–30. Stuart also emphasizes the militaristic nature of the day of YHWH and connects it to ancient Near Eastern traditions that describe the victory of a sovereign over an enemy in single day; Stuart, "Sovereign's Day," 159–64. Fensham and Weiss critique von Rad's assertion that holy war lies behind the day of YHWH tradition with Fensham viewing it as a day of judgment, possibly with covenantal overtones and Weiss arguing that the key point is the appearance of YHWH who may act in a variety of fashions; Fensham, "Possible Origin," 90–97; Weiss, "Day of the Lord," 29–60. Another contribution to the discussion comes from Hoffman, who sees theophany as the guiding image behind the day of YHWH; Hoffman, "Day of the Lord," 37–50. Everson advances the discussion by noting that the temporal orientation of the day of YHWH can vary, with certain passages pointing to past events (Lam 1:12; 2:22; Isa 22:1–14; Jer 46:2–20; Ezek 13:1–9) and the remainder looking toward a future day; Everson, "Days of Yahweh," 329–37. The result of these studies is that there is no established consensus concerning the origin and transmission of the idea of the day of YHWH. These studies, however, effectively convey the range of images invoked by this day. On the day of YHWH, YHWH appears, announces both judgment and salvation and causes the cosmos to tremble in response. For a detailed and thoughtful analysis of the development of day of YHWH scholarship, see Boase, *Fulfillment*, 105–39.

[15] Scholars usually refer to the repeated use of the exact phrase יוֹם יְהוָה in Joel when debating the range of what should be considered a "day of YHWH" text. The exact phrase occurs fifteen times, twelve of which are in the Minor Prophets (Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14 (2x); Mal 3:23). Hoffmann, most notably, seeks to restrict study of the day of YHWH motif to

into questions of origin and development, the rhetorical purpose of evoking the realms of imagery related to the day of YHWH is worth considering.

The uses for which prophetic literature invokes the day of YHWH are multi-faceted, although they all relate to a time in which YHWH intervenes into human events.[16] Speaking about the Minor Prophets, Nogalski aptly notes that YHWH's intervention "does not fall neatly into a single, systematic view."[17] Instead, the day of YHWH can serve purposes ranging from announcing YHWH's judgment on Israel to promising Israel's restoration and enduring security. To communicate these messages, the day of YHWH can employ multiple motif-complexes including covenant, holy war, and theophany.[18]

The range of communicative purposes that the day of YHWH can serve is evident even within Joel. The text first uses it in the context of a locust infestation that sets off a cycle of liturgical lament among Judah/Jerusalem leading hopefully to divine restitution (Joel 1–2), while further evoking the day of YHWH as a time when Judah and Jerusalem

those passages, suggesting that the interpreter should only consider related phrases as a secondary step; Hoffmann, "Day of the Lord," 38. Weiss takes the opposite approach, arguing that related phrases invoke the same concept and should be considered. This has the potential to greatly expand the pool of available texts; Weiss, "Day of the Lord," 64–65. Rendtorff and Nogalski continue this trend while focusing specifically on the Minor Prophets, arguing that any text that refers to a day in which YHWH acts is worthy of consideration; Rendtorff, "Theological Unity," 75–87. Nogalski explicitly includes the phrase "on that day" (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא), or "in those days" (בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה) which are found in Joel; Nogalski, "Day(s)," 419–21.

[16] Nogalski, "Day(s), 621. Nogalski captures the flexibility of the day of YHWH, suggesting that it can be "anticipated, recounted or interpreted."

[17] Nogalski, "Recurring Themes," 126. He categorizes the varied use of the day of YHWH according to differences in target, time and means. He effectively develops the differences in target (Israel or foreign nations) and time (past, near future or distant future), while briefly mentioning some of the various means through which the day of YHWH is described.

[18] Leung, "Intertextual," 78–96. Leung finds examples of the covenant motif in the connection between the curses of Deut 28 and the calamities that afflict the audience in Joel. The theophany motif is found in the cosmic upheaval that surrounds the day of YHWH descriptions in Joel 2, 3 and 4. Leung also draws in the holy war motif in her discussion of the day of YHWH in Joel 2 and 4, arguing that these passages show YHWH appearing to engage in warlike activity. This study does not agree with all of Leung's identifications of motif-complexes, but her work is significant for demonstrating the breadth of images that the day of YHWH can employ.

stand aside, allowing YHWH their God to preserve their security and destroy those

foreign nations who threaten them (Joel 3–4).[19] Bourke concludes that the day of YHWH

that targets Judah and Jerusalem in Joel 1–2 is a microcosm of the day of YHWH that

affects foreign nations in Joel 3–4.[20] Other texts demonstrate similar creative range, with

Zephaniah invoking the day of YHWH to describe YHWH's sovereignty, judgment and

salvation, and Obadiah using the day of YHWH to announce judgment while making

Judah the agent that executes YHWH's verdict.[21] This study will continue to explore the

effects of invoking the day of YHWH in conjunction with the specific passages where it

occurs.

The rhetorical effect of employing the day of YHWH in Joel 1:15 relates to the

tradition of announcing judgment against the people of YHWH themselves (cf. Amos

5:18). The reference to the day of YHWH in Joel 1:15 also has a nearly exact parallel in

Isa 13:6. Both verses stress the nearness of the day (כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה) and employ a

phonological wordplay to describe the power of that day as coming like destruction from

the Almighty (כְּשֹׁד מִשַּׁדַּי יָבוֹא).[22] One important difference between Isa 13:6 and Joel 1:15

is that the Isaianic passage targets Babylon while Joel 1:15 is directed at YHWH's own

community. This demonstrates the adaptability of the day of YHWH concept to warn of

YHWH's wrath against any target.[23] Further, Isa 13:6 presents a picture of inescapable

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[19] Rendtorff, "'Alas for the Day!'" 19; cf. Bourke, "Jour," 5–6.

[20] Bourke, "Jour," 22. Bourke comments on the shared terminology between different uses of the day of YHWH in Joel and argues, "Il emploie systématiquement les mêmes termes selon deux dimensions entièrement différentes."

[21] King, "Day of the Lord," 16–32; Snyman, "Yom (YHWH)," 81–91. Although the exact phrase "day of the Lord" is only found in Zeph 1:7, 14, King employs a similar methodology to Nogalski and treats all of Zephaniah's references as a day in which YHWH acts. This brings out the full range of Zephaniah's understanding of YHWH's intervention into human affairs.

[22] Mason, *Zephaniah*, 117; Müller, *Gottes Zukunft*, 79.

[23] Coggins, *Joel*, 34.

judgment surrounding the announcement that the day of YHWH is approaching, while the announcement in Joel 1:15 ties into later passages (specifically Joel 2:12–17) that appear to offer a way to avoid judgment.[24] Thus, while the image of the day of YHWH has resonance across the prophetic canon, it is necessary to examine how individual texts nuance the motif.

Joel 1:15 declares that the day of YHWH is a day to come that will bring destruction upon the land through divine agency. Joel 1:15 views this day as one to come since it describes the day as "near" (קָרוֹב). Thus, what is occurring now is a precursor of this coming day.[25] Joel only briefly introduces the day of YHWH in Joel 1:15, effectively foreshadowing further discussions of the motif. In future chapters, the text will elaborate and expand on the great theophanic and cosmological ramifications of the day of YHWH.[26] Joel 1:15, however, makes it clear that its picture of the day of YHWH is clearly one of woe for the community of YHWH.[27] The land has experienced a terrible locust plague and the text wants to make it evident that the community cannot interpret it as simply occurring due to natural causes.[28] In effect, announcing the imminence of the day of YHWH strengthens the text's appeal to cry out to YHWH in Joel 1:14. The implied audience is suffering the ravages of the locust infestation which provides many reasons to cry out, but the text heightens the gravity of the situation by briefly invoking the day of YHWH and implying that YHWH lies behind the devastation.

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[24] Rendtorff, "Alas for the Day," 188.

[25] Ellul, "Introduction," 428. This is contrary to the interpretative tradition that Vernes inaugurates in which Joel 1–2 refers to a day of YHWH in the past while Joel 3–4 speaks of a day of YHWH to come. See the above discussion regarding theories of Joel's literary unity in the Introduction.

[26] Ahlström, *Joel*, 64–65. A broad overview of the day of YHWH texts in Joel reveals a progression from wrath directed at Judah to wrath directed against Judah's enemies. See Bourke, "Jour de Yahvé," 5–30, 191–212. For the various thematic resonances of the day of YHWH, see Leung, "Intertextual," 71–97.

[27] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 58.

[28] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 153.

The destructive nature of the day of YHWH ties Joel 1:15 back to 1:10 which

uses the same root to describe the destruction of agricultural produce.[29] The destruction

(שָׁדַד) that the locusts bring in Joel 1:10 thus is connected to the devastation (שֹׁד) wrought

by the day of YHWH in 1:15. In doing so, the text invokes the presence of YHWH, not

only as the one to whom the people cry, but also as the agency behind their current

circumstances. The text brings YHWH into the foreground and creates a new

understanding of the situation's gravity.[30] In establishing that the current situation is

potentially a precursor for further hardship brought on through divine agency, the text

presents a powerful case for the implied audience to engage in the actions it prescribes in

the earlier calls to lament.[31]

After the announcement of the day of YHWH, Joel 1:16 adds greater detail

describing the crisis that points to the proximity of that day. Joel 1:16 again declares that

the cult is unable to function properly. The text again references the cessation of daily

sacrifices in Joel 1:16 through two rhetorical questions that connect the day of YHWH,

the locust plague and the cultic crisis.[32] Joel 1:16a reads הֲלוֹא נֶגֶד עֵינֵינוּ אֹכֶל נִכְרָת ("has not

the food been cut off from before our eyes?"). This clause commences with a negative

interrogative particle followed by the adjunct of place (נֶגֶד עֵינֵינוּ) and the subject of the

verb (אֹכֶל).[33] In fronting the adjunct of place, Joel emphasizes the helplessness of the

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[29] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 120.

[30] On the role of presence in the construction of an argument, see Perelman, *New Rhetoric*, 116–7, which states that one of the rhetor's tasks is, "to make present, by verbal magic alone, what is actually absent but what he considers important to his argument."

[31] LaRocca-Pitts, "The Day of Yahweh," 290.

[32] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 149.

[33] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 120.

situation since the community is powerless to stand against what is happening even though it occurs right in front of them.[34]

Joel 1:16b reads מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ שִׂמְחָה וָגִיל ("from the house of our God joy and mirth") with the verb נִכְרָת also governing this half of the verse. Joel 1:16b ties the cessation of cultic practice to the description of inescapable want in Joel 1:16a. This clause directs focus to the house of YHWH from where joy and mirth (שִׂמְחָה וָגִיל) are cut off. Joy and mirth in this instance have cultic connotations, reflecting the attitude that making offerings to YHWH ought to create (cf. Deut 12:5–7).[35] The structure of Joel 1:16b also highlights the cultic connection since it parallels the structure of the final clause of 1:13, which speaks to the interruption of the מִנְחָה וָנֶסֶךְ from the house of YHWH. Ultimately, Joel 1:16 reveals once again that there can be no cultic celebrations of joy in the context of tremendous want within the community that makes it impossible to follow the ordained sacrificial system.

Joel 1:17–18: Second Communal Cry

Following the reference to the day of YHWH and its cultic ramifications, Joel 1:17–18 again paints a vivid picture of natural disaster that focuses upon images drawn from the realm of drought and desiccation. Some interpreters use the shift in imagery to argue for different layers of composition with Ahlström claiming that the drought images "cannot be in harmony with the damaging ravages of the locusts."[36] On the other hand, it

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[34] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 107. Crenshaw further connects this image with covenant futility curses in places like Deut 28:31 where again the community will be powerless to stand against YHWH's judgment.

[35] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 107. Anderson uses this verse to illustrate the connectedness of the community and the divine presence. YHWH's absence and the presence of lament and fasting indicate that it is impossible to preserve communal joy or rejoicing in this context; Anderson, *Time to Mourn*, 109–10.

[36] Ahlström, *Joel*, 51–52. See also Bergler who tries to separate out the references to the drought and identify them as the kernel of the prophetic book; Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret*, 275.

is possible to demonstrate the congruity of the two image-worlds, noting how both locusts and droughts can draw from the realm of fire to describe their effects (cf. Joel 2:3, 5), and how the destruction of foliage in the aftermath of a locust invasion could resemble the effect of a devastating drought.[37] For the purposes of this study, what is of greater interest is how the strategy of shifting image-worlds contributes to the rhetorical strategy of the text. Primarily, the development in imagery reinforces the hammering rhythm of attack after attack against the implied audience, resulting in total devastation. Joel 1:1–14 portrays wave after wave of locusts devastating the land, rendering inoperative the sacrificial system and requiring the community to call out in lament. If that were not enough, the text now adds the image of a desiccating drought, heightening the despair by introducing yet another calamitous threat to the community's continued existence.

Joel 1:17–18 presents the specifics of the drought images that again reinforce the desperate straits of the community. Joel 1:17 first portrays seeds unable to sprout because of the lack of moisture.[38] This effectively adds to the imagery of famine that is prevalent in this chapter since reading it together with the destruction of the locusts would indicate that those few stalks and seeds that the locusts did not devour will succumb to the drought that follows.[39] The remainder of Joel 1:17 references the disrepair of the storage

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[37] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 149–53.

[38] Joel 1:17 is one of the most difficult verses of the book to decipher since 1:17a contains 3 *hapax legomena*. The MT reads עָבְשׁוּ פְרֻדוֹת תַּחַת מֶגְרְפֹתֵיהֶם (the only non-*hapax legomenon* is תַּחַת) which is usually rendered "the seeds have been shriveled up in their clods" based on an understanding of פְרֻדוֹת as "seeds" from Aramaic and Syriac cognates. Since the remainder of the verse refers to the destruction of granaries because of the absence of crops, this at least seems to fit the context. The LXX offers little in the way of clarification. It reads δαμάλεις ("heifers") for פְרֻדוֹת (which would be פָרוֹת) and then makes reference to them "skipping about" (ἐσκίρτησαν), potentially due to hunger pangs. No solution to this issue has garnered significant support. Barton suggests that there is little hope of ever restoring the original Hebrew or of fully comprehending the sense of the MT should it be the correct text, while Simkins declines to offer a translation and skips this clause in his analysis; Barton, *Joel*, 58; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 146–47. Given the lack of reasonable alternatives, this study follows the general scholarly consensus of what the Masoretic text seems to mean on the grounds that it best fits with the latter half of the verse.

[39] Simkins, "God, History and the Natural World," 442.

houses for the crops; the widespread crop failure means that there is no need for these storehouses or that the disasters have erased any prior surplus. In the last clause of the verse, Joel engages in lexical repetition, again referring to the withering of grain (הֹבִישׁ דָּגָן) by using verbs derived from יָבֵשׁ, which recalls the elaborate description of crops withering in Joel 1:11–12 that calls agricultural workers into lament. Consequently, one can see continuity in the way that the text describes the effects of the locust infestation and the drought.

Joel 1:18 adds a new element to the imagery of drought and suffering. Not only have the locusts and the drought affected the community, but also their livestock. The text emphatically introduces the animal realm by using three rhyming words in an expressive exclamation to begin the verse (מַה־נֶּאֶנְחָה בְהֵמָה). In this first clause, the text personifies the בְהֵמָה by describing them as groaning.[40] The text provides the reason for their groaning in an explanatory כִּי clause that declares that the animals have no pasture (אֵין מִרְעֶה לָהֶם). Joel 1:18 then concludes by adding extra detail to the description of the animals' suffering. The final clause reads גַּם־עֶדְרֵי הַצֹּאן נֶאְשָׁמוּ ("even the flocks of sheep suffer") and is notable for fronting the subject of the verb. This fronting emphasizes that even the "flocks of sheep," or animals presumably accustomed to foraging in dryer areas are finding this situation devastating.[41] Overall, Joel 1:18 expands the scope of those affected by the series of disasters. The preceding verses vividly communicate the effects of the current catastrophes on people and crops while this verse adds extra weight by

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[40] The verb אָנַח can refer to sounds uttered by both people and animals. Cf. Exod 2:23; Prov 29:2; Isa 24:7; Jer 22:23.
[41] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 121. Van der Merwe suggests that this fronting is to be expected since גַּם + constituent tends to be the focus of an utterance; cf. Van der Merwe, "Another Look," 330.

detailing the effects on livestock. These images thus heighten the rhetorical connection between the current situation and the promised day of YHWH which reflects an all-encompassing devastation.

Joel 1:19–20: The Cry of the Prophet

Joel 1:15–20 concludes in Joel 1:19–20 with the text changing its rhetorical voice from the first person plural identification with the implied audience to first person appeal from the prophet to YHWH. This shift in voice highlights the prophet himself as he adds his own voice to the picture of devastation and drought. In Joel 1:19 the prophet declares אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא ("to you, O YHWH, I cry"), appealing to YHWH as the sole source of succor in the face of the overwhelming catastrophes described in the previous verses.[42] The prophet's personal interjection is a natural progression from the earlier appeals to different groups within the implied audience to call out to YHWH. In crying out to YHWH, the text uses the prophet as a model for how the community ought to respond to the preceding descriptions of disaster; they are to follow his lead and call out to YHWH. This appeal also makes YHWH into a part of the audience that the text addresses. While this appeal to YHWH may intend to draw the implied audience to cry out amidst their circumstances, it also opens up the expectation for divine response since that is what the prophet appears to desire.

The prophet's cry is also powerful in how it deepens the picture of destruction. Joel 1:19–20 introduces the image of fire burning the pastures and trees, which forcefully points to impending devastation (cf. Amos 7:4–6). The image-world imagined here is

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[42] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 121.

reflective of a full-fledged drought drops the water table to an extent in which wildfires could ravage the region.[43] As mentioned in the discussion of rhetorical unit, the phrase אֵשׁ אָכְלָה נְאוֹת מִדְבָּר occurs in both Joel 1:19 and 1:20 which probably reflects an example of epiphora, suggesting that this imagery of fire brings this rhetorical unit to a close.[44] The text further heightens the gravity of this cry to YHWH through personification in Joel 1:20. The beasts of the field add their voice of longing as they "pant" (תַּעֲרוֹג) for YHWH. The only other occurrence of the root עָרַג is in Ps 42:2 which places the panting of the deer for streams of water in parallel with the psalmist's longing for YHWH. Thus, alongside the audience and the prophet, the beasts add their voice to the appeal to YHWH because of the lack of water (cf. Job 38:41; Ps 104:21).[45]

Joel 1:20 also has another parallel to Ps 42:2 since both verses use the phrase אֲפִיקֵי מָיִם ("streams of water"). This term probably refers to water sources that are seasonal in nature and derive their liquidity from the underground water table (cf. Ps 126:4).[46] In Ps 42, the psalmist uses the example of the deer seeking the אֲפִיקֵי מָיִם to illustrate the urgency of the quest for YHWH. Joel 1:20, however, suggests that just as the אֲפִיקֵי מָיִם are dried up, those who pant in their search for YHWH will come away unsatisfied.[47] The lack of water goes beyond its effects on both humans and animals. It is

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[43] Nash, "Palestinian," 57. Also, Simkins suggests that the description of fire could again refer to the destructive capacity of the locusts in that their rapacious consumption could resemble a building fire; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 149–50. It is difficult to untangle the image-worlds of this reference and it is also probably unnecessary. The idea remains that fire is ravaging the landscape, adding yet another level of the distress pictured in Joel 1.

[44] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 50–51.

[45] Ellul, "Introduction," 429; Allen, *Joel*, 63.

[46] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 151–52.

[47] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 153–54. Simkins attempts to get behind the metaphorical references to streams of water by detailing how the devastation of a locust plague would be compounded in the dry heat of early summer. Whether his hypothetical reconstruction of the circumstances that led to this text is correct, he articulates a chilling picture of the level of devastation and desperation that these circumstances could create.

also probable that the disappearance of this water source is symbolic of the removal of divine favour.[48] This idea gains strength from the end of the book where YHWH's enthronement in Zion will cause abundant streams of water to flow in Judah. Both Joel 1:20 and 4:18 use the same construct noun אֲפִיקֵי ("streams of") to refer to water or its lack in the context of divine favour. Water, a precious commodity necessary for life, thus is promised when YHWH is restoring Judah, but is lacking when it seems that YHWH is either silent or angered.

Overall, Joel 1:20 expands the effects of the drought imagery. It is not only the different varieties of domesticated beasts of 1:18 that cry out; wild animals accustomed to foraging on their own fare no better since the pastures of the wilderness (נְאוֹת הַמִּדְבָּר), on which grazing animals depend, also succumb to the fires (cf. Ps 65:13; Jer 9:9; 23:10).[49] As a result, those suffering from the conditions whether they are human or animal join their voices to cry out to YHWH. These intermixed cries appear to play on the cultic lament by offering only the first element of crying out to YHWH; they do not include a petition, vow or confession of trust.[50] Instead, the text leaves the burden of action upon YHWH who is the only agent capable of answering. The cries of the people and of the animals are not answered in Joel 1:15–20. Instead they are left awaiting further resolution in the remainder of the book.

There is a connection between the descriptions of devastation in these cries to YHWH and the destruction caused by the locusts in Joel 1:5–14 in that the text uses both to set up the statement that the day of YHWH is near.[51] Consequently, the present

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[48] Simkins, *Yawheh's Activity*, 153.
[49] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 111.
[50] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 115.
[51] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 38.

emergency is an act of YHWH and it foreshadows the potential of an even greater catastrophe to come in succeeding rhetorical units. The prophet thus attempts to persuade the implied audience that YHWH is at work in all of the circumstances that he has so intricately detailed throughout the course of Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20. The prophet's cry to YHWH reflects on the current devastation and points the community to the one whose day is coming.

Summary

Joel 1:15–20 ties the previous images of the locust plague into the picture of the coming day of YHWH which it portrays as a day of destruction and devastation against the implied audience. Joel 1:15–20 uses further pictures of cultic and agricultural crisis to heighten the community's awareness of the nature of the day of YHWH. These images come from the realm of drought and, along with the ravages of the locusts from Joel 1:1– 14, they indicate the severity of the situation. Joel 1:15–20 concludes with the prophet rhetorically crying to YHWH, modeling the cry that the implied audience ought to adopt. This cry is not answered in this section, leaving the implied audience in suspense concerning whether YHWH will hear and respond to the calls of lament that the prophet has commanded.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The discussion of rhetorical effectiveness in Joel 1:15–20 begins with the text's progression from calls to lament in Joel 1:5–14 to the actual cries of lament that culminate in a direct appeal from the prophet to YHWH in Joel 1:15–20. The steps that

the text takes towards crying out to YHWH seem to indicate the effectiveness of the prophetic word.[52] This movement may reflect the text's potential effectiveness since it would fit with the claim of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca that an effective deliberative argument is one that obtains a decision to act.[53] By providing these laments, the text indicates that the call to cry out to YHWH in Joel 1:14 is effective. Essentially, Joel 1:15–20 presents a prophet who reflects on the situation and responds appropriately by drawing YHWH into the discussion. This should galvanize the implied audience and direct them to the house of YHWH where they should follow the prophetic lead and offer up these cries to YHWH.[54]

Joel 1:15–20 further reflects an effective strategy of identification between the prophet and the implied audience. Joel 1:1–14 begins with appeals to the community to hear the prophetic word, followed by more specific commands to different subsections to take up the prescribed cries of lamentation. Joel 1:15–20, however, does not leave the persona of the prophet aloof from the situation. When the laments are issued in Joel 1:15–20, the text draws the prophet and the implied audience together in Joel 1:16–18, before placing the final cry in the mouth of the prophet himself in 1:19–20. Thus, Joel 1:15–20 effectively connects its rhetor with the implied audience whom it seeks to persuade. When the implied audience gathers to "cry out to YHWH," the text places the prophet among them, uttering similar cries for respite and relief from the exigences that drive the rhetorical situation.

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[52] Simkins, "God, History and the Natural World," 436; Dillard, "Joel," 266; Coggins, *Joel*, 33. Coggins specifically refers to Joel 1:15 as the verse where the text switches from a "summons *to* assembly, to a cry apparently uttered *by* the assembly."

[53] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 54.

[54] Looking ahead, the great reversal of all the elements of deprivation in Joel 2:18–27 could potentially indicate a scenario in which the people faithfully followed the course of action that the prophet prescribed. Of course, the text never explicitly makes this claim, which leaves the situation ambiguous.

This strategy of identification is also effective given the rhetorical genre of Joel 1:15–20. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca indicate that one of the aims of epideictic discourse is to establish a sense of communion between the rhetor and the audience based around a shared value or belief.[55] In Joel 1:15–20, the prophet draws from the tradition of the day of YHWH and uses this to establish his connection with the implied audience. By identifying with the implied audience as one who also cries out as the day of YHWH nears, the prophet can effectively persuade the implied audience that they ought to respond in a similar manner.

Conclusion

Joel 1:15–20 begins with a powerful exclamatory cry that marks the transition from calls to lament in Joel 1:5–14 to the uttering of lament cries. It also develops the rhetorical situation by introducing the exigence of the day of YHWH, while further portraying the level of devastation through images drawn from the realm of drought. Joel 1:15–20 also reflects a development in the rhetorical genre of the text, trying to educate the implied audience that they ought to follow the prophet's lead in responding to the exigences that the text presents. Joel 1:15–20 continues to powerfully use the desperate circumstances it describes in order to draw the implied audience into response, which opens the door for evoking a response from YHWH who is the one who can remedy the situation. Ultimately, Joel 1:15–20 permits the prophet to identify more closely to the implied audience, urging it to follow the prophet's leadership in crying out to YHWH.

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[55] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 51. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that the rhetor attempts to emphasize the value that the rhetor and the audience share, so that this sense of communion can remain intact even when conflicting values come into play.

Chapter Four: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 2:1–11

Introduction

Joel 2:1–11 picks up from the prophet's cry to YHWH and takes the text in a startling direction. It again announces the day of YHWH as a day of destruction for the Judahite community, made evident in the command to blow a trumpet in Zion and in the description of an invading army. Joel 2:1–11 culminates in the shocking revelation that YHWH leads the invading horde against Zion. This heightens the crisis articulated in Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20, indicating that the initial appeals to cry out to YHWH and the prophet's own lament have not successfully persuaded YHWH to act salvifically at this stage. This revelation establishes the need for the more detailed call to response that follows in Joel 2:12–17. By threatening the community's continued existence, the text lays the foundation for trying to evoke the response of again appealing to YHWH in Joel 2:12–17.

Rhetorical Unit

Following the descriptions of fire and drought, Joel 2 commences with further imagery related to devastation and destruction. The first discrete unit in this chapter is Joel 2:1–11. An inclusio using the theologically rich phrase "day of the Lord" demarcates the boundaries of this particular rhetorical unit.[1] The latter half of Joel 2:1 declares that this day is coming and that the inhabitants of the land should tremble, while 2:11 concludes with a statement regarding the magnitude of that day and a rhetorical question concerning the miniscule likelihood of surviving its onslaught. Joel 2:1–11 stands distinct

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[1] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 128. Crenshaw also points to the threefold repetition of the suffixed noun פָּנָיו in Joel 2:1–11 as a feature that binds it together (לְפָנָיו in Joel 2:3, 10, מִפָּנָיו in Joel 2:6).

from what precedes by shifting away from the laments and prophetic entreaties to YHWH that characterize Joel 1:15–20. Instead, this passage readdresses the implied audience with a series of imperatives and presents a further picture of disaster. Joel 2:1–11 concludes by returning to the idea of the day of YHWH, ending with a powerful exclamatory rhetorical question concerning the possibility of surviving its onslaught. The final rhetorical question is a climactic conclusion to the rhetorical unit since it summarizes all that precedes and asks an overarching question that the following unit (Joel 2:12–17) begins to answer.[2]

Within Joel 2:1–11, the text breaks down into several subunits. Joel 2:1–2a introduces the day of YHWH inclusio and describes the devastating darkness that this day brings. Joel 2:2b–5 shifts to describing the advance of an invading army. This army leaves the landscape devastated in its wake and arrives at the gates of Zion to launch its assault. Joel 2:6 provides a brief shift of scene, focusing the reactions of those who fall victim to the invader. Joel 2:7–9 then describes the assault on Zion and the invader's ability to overcome any defenses. Finally, Joel 2:10–11 closes the day of YHWH inclusio, describing the cosmos-rending effects of YHWH acting as the leader of the invading horde.

Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation created by the text shifts from Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20 as the text transitions to different imagery describing the threat against its implied audience.

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[2] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 44. Wendland lists rhetorical questions principally as signals of aperture for new rhetorical units but he also acknowledges the possibility of using them as signals of closure. See Hos 9:14.

The situation of Joel 1:1–14 revolves around the announcement of a locust invasion and subsequent agricultural disasters, while pointing the audience to cultic observances to appeal for relief. Joel 1:15–20 continues to describe agricultural hardships through imagery drawn from the realm of drought. Joel 2:1–11 makes no further mention of agricultural produce. Instead, it focuses upon an army ravaging the surrounding landscape before besieging Zion.[3] This militaristic picture provides the setting for Joel 2:1–11; following the detailed description of an army ravaging the landscape in Joel 2:2b–5, attention turns to the one stronghold where the implied audience could hope to find succor. The references to the temple found in Joel 1:9, 13, 14 do bring Zion into view, but Joel 2:1–11 crystallizes the text's focus on this location beginning with the very first warning to blow the ram's horn.

This is a significant transition given the importance of Zion in the remainder of the book which culminates with the text's climactic conclusion concerning the relationship between YHWH and Zion (Joel 2:23; 3:5; 4:16, 17, 21).[4] The key aspect of Zion's role in the rhetorical situation of Joel 2:1–11 concerns its relationship with YHWH in the wake of the day of YHWH. The text first situates Zion as one would expect, referring to YHWH's claim over it in Joel 2:1 (בְּהַר קָדְשִׁי), but by the end of Joel 2:1–11 this relationship is under severe threat and appears likely to be severed.

The imagery that the text uses to construct the rhetorical situation is reminiscent of an imminent military invasion that also contains powerful theophanic overtones.[5] The

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[3] Barton, *Joel*, 70.

[4] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 128.

[5] On the theophanic resonances of Joel 2:1–2a, see Leung, "Intertextual," 176–77. She detects the presence of theophany in Joel's prophetic re-reading of the day of YHWH from Joel 1:15. Whereas that reference to the day of YHWH focuses upon the locusts, the image associated with the day of YHWH in Joel 2:1–2a is cosmic darkness, reflecting the presence of YHWH (cf. Deut 4:11). Darkness is a common theme in day of YHWH texts, reflective of the divine authority over the natural order (cf. Isa 13:10; Amos 5:18–20; Zeph

exigence driving the situation of Joel 2:1–11 is the arrival of the invading horde and its assault on Zion. The description of the invader in Joel 2:2b–5 uses its effects on the landscape to emphasize the power of its assault and highlight its invulnerability, while 2:6–9 details the assault itself and demonstrates that Zion, the supposedly inviolable fortress, cannot withstand this assault. The overwhelming nature of the threat heightens the tension of the rhetorical situation from Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20. Whereas Joel 1:1–14 points to a locust infestation that threatened the agricultural and the sacrificial systems, Joel 2:1–11 threatens the survival of YHWH's covenant people as it describes an invader capable of penetrating Zion's defenses and wreaking havoc.[6]

The text heightens this exigence through theophanic imagery revealed in the day of YHWH inclusio that brackets this unit. On top of imagery related to a military invasion, this unit also creates the cosmological backdrop where the heavenly lights dim

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1:15). As will be argued below, the locusts still are part of the image-world in Joel 2:1–11, but the text locates them in the middle of an inclusio composed of references to the cosmos-rending power of YHWH.

[6] The term covenant is a central metaphor that describes the relationship between YHWH and Israel/Judah. The key idea is that a covenant provides a complex enactment that creates relationship between the covenanted parties. The covenant to which this study refers is the Mosaic covenant at Sinai which codifies the relationship between YHWH and Israel. Many, following Mendenhall, note the similarities between the covenant language of the Old Testament and suzerain-vassal treaties of the ancient Near East, specifically as illustrated in Deuteronomy. Features common to both include: i) the identity of the covenant giver, ii) a historical prologue, iii) stipulations, iv) list of witnesses, v) list of blessings and curses. Also significant to the Old Testament concept of covenant is the acknowledged inequality between the parties: YHWH takes the initiative in establishing covenant relationship with Israel who are called to serve YHWH faithfully. The tension in much of the prophetic literature of the Old Testament concerns whether or not Israel/Judah will uphold the stipulations of their covenant with YHWH, including faithfully worshipping YHWH alone and living in accordance with YHWH's decrees. If they do, the prophets indicate that YHWH will bring blessing, but if they fail, YHWH will bring curses including exile. The term "covenant community" in this study reflects the relationship between YHWH and the implied audience that Joel constructs. Pronominal suffixes that refer to "your God" (Joel 1:13, 14; 2:13, 14, 23, 26, 27; 4:17), "our God" (Joel 1:16), "my people" (Joel 2:26, 27; 4:2) and "your people" (Joel 2:17), suggest the depth of this relationship. The responses of the implied audience and YHWH are intertwined throughout the book, reflecting the covenantal connection between them. For further reading on covenant and the Old Testament, see Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1179–1202; Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 20; Hillers, *Covenant*; Klein, *Treaty*; Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 94–119; McKenzie, *Covenant*, 25–40, 53–64; Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 49–92.

and the earth shakes before revealing YHWH's claim to lead the invading horde.[7] Thus, the exigence of the threat to Zion's survival comes not only from a military threat, but also from the theophanic realm, where YHWH as sovereign ruler of the cosmos is the one bringing this threat against Zion.

The way in which this unit establishes its implied audience is also worthy of comment. The text addresses the implied audience directly in Joel 2:1, first locating it in Zion, also described as the mountain of YHWH's holiness.[8] The text describes the audience as "all dwellers of the land" (כֹּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ), which echoes one half of the initial prophetic call in Joel 1:2. In Joel 2:1, the text makes no reference to elders, which may reflect the impending gravity of the situation; there is no command for the implied audience to pass on its knowledge of this time to future generations since the approach of this invader may herald final doom. Consequently, "all dwellers of the land" probably gathers all of the elements of the implied audience in Joel 1:1–14.

The text instructs this implied audience through a sequence of three imperatives that begins with a call to blow the warning horn (תִּקְעוּ) and then commands the audience to sound an alarm (וְהָרִיעוּ) and tremble (יִרְגְּזוּ). These commands create the context of an attack warning, with the prophet functioning as the watchman, calling for the alarm to sound (Isa 21:11–12; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17).[9] The command for the implied audience to

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[7] For a discussion of the metaphorical blend of imagery that combines the locust invasion, military assault and theophanic phenomena, see Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 34. Wendland correctly notes the reuse of locust imagery in Joel 2:3–9 that fleshes out the detail of the divinely-sanctioned assault on Zion in Joel 2:1–2, 10–11.

[8] See the section on rhetorical strategy in Joel 2:1–11 for further discussion of the effect of referring to Zion as the mountain of YHWH's holiness.

[9] Dillard, "Joel," 271. Dillard suggests that, "Joel is in effect giving another battle oracle—but it is the Lord's army coming against Israel on the day of the Lord." This reverses the expectation that the prophet will articulate the way in which the battle ought to proceed (cf. 2 Kgs 3:14–19; 6:8–7:2; 13:14–20. See 1 Kgs 20 and 2 Chr 11:1–4 for examples of the prophet declaring that the battle ought not to occur).

tremble suggests that this call to alarm is likely to have serious consequences.[10]
Interestingly, this is the final occasion on which Joel 2:1-11 addresses its implied
audience as active agents. Joel 2:2–11 describes the day of YHWH and the advance of
the invader without once mentioning any action to resist the onslaught on the part of
those living in Zion. This stands in distinct contrast to the previous rhetorical unit which
first constructed its implied audience in broad strokes (Joel 1:2), before highlighting
specific groups within the larger community (Joel 1:5–14) and calls upon them to gather
at the temple to cry out to YHWH.

The only further action that the text grants to an audience is to writhe in abject
terror (יָחִילוּ) in the wake of the invader's advance (Joel 2:6).[11] The text's focus on the
invader's activities and silence concerning those who dwell in Zion creates a rhetorical
situation in which the rhetor seeks to emphasize the implied audience's inability to
ameliorate their situation. The implied audience and rhetor may share the same degree of
interest in the situation, but establishing the implied audience's inability to directly effect
change is the primary purpose.[12] The call to alarm in Joel 2:1 is ironic since the
progression of this rhetorical unit reveals that the sounding alarm has no effect on the
implied audience's fate. Essentially, the situation that governs this rhetorical unit is not
one that calls its audience to a response that can modify the exigence, instead it

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[10]Vanoni, "רגז," 304–08.The root רָגַז has a semantic range that suggests that its subject is moved
powerfully, both inwardly and outwardly. The causes of such reactions tend to be negative for humanity,
such as announcement of death (2 Sam 19:1; Isa 32:10–11), injustice (Ps 45:5), or cosmic turmoil (Isa 14:9,
16; Job 3:26). The root רָגַז also describes trembling of bodies in the natural world, usually as the result of
YHWH moving and acting as Divine Warrior (1 Sam 14:15; Pss 18:8; 77:19; Isa 64:1; Mic 7:17). Joel 2:1–
11 makes use of both elements since the description of the earth's response in Joel 2:10 mirrors the
command for the implied audience to tremble here.

[11] For more on the effect of commanding the implied audience to respond by writhing, see the discussion
below on the rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:1–11.

[12] Hauser, *Introduction*, 57–58.

emphasizes that there is no viable response other than terror and fear. This lays the foundation for the implied audience to respond through an appeal to YHWH to remedy the situation in Joel 2:12–17.

In summary, the rhetorical situation of Joel 2:1–11 is based on the exigence of an unstoppable invading horde that is a reflection of the day of YHWH. Joel 2:1–11 details the inexorable advance of the invader as it makes its way across the countryside (Joel 2:3–5) to the city walls which it penetrates with ease (Joel 2:7–9). The implied audience of this rhetorical unit consists of those "dwellers of the land" who hear the command to blow the trumpet in Zion and who can only tremble as the invader draws near. Joel 2:1–11 essentially eliminates their ability to directly modify the exigence, indicating that its intent is to persuade the audience that they are helpless before the unleashed power of YHWH.

Rhetorical Strategy

Joel 2:1–11 relates closely to the preceding rhetorical unit. Again the text provides a detailed depiction of disaster falling upon YHWH's covenant people, this time focusing on the destruction of Jerusalem. One of the key questions guiding the discussion of Joel 2:1–11 is the connection between this disaster and the one articulated in Joel 1. Three prominent streams of interpretation can be discerned from previous research.[13] First, those commentators who argue that the locusts of Joel 1 represented a human army carry this argument through Joel 2:1–11, again pointing to the Babylonian army that

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[13] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 159. He also notes that Nash has attempted to put forward a different proposal and argue that the referent of this section is a sirocco windstorm that could dry out the land and drive dust into everything; cf. Nash, "Palestinian," 136–56. However, this idea has not gained much traction since it fails to deal sufficiently with the images of individual fighters that characterize Joel 2:4–9.

carried the Jerusalem community into captivity.[14] Secondly, some argue that Joel 2:1–11 makes a transition from a literal locust plague in Joel 1:1–14 to an evocative description of an apocalyptic enemy that cannot be identified with an earthly foe.[15] Thirdly, others view Joel 2:1–11 as further depiction of a locust plague such as the one that dominated the image-world of Joel 1:1–14.[16]

Taking these different views in turn, there are relatively few who hold to the "literal enemy" interpretation for this passage. Stuart attempts to make the case for this point of view by arguing that the language and imagery of Joel 1:1–2:17 is very appropriate to descriptions of what devastation can be wrought by human armies and is not characteristic of locusts.[17] He associates that army with a looming Babylonian threat. This interpretation fits with the militaristic tone of Joel 2:1–11, with its images of armies, chariots, and horses. Simkins and Linville challenge Stuart by noting the prevalence of the preposition כְּ that precedes many of these images and suggest that this indicates the presence of simile (cf. Joel 2:2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9).[18] If the invader is "like a mighty people arrayed for battle," or "like men of war," it would be surprising if the referent actually was an invading army.[19] Their critique, however, ignores the possibility that Joel 2:1–11 employs *kaph veritatis*, which would indicate that the invader is "in every respect like"

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[14] See Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 233; Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 27. Ogden argues that Joel is borrowing the imagery of the Babylonian invasion and using it here to call the community to hear his message concerning the coming of the day of YHWH.

[15] See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 41–42; Sweeney, *Twelve*, 162–64; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 118–25.

[16] See Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 163–69.

[17] Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 233. Ogden asserts a similar position, arguing that the text is reflecting back on the experience of the Babylonian invasion and treating it as occurring in the present in order to direct the nation to seek YHWH; Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 27. This position is dependant on successfully identifying Joel's time of composition, which continues to prove challenging.

[18] For the comparative function of כְּ, see Waltke and O'Connor §11.2.9a–b; van der Merwe et al. §39.10; GKC §118s–w.

[19] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 160; Linville, "Bugs," 290. Linville expresses the apparent tautology, stating "of course an army is like an army."

the images it presents (cf. Num 11:1; Neh 7:2; Joel 1:15).[20] The potential use of this form

of *kaph* could weaken Simkins' and Linville's argument.

The presence of *kaph veritatis* in Joel 2:1–11, however, is debatable. The

description in Joel 2:2 of the invader arriving "like dawn spread over the mountains"

(כְּשַׁחַר פָּרֻשׂ עַל־הֶהָרִים), is most likely a simile. Similarly, the description of the landscape

being like the Garden of Eden (כְּגַן־עֵדֶן הָאָרֶץ לְפָנָיו) before the approach of the invader

seems to be a hyperbolic simile, rather than an indication that the landscape is Edenic in

every respect. The other occurrences of כְּ in Joel 2:1–11 are more ambiguous but given

that the first two occurrences are most likely similes it is defensible to see similes in the

rest of the unit.

Further, as mentioned in the discussion of the rhetorical situation of Joel 1:1–14,

Stuart's attempt to dismiss the locusts as the foundation the imagery in Joel 1:2–2:11 is

unconvincing. His argument that the ravages of locusts were transient and would not

generate this level of alarm does not take into account the presence of YHWH at the head

of the invader. Locusts alone may not generate this level of threat, but the climactic

image of YHWH leading the invader contributes to the gravity of the situation. The

explicit mention of locusts in Joel 1:4 activates that particular image-world and it is worth

considering if that image-world continues to resonate in the present chapter.

The apocalyptic interpretation of the invader is the next option to consider. This

proposal, championed by Wolff, is stronger at first glance. Wolff's arguments include his

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[20] Chisholm, *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 58. On the general use of *kaph veritatis*, see Waltke and O'Connor §11.2.9b; van der Merwe et al. §39.10.2; GKC §118x. Andiñach relies on this understanding of *kaph*, even if he does not use the technical term; Andiñach, "Locusts," 439. Joel 1:15 is probably an example of *kaph veritatis*. It states that the day of YHWH will come "like destruction from the Almighty" (כְּשֹׁד מִשַּׁדַּי), which prefigures YHWH's powerful activity. Essentially, divinely ordained destruction is an integral part of the day of YHWH.

assertion that the prayer of Joel 2:17, which calls for divine redress of the circumstances described in this unit, presupposes a Jerusalem overwhelmed by "nations," which he does not think could refer to locusts. Further, Joel 2:1–11 does not contain references to typical devastations caused by locusts such as hunger and blight.[21] Instead the references to fire and the shaking of the heavenly bodies suggest a cosmological interpretation. Additionally, Wolff argues that Joel 2:1–11 describes the enemy as unique, standing outside the course of natural events. Meanwhile, in his view Joel 1:2b describes the locusts and the severity of their attack as unusual, but not out of the realm of possibility.[22] Wolff draws a parallel concerning their uniqueness to the reign of locusts found in Rev 9:2–11, suggesting that Joel 2:1–11 is an apocalyptic form prefiguring the Revelation passage.[23] Wolff also notes that in Joel 1 the majority of the verbs are in affix form, representing completed action, while in Joel 2:1–11, the majority of the verbs are in

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[21] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 42.

[22] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 42. Wolff mentions two other arguments that are not nearly as helpful to his case. He states that: i) locusts are not mentioned in Joel 2:1–17 but have instead disappeared from the scene in 1:8–12; ii) YHWH is mentioned as the commander of the army in 2:11 but was not mentioned as commanding the locusts in Joel 1. The problem with the first argument is that while there is no explicit word for locust found in Joel 2:1–17, this does not prove that the metaphors and similes of the passage are not referring to locusts. The second argument is also problematic because it does not leave room for the possibility that the prophet could use the same locusts to put forward different facets of his argument.

[23] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 42. The relationship of Joel to apocalyptic literature requires some discussion. Collins offers the seminal definition of apocalyptic literature as, "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." Joel may reflect some of the characteristics of apocalyptic with its visions of cosmos-rending divine activity, but it lacks the otherworldly mediator that is integral to the genre; cf. Collins, "Introduction," 9; Collins, "Jewish Apocalypses," 29. Grabbe critiques the attempt to precisely distinguish between prophetic and apocalyptic literature, suggesting that both are scribal products. He proposes viewing apocalyptic as a subset of prophetic literature; Grabbe, "Prophetic and Apocalyptic," 107–33. This proposal takes into account the difficulty of getting to the world behind the text, but it glosses over distinctions in how texts construct their eschatological visions. Collins rightly claims that one can find differences in eschatology in the Old Testament between a "prophetic" book like Joel and an "apocalyptic" book like Dan 7–12, including the presence of an intermediating figure; Collins, "Prophecy, Apocalypse," 49. Consequently, while Joel may put forward a vision of YHWH's dramatic intervention in the affairs of this world, the most appropriate category to understand it remains that of prophetic literature.

prefix form, reflecting uncompleted or future action.[24] Accordingly, this means that the two passages cannot refer to the same event.

Further scrutiny, however, reveals significant weaknesses in Wolff's proposal. Wolff's appeal to the heightened description of the disaster in Joel 2 does not necessarily require that it reference a different event.[25] The multi-generational command to commemorate this incident in Joel 1:2–3 and the identification of the uniqueness of this moment in Joel 2:2 are more similar than dissimilar.[26] Both bring the crisis into stark relief and it is equally likely that the text uses slightly different language and imagery to describe the phenomenon in these chapters. Simkins also discusses the potential parallel to Rev 9:2–11 and finds some similarities related to the appearance and the organization of the invaders in both passages. Simkins, however, notes a significant discrepancy that renders Wolff's parallel less apt. In Rev 9:2–11 the locusts are explicitly forbidden to act like locusts, that is, they are expressly commanded not to harm the foliage but rather to directly afflict humans with scorpion-like tails that real locusts do not possess (Rev 9:3–4, 10). Clearly, the locusts of Revelation are an apocalyptic creation and not a reflection of actual locusts. By way of contrast, Simkins demonstrates that by and large, the invaders mentioned in Joel 2:1–11 do behave like one would expect from locusts. Their destructive activity ravages the earth and in the aftermath it looks as though a fire has burned the land clean.[27] The descriptions found in Joel 2:1–11 may be hyperbolic but they do bear significant resemblance to descriptions of actual locusts.

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[24] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 41–42. See also Crenshaw, *Joel*, 129.

[25] Barton, *Joel*, 69.

[26] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 42. Wolff tries to make a distinction between Joel 1:2–14 and 2:1–11 suggesting that the events of 1:2–14 were unusual, while those of 2:1–11 were unique. This level of precision is difficult to claim when dealing with the potential for prophetic hyperbole.

[27] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 163. See also his discussion of contemporary accounts of locust attacks and the resulting descriptions of the land.

Finally, the question of affix versus prefix verb forms ultimately does not bear the weight that Wolff places upon it. While the preponderance of prefix verbs in Joel 2:1–11 may suggest an imminent threat, this does not necessitate that the threat be derived from a different source than that of Joel 1:1–14. Joel 2:1–11 reflects an imperfective situation in which the text portrays the advance of the invading army as a continual series of overlapping events that builds towards YHWH's climactic intervention in Joel 2:10.[28] Dillard suggests that this situation is an extended metaphor that builds upon the locust invasion of Joel 1:1–14.[29] In this view, Joel 2:1–11 appropriates the locusts of Joel 1:1–14 and transforms them into harbingers of the day of YHWH which is again described as near in Joel 2:1. The prevalence of imperatives and affix forms in Joel 1:1–14 may contrast with the prefix forms of Joel 2:1–11, but both passages could equally articulate different approaches to a threat drawn from the same image-world.

The third and most likely possibility to explain the image-world governing the rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:1–11 is that the text again draws from the realm of a locust invasion. The most common theory is that the text is referring back to the same infestation from which it drew its imagery for Joel 1, though some have proposed that the text is constructing a second infestation that prompted the heightening of the rhetoric.[30] This attempt to look behind the imagery of the text is ultimately irresolvable and detracts

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[28] Waltke and O'Connor §31.3a–b. Interestingly, the text reverts to predominantly affix verbs in Joel 2:10–11 when describing YHWH's intervention. This may indicate the inevitability of YHWH's actions, reflecting an example of the prophetic perfect; cf. Waltke and O'Connor §30.5.2a.

[29] Dillard, "Joel," 278.

[30] See Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 154. Simkins draws from the promise of restoration found in Joel 2:25 where YHWH states that he will restore the "years" (הַשָּׁנִים) that the locusts have devoured. Mason offers a trenchant critique, noting that according to Simkins' own fusion of mythic and historical elements in Joel's understanding of the world, the idea of a divinely inspired locust infestation should be available for use in different crises. Consequently, there is no need to posit a second wave of locusts to explain Joel's reuse of that particular image-world; Mason, *Zephaniah*, 122.

from the consideration of the rhetorical effect of returning to the image-world of locust

activities. To that end, one can effectively argue that the activities of the invading horde

fit quite nicely with the expected activities of locusts, especially concerning the seeming

discipline with which bands of locusts advance across a landscape.[31] Similarly, the image

of landscape devastated by fire in Joel 2:3 can reflect the aftermath of the advance of

locusts.[32] Consequently, the imagery that forms the backdrop of Joel 2:1–11 is a locust

invasion, albeit one that the text describes using "magnificent poetic hyperbole,"

combining it with overtones of an invading army.[33] The grandiose effects on the heavenly

bodies noted in Joel 2:10 do not reduce to observable locust phenomena, but it can be

effectively argued that the function of these phenomena is to transition the text from the

image-world of the locusts towards the portrayal of powerful divine action.[34]

While it is most plausible to find locust imagery at the core of Joel 2:1–11, it is

clear that the text develops its portrayal of the locusts from the previous rhetorical unit.

Whereas the locusts in Joel 1:1–14 function as one would expect by devouring crops

which leads to devastating privation, the text fuses locust imagery in Joel 2:1–11 with

imagery reflecting a military force. The locusts continue to ravage the landscape (Joel

2:3) but the description of their assault against Zion also conjures up images of a military

assault (Joel 2:7–9). This metaphorical blend effectively heightens the sense of threat that

the text conveys against the implied audience. Not only are they facing agricultural

devastation, they also have to face the reality of an invader who gravely threatens their

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[31] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 164–65.
[32] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 165.
[33] Barton, *Joel*, 70.
[34] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 167.

physical security.[35] Thus, the text reuses the locust imagery of Joel 1 and transforms it to

announce a further, greater threat against the implied audience.

Joel 2:10 then moves from powerful descriptions of locusts to cosmos-rending

divine activity. While it might seem like overkill to return once again to locusts in this

rhetorical unit, the way in which this imagery fuses with descriptions of the day of

YHWH permits the text to communicate a further message. The text creatively places the

locust army in the middle of the day of YHWH inclusio that frames Joel 2:1–11. After

announcing the day of YHWH, the text describes the advance of the invading locusts,

intermingling images derived from an attacking army. The locusts, however, are only a

precursor to the climactic conclusion to Joel 2:1–11. The power and irresistibility of their

assault against Zion sets the stage for YHWH to return and establish that the locust

invasion has dramatic cosmos-rending significance since it occurs under divine aegis.

After discussing the variables of the image-world of Joel 2:1–11, it will be fruitful

to engage in a closer analysis of the unit in order to see how this unit constructs its

persuasive arguments. While Joel 2:1–11 returns to the image-world of the locusts that

governs Joel 1:1–14, this rhetorical unit has its own unique features and techniques that

merit analysis.

Joel 2:1–2a: Announcing the Day of YHWH

This chapter begins with a series of three commands in which the text issues

further warnings concerning the imminent arrival of the day of YHWH. As in Joel 1:15,

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[35] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 32–34. Wendland goes into further detail discussing the elements that make up the metaphorical blend in Joel 2:1–11, noting that the text strengthens its militaristic tint by employing theophanic imagery, especially in Joel 2:11 which portrays YHWH as a military leader, commanding the activities detailed in the preceding verses.

YHWH's covenant people are the targets of the day of YHWH since Zion is under attack.

The text places the warning call in the mouth of YHWH which is evident from the first

person pronominal suffix on the adjective קָדְשִׁי ("my holiness").[36] In constructing

YHWH as the one who sounds the alarm, the text is quite possibly engaging in irony

since the remainder of this rhetorical unit will reveal that YHWH's actions render futile

this call to alarm.

The parallelistic construction that commences Joel 2:1a issues a strident warning

call that lays the foundation for the attack described in this rhetorical unit. The first

command is to blow a trumpet (תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר) in Zion. This is a command found elsewhere

in the Old Testament which can refer to warnings of attack (Jer 4:5; 6:1; Hos 8:1) and

calls to war (Judg 3:27; 6:34; 7:8; Jer 51:27), but also to cultic observance (Lev 25:9; Pss

47:6; 81:4; 2 Chr 15:14).[37] The progression of this rhetorical unit supports the idea that

Joel 2:1 is drawing mainly from the warning of attack motif since what follows is a

detailed description of an invader's assault against Zion.

There is further support for the call to alarm setting of Joel 2:1–11 in its

connections with the call to blow the trumpet in Jer 4:5–8 and the description of the day

of YHWH in Zeph 1:14–16. Jeremiah calls for the trumpet to sound and for the people to

gather in Zion and other fortresses because YHWH is sending out an invader from the

north (רָעָה אָנֹכִי מֵבִיא מִצָּפוֹן). This connection with Joel is strengthened when considering

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[36] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 117. Crenshaw suggests that YHWH's persona persists in this section through the end of Joel 2:10, with 2:11 providing the response in the voice of the prophet. Joel 2:1b, however, does mention the "day of YHWH," which is a third person reference. Crenshaw argues that the "day of YHWH" is a fixed form. Consequently, one does not need to posit a change in speaker. It is also possible to posit a change of speaker to the prophet in Joel 2:1b who then carries the discourse through Joel 2:1; cf. Fleer, "Exegesis," 152. Conclusive resolution of this issue is unlikely but it does not greatly affect the understanding of the text's rhetorical power since the prophet and YHWH both appear to adopt the same perspective on the situation in Joel 2:1–11.

[37] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 162.

Joel 2:20 which explicitly refers to the invading force of Joel 2:1–11 as "the

northerner."[38] These parallels suggest that Joel 2:1 echoes the statement of threat to

Zion's continued security in Jer 4:6.[39] Zephaniah 1:14–16 further resonates with this

passage since it also stresses the nearness of the day of YHWH and the darkness that it

brings. Zephaniah 1:16 further places the day of YHWH in the context of an assault

against fortified cities including Jerusalem, with the trumpet sounding the alarm (cf. Zeph

1:12).[40] Thus, the shared motif of a city under assault unites Jer 4:6 and Zeph 1:16 with

Joel 2:1 and suggests that the command to sound the trumpet in Joel 2:1 emphasizes a

call to alarm.

Beyond the dominant call to alarm, cultic resonances of blowing the trumpet are

also possibly present given the cult-based program to both lament the destruction found

in Joel 1:14 and to hopefully turn aside YHWH's wrath that the prophet puts forward in

Joel 2:12–17. This exact command recurs in Joel 2:15 in the context of a gathering at the

house of YHWH to try to avoid the realization of the destruction forewarned in Joel 2:1–

11. Consequently, while the call to blow the trumpet in Joel 2:1 presages the forthcoming

assault, it also may begin to prepare the possibility of a cultic remedy.[41]

The second command, which calls for sounding an alarm on YHWH's holy

mountain, echoes and enhances the first since it introduces imagery that resonates with

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[38] There is a significant amount of research on the identity and function of the northern enemy in prophetic literature. This study will explore it in further detail in conjunction with analysis of the explicit use of this tradition in Joel 2:20.

[39] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 115–16.

[40] The passage in Zephaniah differs slightly in that there is no command to blow a trumpet, rather Zeph 1:16 describes the day of YHWH as a "day of the trumpet" (יוֹם שׁוֹפָר). The close connection between the description of the day of YHWH in Joel and Zephaniah suggests, however, that both passages employ the sounding of the trumpet to warn of coming divinely-sanctioned assault.

[41] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 117. Strazicich also rightly points out that Joel preserves the cultic resonance of the trumpet blast since although it is here used as a call to alarm, the prophet does not call for the implied audience to resist the forthcoming assault, since no one can stand in the face of YHWH's appearance (Joel 2:11).

ancient Near Eastern traditions of mountains as the dwelling place of deities.[42] The first

person singular suffix on בְּהַר קָדְשִׁי makes evident YHWH's claim to that location.

Clifford draws intriguing parallels between the Canaanite idea of Mount Zaphon and the

Old Testament descriptions of Mount Zion. In both locations the deity dwells in the

temple on the mountain, and while the mountain may be the scene of battle, it is

ultimately impregnable since the power of the deity preserves it.[43] The theme of

inviolability concerning Mount Zion is also found in several locations in the Psalter,

notably Ps 48:2–7 and Ps 2. In both instances, attackers approach Zion only to go down

to defeat at the hands of the deity who dwells in Zion.[44] Consequently, it is all the more

shocking when Joel 2:1–11 dramatically overturns the idea of inviolability by depicting a

force that experiences little difficulty in overcoming the defenses of the place where

YHWH is supposed to dwell and keep safe.[45]

A third command directing the dwellers of the land to tremble (יִרְגְּזוּ) follows after

these first two imperatives.[46] This reconstitutes the implied audience since it echoes Joel

1:2 and probably covers all the subsections of the implied audience created in Joel 1:5–

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[42] Barton, *Joel*, 70–71.

[43] Clifford, *Cosmic*, 131. See also Hoppe's work on Ps 48 which draws out the psalmist's intent to claim Mount Zaphon for YHWH by putting it in parallel with Zion. This psalm goes beyond borrowing the imagery of a holy mountain. Instead it intends to place a rival location under the aegis of YHWH; Hoppe, *Holy City*, 26.

[44] Clifford, *Cosmic*, 153. Ollenburger correctly emphasizes that the reason for Zion's inviolability is rooted foremost in the presence of YHWH. Zion is only impregnable insofar as the deity who claims this location is present to protect the city; Ollenburger, *Zion*, 66. Further, Hayes connects the theme of inviolability to pre-Israelite conceptions of Jerusalem and helpfully points to prophetic passages that attach the condition of obedience to the guarantee of security in Zion (cf. Isa 10:5–6; 29:1–8; Jer 7:13–15; 26:4–6); Hayes, "Tradition of Zion's Inviolability," 419–26.

[45] The issue of the inviolability of Zion has been raised in attempts to date this book. If the majority opinion that this book is post-Babylonian captivity is correct, one wonders how strongly the concept of inviolability would resonate in Zion traditions. Crenshaw argues that it still held sway, inasmuch as YHWH was thought to have commandeered the Babylonian army to punish sinful Judah; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 118.

[46] The determination that יִרְגְּזוּ is in the imperatival mood has to be made from context since the prefix and jussive have the same form. The proximity of this verb to the preceding imperatives, however, suggests that the jussive reading is more likely in this context.

14. The command to tremble heightens the dire nature of the situation, implying that the previous commands to blow the trumpet and sound the alarm will not lead to rescue.[47] Following this final imperative, the verse then provides the reason for trembling, employing two synonymous clauses beginning with causal כִּי that state that the day of YHWH is imminent. The first clause reads כִּי־בָא יוֹם־יְהוָה ("for the day of YHWH is coming") while the second elides the day of YHWH and states כִּי קָרוֹב ("for [it is] near").[48] The second clause echoes Joel 1:15b in stressing the imminence of YHWH's day since both passages use the adjective קָרוֹב to describe the day.[49] The lack of detail that the text gives to the day of YHWH in Joel 1:15 begins to be remedied in the day of YHWH inclusio of Joel 2:1–11, which details all the frightening ramifications of that day for the implied audience.

There is an interesting structural parallel between Joel 2:1 and Joel 1:5–6a since both passages employ a sequence of three imperatives followed by two כִּי clauses.[50] Joel 1:5–6a follows the description of the locust invasion and begins the process of calling for lament from the drunkards while detailing the consequences of the infestation through כִּי

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[47] See note 10 in this chapter for a discussion of the semantic range of רָגַז.

[48] The verb בָּא is either an affix or participial form, but the presence of a qualifying statement that stresses the nearness of YHWH's day suggests that a participial translation is more appropriate.

[49] Carroll suggests that the phrase כִּי קָרוֹב in Joel 2:1 is an editorial insertion, indicating that the editor intended for this verse to refer to a future day of YHWH, rather than one in the past or present. This downplays the resonance between Joel 2:1 and other texts that describe the day of YHWH as "near" (Isa 13:6; Joel 1:15, 4:14; Zeph 1:14). These parallels suggest that Joel 2:1 fits into a broader prophetic conception of the day of YHWH. Carroll also comments on the ambiguous nature of describing the day of YHWH as "near," suggesting that this is a rhetorical strategy to reduce potential dissonance between prophetic expectations and an historical reality in which these expectations did not occur; Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, 124–28, 171–72. Chisholm challenges Carroll's perspective, suggesting helpfully that one ought to consider the contingent nature of prophetic language. Prophetic language is functional (or rhetorical) in that it intends to persuade its audience to respond in certain ways. It can employ a wide variety of strategies to achieve this purpose. Consequently, describing the day of YHWH as "near" in Joel 1:15 and 2:1 is not necessarily a sign of later hedging, but rather as language that intends to heighten the urgency of the audience's response; Chisholm, "When Prophecy Appears to Fail," 561–78.

[50] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 122.

clauses. Joel 2:1 builds off of the previous unit's description of the ravages of locust

invasion, sounding the alarm through its imperatives and claiming that the day of YHWH

necessitates this alarm through its כִּי clauses. It is also possible that the second כִּי clause

in Joel 1:6, which introduces the locusts as a nation (גּוֹי), resonates with the description of

the great and numerous people (עַם רַב וְעָצוּם) coming against Zion in Joel 2:2.[51] Thus, one

element of the rhetorical strategy in Joel 2:1–11 is to echo a previously employed rhythm

for detailing the nature of the devastation and calling for response. Joel 2:1 also

demonstrates a progression in the seriousness of the situation since the text calls the

drunkards to cry out because of the lack of wine, while Joel 2:1 commands the implied

audience to tremble and sound an alarm because the day of YHWH draws near. The use

of this pattern in Joel 2:1 stands out even more starkly since these are the only

imperatives that the text directs towards the implied audience in this unit.

Joel 2:2a employs two short verbless clauses headed by יוֹם in order to describe

what will happen when the day of YHWH comes. Both clauses use word pairs that make

reference to the related concepts of darkness and cloud (יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וַאֲפֵלָה יוֹם עָנָן וַעֲרָפֶל) to

reinforce the nature of the potential calamity. These are stock images in passages

referring to the day of YHWH, probably reflecting Amos' depiction of the day of YHWH

as one of darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ) and not light (Amos 5:18–20; cf. Zeph 1:15–16).[52] The

occurrence of these word pairs also emphasizes theophanic imagery of the day of YHWH

since the combination of horn-blasts, dark clouds, and the trembling of the people recalls

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[51] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 122.
[52] Barton, *Joel*, 72. Barton also suggests that the darkening makes reference to the side of locusts covering over the landscape with their massive numbers.

manifestations of YHWH's presence (Exod 19:16; Deut 4:11; Ps 97:2).[53] The brevity of

these clauses, each containing only the word יוֹם in addition to the word pairs, also

emphasizes the stark nature of what is about to befall. These descriptions of darkness of

the day of YHWH convey YHWH's imminent appearance and reinforce the calls to

sound the alarm in Joel 2:1. The descriptions of darkness also prefigure the return to the

day of YHWH in Joel 2:10–11, which affects the heavenly bodies and makes the heavens

and earth tremble. The effect is to create a sense of impending doom that the remainder

of this unit explores in detail.

Joel 2:2b–5: The Advance of the Locust Army

In Joel 2:2b–5, this rhetorical unit moves from declaring the imminence of the day

of YHWH to a detailed description of what is going to happen when that day dawns.

These verses also introduce the dominant genre of persuasion that Joel 2:1–11 employs.

While the beginning imperatives found in Joel 2:1–2a seem to call the implied audience

to respond to the unfolding situation, the course of action that the text proposes is

ultimately futile. Instead, the bulk of Joel 2:1–11 is descriptive rather than prescriptive as

it details the full gravity of the devastation that the implied audience will face.[54] The

focus is upon the locust army as a harbinger of the day of YHWH and the power of its

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[53] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 44. Klein notes that עֲרָפֶל in particular presages the presence of YHWH since it "is used almost exclusively elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe the appearance of Yahweh," cf. Exod 20:21; Deut 4:11; 2 Sam 22:10; Ps 97:2; Job 22:13; Klein, "Day of the Lord," 518. Ringgren emphasizes the connection between this verse and Deut 4:11 since it describes the manifestation of YHWH's presence at Sinai using three of the four words for darkness found in Joel 2:2 (חֹשֶׁךְ עָנָן וַעֲרָפֶל); Ringgren, "חשׁךְ," 257.

[54] The text returns overtly to prophetic prescription in the following rhetorical unit. Joel 2:1–11, however, thoroughly details the power and authority of YHWH and the invading horde that is under divine control. Thus, the locutionary intent of Joel 2:1–11 is to describe the power of YHWH in full detail. There may be, however, an illocutionary intent here through which the prophet tries to persuade the implied audience that the only potential means of response will come in the program detailed in Joel 2:12–17.

attack upon Zion. The revelation of Joel 2:11 that it is YHWH who commands this army

may identify the principal persuasive genre of this passage as epideictic since its

emphasis is to reveal the nature of the deity who is threatening to unleash his "day" upon

the earth. Focusing on the nature of YHWH then ties Joel 2:1–11 into the next unit which

provides the text's solution to the situation that it describes here.

Joel 2:2b–5 depicts the arrival of a mighty invading host (עַם רַב וְעָצוּם) that leaves

only destruction and ruin behind it. In accordance with the above discussion this invader

probably again draws from the realm of a locust invasion that dominated the imagery of

Joel 1, however, in Joel 2:1–11 the locusts take on new and frightening characteristics

since they also have the characteristics of a military force. As argued above, Joel 2:1–11

frequently employs simile in order to describe the appearance and activities of the

invading locusts. Joel 2:2b contains the first simile of this unit, describing the arrival of

the invading army as "like dawn spreading out upon the mountains." This image is meant

to emphasize the suddenness of the invader's arrival since a mountain sunrise can quickly

bring places of shadow into blindingly vivid light.[55] The invader's swift and sudden

appearance emphasizes the dread that it brings. This simile relating to light stands in

vivid contrast to the four synonyms related to darkness that are found in the previous

clause.[56] The rapidity of this shift from images of darkness to an image of light also

contributes to the disorienting quickness with which the invading horde appears.

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[55] Finley, *Joel*, 43.

[56] Wolff and Allen take issue with this switch from darkness to light and have suggested repointing שַׁחַר ("dawn") to read שְׁחֹר ("darkness," cf. Lam 4:8); Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 44; Allen, *Joel*, 68–69. This would seem to fit better with the imagery of the preceding verse; however, the lack of textual support for this change renders it speculative.

After this simile, Joel 2:2b once again uses the incomparability of the situation to add emphasis, echoing the use of rhetorical questions pointing to the past and future that are found in Joel 1:2b. In this case, the prophet states that the size and power of the invader have not been seen previously and will never be seen again.[57] The strategy of incomparability again calls to mind the temporal progression found in Joel 1:2–3 where again the prophet invokes both the past and future to describe the gravity of the unfolding situation. There is even some overlap in vocabulary since both Joel 1:3 and 2:2b refer to the necessity to inform the generation (דּוֹר) that follows another (אַחֵר) of these incidents.[58] In Joel 1:2–3 the prophet asks rhetorically whether such an event had occurred in the past and then commands the audience to tell of this event to succeeding generations, implying that this is a moment worthy of remembering. In Joel 2:2, the text looks before and after the event being described and stresses its incomparability. In both cases, the rhetorical strategy is to express the singular significance of the situation.

Following the invader's appearance, the text focuses on the activities of the locust army. Helpfully, Alter examines the verbs that the text uses to describe this locust invasion and proposes that they reflect a strategy of "incremental repetition."[59] The verbs principally describe the activities of the invading force and in doing so they overlap and occasionally even repeat. The net effect is to describe a steady advance of the invading force that ravages the landscape and moves from the mountains down to the city, over the

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[57] Barton, *Joel*, 72.

[58] Fleer, "Exegesis," 151. The way in which the text constructs its multi-generational audience is slightly different since Joel 1:3 uses imperatives to command the implied audience to tell of this to their children, a process that is to be generationally repeated. Joel 2:2b is more succinct, employing repetition (דּוֹר וָדֹר) to indicate continuing generations.

[59] Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 42. Alter separates out the verbs related to the advance of the army and lays them out together, which effectively makes his point. These verbs read (according to his translation) "they run, they dance, they run, they scale a wall, they go; indeed, they go, they swarm, they run, they scale, they come in at the windows like thieves."

walls and into the houses. The locust army's advance is inexorable and the heavy

concentration of verbs of movements devoted to describing its activities helps to

powerfully make that point throughout Joel 2:1–11.

Joel 2:3a begins the process of describing the activities of the invading horde and

how they move across the land to wreak havoc. This verse evokes a scene of destruction

resembling the passing of a large locust swarm. The two clauses in this verse again

employ a "before and after" strategy that describes the locusts' geographical progression

across the landscape.[60] Joel 2:3a uses two parallel phrases to construct the "before and

after" statement. The first clause is לְפָנָיו אָכְלָה אֵשׁ ("before it a fire consumes") and it

begins with a locative phrase, followed by a verb of consuming and its subject. The

second clause, וְאַחֲרָיו תְּלַהֵט לֶהָבָה ("after it a flame blazes") mirrors this construction. The

fronting of the locative phrases underscores the magnitude of the devastation that the

invaders are unleashing by shifting focus from the temporal dimension of the day of

YHWH to the spatial dimension; wherever this horde goes, it leaves behind only ruin and

destruction.[61] The two nominal subjects are the closely related words אֵשׁ and לֶהָבָה which

invoke images of fire and burning that describe the fury that comes before and follows

this invading host. Again one can connect this imagery to actual descriptions of locust

invasions where the aftermath of their ravaging can make it appear that a fire gutted the

entire landscape, leaving behind only charred ruins.[62]

In Joel 2:3b, the prophet expands upon the devastation wrought by the invader by

again employing a simile and another "before and after" scheme. The simile creates an

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[60] Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 28–29.
[61] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 24.
[62] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 150.

extreme contrast since the land is like the Garden of Eden before the arrival of the

invaders and a desert after they pass.[63] The syntax of this half of the verse differs since

this phrase is arranged as a chiasm with the two prepositions of location (לְפָנָיו, אַחֲרָיו) in

the middle positions. The reference to Eden is notable since the image of a paradise

garden plays a surprisingly limited role in the Old Testament.[64] Obviously, it draws off

the idyllic description of the early chapters of Genesis but this theme does occur

elsewhere in prophetic literature, although in the opposite direction to Joel 2:3. Isaiah

51:3 and Ezek 36:35 are both relevant since they describe how YHWH will act to undo

destruction and desolation and to restore the land to an Edenic state.[65]

Joel 2:3 essentially uses this image in a contrary fashion since the coming of the

day of YHWH, shown through the activities of the invading locusts, changes the land

from paradise to wasteland. The simile comparing the land to Eden and then to a

wasteland may go beyond merely describing the enormity of the change that the locust

invasion brings. Instead, the use of Eden and its "uncreation" opens up the image-world

of the earth returning to its pre-creation chaotic state.[66] Strengthening this association,

Deut 32:10 parallels the term that Joel 2:3 uses for wasteland (מִדְבָּר) with the term for the

uncreated state from which YHWH formed the earth (תֹהוּ). At minimum the switch from

Eden to a "wasteland of desolation" (מִדְבַּר שְׁמָמָה) graphically expresses the totality of the

devastation, and may invoke the prospect of complete destruction and a return to chaos.

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[63] Karp, "Stylistic Embellishment," 62.
[64] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 120. Kapelrud lists Gen 2:8, 10, 15; 3:23; 4:16; Isa 51:3; Ezek 31:9, 16, 18; 36:35 as the only other passages that employ either גַּן-עֵדֶן or עֵדֶן; Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 76.
[65] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 120; cf. Scoralick, "JHWH als Quelle der Fruchtbarkeit," 334–37.
[66] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 167.

The final phrase of Joel 2:3 again reinforces the totality of the event, articulating

that it is impossible to avoid what is coming. This clause summarizes the "before and

after" constructions that precede it, employing an emphatic וְגַם that links this clause with

the preceding phrases.[67] This final clause in Joel 2:3 foregrounds the word פְּלֵיטָה

("escape") before the negated form of the verb "to be" (לֹא־הָיְתָה), emphatically dashing

any potential of avoiding the unfolding catastrophe.[68] The invading locust horde that

follows the announcement of the day of YHWH in Joel 2:1 is both incomparable and

inescapable.

Joel 2:4 again utilizes two similes in order to describe the invaders as having both

equine appearance and mobility. The first clause is verbless and it twice uses the word

מַרְאֶה ("appearance") bracketing סוּסִים. The first occurrence is prefixed by כְּ in order to

construct the simile and the second occurrence has the third person masculine plural

suffix attached (מַרְאֵהוּ), in order to establish that the antecedent of this comparison is the

invading horde. This construction may also point to locusts as the intended referent of the

imagery since there are noted similarities between the shapes of the heads of both

creatures.[69] The second clause of Joel 2:4 constructs a simile related to the movement of

the invading horde. It uses כְּפָרָשִׁים as a word pair with סוּסִים and it is the subject of the

verb יְרוּצוּן ("run"). This verb is the first of several verbs in this particular rhetorical unit

to employ the paragogic *nun* ending on the third person masculine plural prefix form.[70]

This is an archaic spelling employed in these instances to deepen the gravity of the

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[67] On the summarizing function of גַם, see Waltke and O'Connor §39.3.4d.

[68] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 122.

[69] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 121, makes reference to the German *Heupferd* and Italian *cavaletta* as modern languages that preserve the idea of the equine appearance of locusts. Barton also mentions that Rev 9:7 also describes locusts as horses equipped for battle; Barton, *Joel*, 73.

[70] See also יַרְקֻדוּן in Joel 2:5; יְרֻצוּן ;יֵלְכוּן ;יַעַבְטוּן in Joel 2:7; יִדְחָקוּן ;יֵלְכוּן in Joel 2:8 and יָרֻצּוּן in Joel 2:9.

situation and to bring out the full sense of terror and awe since in poetic passages, the paragogic *nun* can indicate certainty.[71] The verbs that show the paragogic *nun* in Joel 2:1–11 refer to the invading army. Consequently, this ending heightens the idea that their attack is unstoppable. Since this alternative ending is relatively rare, its repeated occurrence in this particular passage is certainly worthy of comment.[72]

Joel 2:5 maintains the militaristic theme of the previous verse but shifts from images that are seen to those that are heard.[73] Through this the text invites the implied audience to engage another one of their senses as it articulates the nature of this invading force. This verse first describes the sound of the invaders as being like that of chariots upon the hilltops. Chariots are mentioned in other places in the Old Testament to convey a sense of a powerful military force (Exod 14:6–7; Judg 4:3; 5:28; 1 Sam 13:5). Further, chariots occur in theophanic passages, which resonates with the revelation of this host's divine leadership in Joel 2:11 (2 Kgs 2:11–12; 6:17; Ezek 1).[74] The text states that these chariots are "skipping about" (יְרַקֵּדוּן) which indicates a significant amount of frenetic activity, pointing to the swift approach of the invader against Zion (Nah 3:2, cf. 1 Chr 15:29; Job 21:11; Isa 13:21).

The location in which Joel 2:5 places the chariots is somewhat surprising since they are weapons of the plains, not of the hilltops (Judg 1:19; 4:3). The text, however, is

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[71] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 42; Waltke and O'Connor §31.7.1b. Waltke and O'Connor distinguish between the uses of the paragogic *nun* in prose and poetry. They note that in prose, this ending usually denotes contrastivity (cf. Num 11:19), while in poetry this ending typically indicates either certainty or the lack of a volitional sense. See also Joüon, §44e, for confirmation of this kind of use of a paragogic *nun* which states that the typical reason for employing a paragogic *nun* is for a "fuller and more emphatic or expressive form." For a more detailed study on the phenomenon of the paragogic *nun*, see Hoftijzer, *Function*, 1–93.

[72] Joüon, §44e, states that there are 305 occurrences of the paragogic *nun* in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy contains the most (56), while Isaiah (37), Job (23) and Ps (104) contain the next highest number of examples.

[73] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 121; Allen, *Joel*, 71.

[74] Dillard, "Joel," 275.

drawing upon shock value by focusing on the sound of the chariots (כְּקוֹל מַרְכָּבוֹת), which

perhaps precedes their appearance when they burst over the top of the hills. The rumble

of the chariot wheels conveys a sense of impending dread, brought to life when these

weapons burst into view. It may suggest further the power of the invader since if it can

bring chariots over the hilltops, it would appear to be unstoppable. Joel 2:5 thus combines

aural and visual imagery and gives a picture of a portent that is first heard, before

appearing in all of its stunning reality.[75] The sound of the chariots' wheels and the horses'

hooves thus inspires fear and dread, setting the stage for their frightening effect on the

implied audience (cf. Joel 2:6).

Joel 2:5 then uses two more similes to describe the invader. The second simile of

Joel 2:5 compares the invaders to the sound of a rampaging fire devouring the stubble

(קַשׁ) of the fields. This recalls Joel 2:3 which employs fire as an image for the aftermath

of the passage of a locust horde. This time, the text focuses on the sound, where the blaze

would create crackling hisses and explosions as it devoured everything in its path, the

sound preceding and warning of the onrushing flames and their heat. The idea of fire

consuming stubble may also foreshadow YHWH's appearance in Joel 2:10–11 since this

image often describes divinely ordained judgment both against Judah and foreign nations

(cf. Isa 5:24; 33:11; Obad 18; Nah 1:10).[76] This simile again emphasizes the totality of

the destruction, declaring that the invader will even devour the stubble. This re-

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[75] Fleer, "Exegesis of Joel 2:1–11," 157. Fleer states, "One listens as the locusts make the noise of chariots. Then one watches as they leap on the tops of mountains."

[76] Dillard, "Joel." 275. Beyse notes that there are two typical judgment metaphors that use stubble. First, as in Joel 2:5 fire can burn stubble which suggests total consumption and devastation with nothing remaining in the wake of judgment. Secondly, wind can scatter stubble, suggesting impermanence (cf. Jer 13:24); Beyse, "קַשׁ," 180–82. The association of stubble with fire in Joel 2:5 makes evident the image-world from which it draws.

emphasizes the "scorched earth" approach of the invader, demonstrating its power by stating that nothing can survive in its wake.

Finally, Joel 2:5 refers to the invaders through a third simile as a force prepared for battle. This simile departs from the aural focus of the previous two and it recalls Joel 2:2 which describes the invader as being "like a mighty people" (כְּעַם עָצוּם), which again has militaristic overtones (Num 20:20; 21:33; Judg 5:13; 2 Kgs 18:26).[77] The passive participle עָרוּךְ ("being set up") that follows the simile demonstrates that this force is arrayed to obtain maximum fighting ability (Gen 14:8; 1 Sam 4:2; Jer 6:23; 50:9).[78] The third simile encapsulates the threats created through the first two. The threatening sounds of approaching chariots and flames coalesce into an image of a great army preparing to attack. By the end of Joel 2:5 the text has detailed the advance of the invading locust army to the gates of Zion and slowed to engage in detailed description of its power and appearance. The assault forewarned in Joel 2:1 is imminent.

Joel 2:6: The View of the Victims

Joel 2:6, however, delays the unfolding of the invader's assault. This verse first stops the flow of similes describing the invaders. Instead, it articulates the reaction of their victims. The verse signals the shift towards the victims with a fronted constituent מִפָּנָיו ("from its face") that precedes the specific action of the victims who writhe in anguish (יָחִילוּ).[79] This writhing is indicative of a loss of control over the body's

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[77] See Lipiński, "עַם" 176. This word can refer to an army or levy, which suggests that the mention of a "mighty people" again emphasizes the militaristic aspect of the metaphor blend describing the locust army.
[78] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 122. The active participle is used to describe the military capability of David's forces in 1 Chr 12:33, 35.
[79] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 24. Dille and Baumann discuss the metaphorical range of חיל, which can include the idea of writhing in childbirth (Isa 13:8; Jer 4:31; 6:24). Dille categorizes Joel's use of חיל as a "dead metaphor," where the allusion to childbirth is not active and instead what remains is a generic sense

movements, reflecting the level of fear. Interestingly, those who writhe are not specifically identified as Zion-dwellers since the text instead uses a generic term עַמִּים ("peoples") and an anarthrous construction כָּל־פָּנִים ("all faces") to describe the victims. This is slightly confusing since Joel 2:2 and 2:5 refer to the invading locust horde with the singular form עַם, but the purpose of using עַמִּים is to emphasize the immense power of the invaders since their approach sends reverberations through surrounding lands even as they prepare to attack Zion (cf. Isa 2:3; 8:9; 12:4).[80]

As a result of the invaders' arrival, the victims stare in anguish and have their faces transformed as they contemplate their fate. The description of the victims also begins with a fronted constituent, כָּל־פָּנִים, echoing Joel 2:6a. Joel 2:6 thus constructs a wordplay on "faces" since the appearance of the face of the invader leads to the transformation of the victims' faces. This is rhetorically powerful since it provides a close-up of the victims' reaction which creates fear in the implied audience since it seeks to draw them into the description being offered.[81]

The translation of the remainder of Joel 2:6b is debated. The issue hinges on the rare word פָּארוּר, which concludes the verse. Most commentators understand this word to mean "glow" or "grow pale." The word is found only here and in Nah 2:11 which does

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of anguish or dismay; Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 28–29. Baumann helpfully fleshes out the image of חִיל, suggesting that it externally evokes an, "involuntary and uncontrolled spasmodic movement, to which the body is surrendered, accompanied by a sense of weakness and heat," and internally evokes, "a state of trembling, panic, fear," Baumann, "חִיל," 344–47. This sense of all-pervasive terror and loss of bodily control is the image-world that the text is trying to bring out in the wake of the army's march.

[80] Barton. *Joel*, 73.

[81] Kalmanofsky does excellent work considering the connections between the genre of horror and prophetic rhetoric in Jeremiah. Although her work does not mention Joel, the description of the "victims" in Joel 2:6 resonates with her understanding of "indirect horror," where the implied audience looks on the state of the victim with a sense of fear and disgust. She suggests that the rhetorical effectiveness of such horrific imagery lies in its ability to make the audience into participants who struggle to maintain emotive distance from the images unfolding before them. The horrific images dynamically engage the implied audience, causing it to identify with the victims, while struggling to preserve itself by maintaining a certain distance; Kalmanofsky, *Terror*, 91–103.

not provide much context for grounding interpretation. In the LXX tradition this phrase is

πᾶν πρόσωπον ὡς πρόσκαυμα χύτρας which is usually understood as the faces becoming

darkened like soot on a pot.[82] This might result from reading פָּארוּר as פָּרוּר ("cooking

pot").[83] These two readings seem to be in conflict since the colouration of the faces goes

in opposite directions. It is possible to argue, however, that the nuance of colour change

in a face to represent fear or terror could vary from society to society, thus both traditions

could well be trying to communicate a similar phenomenon of faces showing the emotive

response that the invaders evoke.[84]

Despite the potential difficulties of interpretation found in Joel 2:6, it is apparent

that its intention is to indicate that the fear created by this invasion is severe enough to

cause a noticeable physical reaction upon the faces of those who are going to be attacked.

The change of perspective from the activities of the invader to the reactions of the victims

further helps to heighten the persuasive potential of Joel 2:1–11. It provides a brief

change of perspective in which the text can highlight the powerlessness of those whom

this army is about to attack. The destructive activities of the invader and the terror-struck

response of the victims point towards the inevitability of the invader's victory, which

again helps to provide the foundation for the call to response in Joel 2:12–17.

Joel 2:7–9: The Attack of the Locust Army

Joel 2:7–9 then articulates additional reasons why the reactions of Joel 2:6 are

entirely appropriate. These verses shift the perspective back to the invading locust army,

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[82] Barton, *Joel*, 58. This same phrase occurs in Nah 2:11 in both the Hebrew and Greek traditions.
[83] See, for example, Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 38, who accepts this reading.
[84] Dogniez, "Fautes de traduction," 253.

describing them as having completed their march across the countryside. They are now

prepared to overwhelm the defenses and break into the besieged city in order to usher in a

reign of terror and destruction. Joel 2:7a accelerates the pace and employs two similes

that describe the invaders as being like warriors (כְּגִבּוֹרִים) and men of battle (כְּאַנְשֵׁי

מִלְחָמָה) who move quickly and breach the city's walls with little difficulty. Both similes

are the first term in their respective clauses, and are followed by the verbs of which they

are the subjects, which emphasizes the powerful military nature of this invading force.[85]

Joel 2:7b then emphasizes the discipline of the attacking force by means of two parallel

clauses that indicate that all of the invading army's members follow their allotted path.[86]

This again has resonances with locust imagery since they are noted to move in a

seemingly organized manner in both biblical (Prov 30:27) and non-biblical accounts.[87]

Joel 2:8 begins with the same word as 2:7b (וְאִישׁ) and continues the description of

the attackers' relentlessness and discipline.[88] Interestingly, the preposition כְּ disappears,

indicating that the text is now employing metaphor, rather than simile. This draws the

implied audience more deeply into the textually constructed world; no longer is the locust

horde "like" an army, it *is* an army that breaches Zion's walls. Again, Joel 2:8 describes

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[85] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 123.

[86] The second parallel clause contains the negated verb וְלֹא יְעַבְּטוּן which has been the subject of some discussion. The root עָבַט occurs in the qal or hiphil in a legal sense of giving or taking in pledge (Deut 15:6, 8; 24:10). Joel 2:7 would be the only time that this root occurs in the piel where it would seem to require a meaning of the verb referring to exchange or change. Whitley instead proposes that there was an interchange of gutturals and that the root should be חָבַט ("to decline"). He points to evidence from an Arabic cognate *hbt*. This would explain the reading in some of the ancient versions, such as the LXX which reads ἐκκλίνωσιν; Whitley, "*bt*," 101–02. Ahlström, however, notes a chiastic structure in the four verbs that comprise Joel 2:7b–8a. The first and fourth verbs are both יֵלֵכוּן ("they go"), while the second and third verbs are וְלֹא יְעַבְּטוּן and לֹא יִדְחָקוּן respectively. This grammatical structure leads Ahlström to suggest that the second and third verbs are synonymous and, since לֹא יִדְחָקוּן seems to clearly refer to the locust army maintaining ranks, וְלֹא יְעַבְּטוּן does also; Ahlström, *Joel*, 11–13; cf. Dillard, "Joel," 275.

[87] See the survey of modern descriptions of how a locust swarm moves in Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 164–65. He notes numerous accounts that describe locusts moving like members of a cohesive, disciplined military force.

[88] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 46.

the invading force as maintaining ranks, not inhibiting the activities of its compatriots as

its follows an allotted path of attack. Joel 2:8b continues to develop the scene, painting a

picture of this army continuing its inexorable advance.[89] This clause indicates that the

weapons (הַשֶּׁלַח) of the defenders are ineffectual with Allen noting the futility of

employing regular weaponry against an enemy with the characteristics of locusts.[90] Joel

2:8 concludes with a final clipped phrased לֹא יְבְצָעוּ ("they do not break ranks") that

summarizes all of the preceding descriptions; the invaders penetrate all of the defences

without having to slow down or break formation. Their overwhelming power is

ultimately unchallenged and they are free to wreak havoc anywhere they choose.

Joel 2:9 describes the ultimate outcome of the invading locust army's actions.

After penetrating all the defenses, the locust army has free reign to run about the city. It

can run along the top of the walls and even enter people's dwellings.[91] The "short

staccato rhythm" of this verse emphasizes the overwhelming nature of this assault.[92] Joel

2:9a creates this rhythm by constructing a threefold repetition of the pattern preposition +

geographical location + verb of motion, with the locust army as the implied subject of all

of the verbs. The locations grow progressively more intimate as the locust army moves

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[89] The phrase is וּבְעַד הַשֶּׁלַח יִפֹּלוּ. The preposition בְּעַד is used here with a verb of motion יִפֹּלוּ. According to Waltke and O'Connor this usually means that the preposition will indicate motion away from a given object, Waltke and O'Connor §11.2.8a. הַשֶּׁלַח then probably is referring to the defensive weapons being fired at the invaders and by moving through or away from them, the image is one of their failure to slow this army. Crenshaw argues instead that this verse is actually employing a second meaning of הַשֶּׁלַח, which is a tunnel or aqueduct. In this instance the poem would be describing the route through which the army breached the defences; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 124.
[90] Allen, "Joel," 72.
[91] The image of locusts invading homes may echo the plague of locusts invading Egyptian houses in Exod 10:5–6. In this instance, the rhetorical effect of this identification would be to inform the implied audience that it now stands in place of Egypt as the target of divine wrath. This adds further reason for the implied audience to adhere to the prophetic plan of response articulated in the following rhetorical unit. See Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 251; Dillard, "Joel," 276; Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret*, 140; Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 132.
[92] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 124–25.

from rushing about (יְשֹׁקּוּ) the city to running (יְרֻצוּן) upon its walls to ascending (יַעֲלוּ) upon the houses.[93] There is a parallel between "this way of dramatically stacking the threatening advance of the destroying army," and the description of locust waves in Joel 1:4.[94] In both instances, the clipped, repeated syntactic structures stress the totality of the devastation.

The final clause of Joel 2:9 slows down the previously mentioned rhythm by adding an extra element. Its geographical location is the most intimate yet, describing the locusts as entering through windows (בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹנִים יָבֹאוּ) after they climb onto houses. In addition, this final clause uses a simile to compare their mode of entry to that of a thief (כַּגַּנָּב). There is an intriguing parallel between this description and Jer 9:21 which describes death as entering through the window.[95] In both instances, the undesired intruder easily enters into the dwelling and demonstrates that there is no sanctuary available.

Overall, Joel 2:7–9 describes the power of the locust army as so overwhelming that there is nothing that can stop it from breaching the defenses of the city. This again graphically portrays the nature of the threat against the implied audience, without providing any hope of escape at this stage. In the following verses, Joel 2:10–11 will strengthen this sense of impending doom by indicating that this invasion has divine sanction.

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[93] Joel 2:9 is also notable for lexeme repetition. Two of the verbs of motion (יְרֻצוּן; יַעֲלוּ) are also found in 2:7a, while 2:7 and 2:9 both make reference to the army breaching a wall (חוֹמָה). This lexeme repetition combines with the syntactic repetition to describe the capture of the city in dramatic fashion. See Prinsloo, *Theology*, 43.

[94] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 123.

[95] Barton, *Joel*, 74.

Joel 2:10–11: Return to the Day of YHWH

The final two verses of this unit reach a climactic crescendo while returning the audience back to the concept of the day of YHWH mentioned in Joel 2:1. The image-world returns to cosmological heights from the blend of locust and military imagery.[96]

Joel 2:10 begins with the fronted spatial constituent לְפָנָיו which has an ambiguous pronominal suffix. The suffix could refer to the invader, envisioning it as a collective entity which is an approach that the text adopts when it refers to the invader with the collective noun עַם in Joel 2:2 and 2:5. The other possibility is that this suffix points forward, foreshadowing the explicit appearance of YHWH in the next verse (cf. Joel 1:2–3, 5, 11).[97] The first possibility preserves the strongest rhetorical effect of the sudden revelation that YHWH is at the head of the invading army, making it the most likely option. The ambiguity of the referent, however, is fitting given the transition towards cosmological imagery that follows the introductory לְפָנָיו, which leaves the implied audience in anticipation of a forthcoming revelation to clarify the antecedent.[98]

Following the introductory spatial constituent לְפָנָיו, Joel 2:10 employs dramatic cosmological phenomena to heighten the power of the invader. These images also draw from the realm of theophany, where the trembling and darkening of heavenly bodies prefigures the appearance of YHWH (cf. Ps 77:16; Isa 13:10, 13; Mic 1:4). This is especially evident since YHWH explicitly appears on the scene in Joel 2:11.[99] When

[96] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 125–26.

[97] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 124. See also Jeremias, *Die Propheten*, 26–27.

[98] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 126.

[99] Allen, *Joel*, 73. Allen notes that the standard effect of YHWH's interventions is an earthquake and other related cosmological phenomena. For more on the theophanic realm as it relates to the day of YHWH, see Leung, "Intertextual," 88–92, 193–97. Leung rightly claims that the effects on the heavenly bodies usher theophany into the image-world of Joel 2:10–11. Leung also understands Joel's use of theophany in Joel 2:1–11 as a combination of the day of YHWH traditions put forward in Isa 13:10–13, Amos 5:18–20 and Zeph 1:14–16. Amos and Zephaniah focus on the element of darkness, while Isaiah describes tremendous

YHWH arrives, the natural order cannot help but react powerfully.[100] Joel 2:10a depicts

the trembling (רָגְזָה) of the earth and the shaking (רָעֲשׁוּ) of heavens. The root רָגַז is also

found in the imperative in Joel 2:1, calling on the dwellers of the land to tremble. The

fact that the earth trembles in Joel 2:10 suggests that all the dwellers of the land (כֹּל יֹשְׁבֵי

הָאָרֶץ) have good reason to heed the command of Joel 2:1. This description of the earth

trembling reinforces the imperative directed towards the implied audience. If the earth

trembles when this army approaches, then surely the implied audience ought to heed the

command to tremble as they experience the assault of this army.

Notably, Isa 13:13, another day of YHWH passage, describes the convulsing of

the earth and the heavens using the same verbal roots. The text in Isaiah, however,

applies רָגַז to the heavens and רָעַשׁ to the earth which may indicate a common vocabulary

and tradition concerning YHWH's appearance. There remains, however, a significant

degree of flexibility in the ways of using these images since the target of the day of

YHWH in Isa 13 is clearly Babylon, while in Joel 2:1–11 the heavenly bodies shake as

the day of YHWH comes against YHWH's own people.[101] When רָעַשׁ has an impersonal

subject or object, its meaning is usually hyperbolic in nature, suggesting that objects of

permanence such as stars or mountains quake before the one doing the shaking (Judg 5:4;

Pss 18:8; 77:18–19; Jer 10:10; Ezek 26:10).[102] The shaking of the heavens and earth that

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cosmic disturbances. Joel combines these image-worlds, presenting the appearance of YHWH through both
darkness (Joel 2:1–2a) and effects on the heavenly luminaries (Joel 2:10).

[100] The presence of thunderstorm imagery informs many prophetic references to theophanies, which is
especially notable with references to dark clouds and precipitation (Isa 28:2; 30:30; Nah 1:2–4; Zeph 1:14–
16). It is evident, however, the prophetic descriptions of theophany also rely on other activities in the
natural world including the trembling of the earth (Isa 29:6; Amos 1:2). See Hiebert, "Theophany," 509–10.

[101] Matthews, "Power to Endure," 38–39. Matthews notes the connection between Joel and Isaiah by
stating, "Joel's description of the Day of the Lord corresponds to that of Isaiah, in theme and imagery, but
not in slavish vocabulary." For a further discussion of all of the elements connection Isa 13 to Joel 2:1–11
see Müller, Gottes Zukunft, 79–81.

[102] Kessler "Shaking," 161.

Joel 2:10a describes thus points towards an imminent appearance of YHWH as the one

who has the authority to make the heavenly bodies respond in this way.

Joel 2:10b changes from trembling imagery to describe the darkening of the sun

and moon, and even of the stars. This half-verse emphatically articulates that all of the

heavenly luminaries are going to be affected. The text declares that the sun and the moon

darken (קָדָרוּ) while using an idiom to state that the stars "gather in their brightness"

(אָסְפוּ נָגְהָם).[103] Ordinarily, to gather (אָסַף) brightness would suggest an augmentation of

light, but presence of the previous clause points towards darkening (cf. 1 Sam 14:19).[104]

The descriptions of darkening in Joel 2:10b recall the announcement of the day of

YHWH in Joel 2:2 which emphasizes that it is a day of darkness and gloom. Beyond the

boundaries of Joel 2:1–11, descriptions of the darkening of heavenly luminaries are part

of the lexicon of the day of YHWH.[105] They act as harbingers foretelling the imminent

arrival of YHWH's presence (Amos 5:8–10; Zeph 1:15–16).[106] Overall, Joel 2:10 returns

the image-world of Joel 2:1–11 to a theophanic plane. No longer does the text provide

imagery of an assault, but rather of convulsing and darkening heavenly luminaries,

suggesting that the entire cosmos is going to be affected.[107]

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[103] The root קָדַר is typically associated with divine judgment when its objects are the heavenly bodies. The judgment can be enacted by YHWH (Ezek 32:7:8; Isa 50:3) or by a force standing in for YHWH (cf. the "foe from the north" in Jer 4:27–28). Schmoldt, "קדר," 518–20.

[104] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 127.

[105] Weiss, "Day of the Lord," 59. Weiss argues for a metaphorical interpretation of the darkening, which is correct insofar as it is not helpful to try to locate actual times and places of cosmic phenomena that may agree with this imagery. Instead, the darkening of the luminaries reflects the imminent arrival of YHWH, which places the final climactic crescendo on the fear inspired through the invasion detailed in Joel 2:3–9.

[106] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 127.

[107] Although there are descriptions of locust infestations that seem to darken the sun, it is hard to see how this could also apply to the darkening of the moon and stars. Further, this statement concerning the heavenly luminaries recurs in Joel 4:16, where there is no surrounding context of locusts. Consequently, it is most likely that the text has moved beyond the image-world of locusts and now focuses on laying the foundation for the appearance of YHWH in the following verse. See Dillard, "Joel," 276; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 167.

Joel 2:11 further contributes to the climax of this unit by explicitly stating what

Joel 2:10 foreshadows. It reveals the stunning detail that YHWH leads the invader, which

is made even more shocking by the identification of Zion as YHWH's holy mountain in

Joel 2:1. Joel 2:11 reverses that picture and powerfully portrays YHWH as the one

authorizing the assault. This is an even greater example of a rhetoric of delay than the

text employs in Joel 1:2–3. The preceding verses employ theophanic imagery and

describe an incredibly powerful invader, but they conceal the fact that YHWH leads the

assault against Zion. Rhetorically, this is intended to provide a moment of abject despair;

there is little hope of escape from an attack that YHWH leads against a location that

YHWH is supposed to defend.

After all of these vivid pictures of the devastation that is about to fall upon the

land and the supposedly secure sanctuary of Zion, the prophet's voice refers to YHWH in

the third person, declaring starkly that YHWH utters his voice (קוֹלוֹ) before his army

(חֵילוֹ).[108] Referring to YHWH in the third person only adds to the shock since this unit

claims that YHWH, who called for the sounding of the alarm in Joel 2:1, is also the

reason why the alarm needs to be sounded in Joel 2:11. YHWH calls for warning on his

holy mountain, but YHWH is also the one who utters his voice to command this invading

force.[109] Thus, the leader of the host sent against them here is the implied audience's own

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[108] The shock of the text's revelation that YHWH is the leader of a force overrunning Zion is hard to overstate. YHWH's constant presence should guarantee Zion's security since unlike Baal, YHWH is not a deity who suffers seasonal or periodic defeats by opposing forces. See Dow, *Images of Zion*, 80. In Joel 2:11, however, YHWH has removed the divine presence and instead has brought destruction to the former sanctuary. Ollenburger provides excellent detail on the function of Zion as refuge from enemies thanks to YHWH's presence. He notes both Ps 46 and Ps 48 as passages that declare that Zion is a refuge from foes ranging from the forces of chaos to foreign attackers. In this prophecy, however, the place that should provide refuge loses its security since the text places the deity who guarantees refuge outside the walls, directing the assault; Ollenburger, *Zion*, 75.

[109] Loewenstamm, "Trembling of Nature," 173–89. Joel 2:11 associates YHWH's military leadership with the theophany described in the previous verse. The fusion of these image-worlds should not be too

covenant partner and the one whose presence in Zion should guarantee security and

protection. The rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:1–11 peaks at this moment, where YHWH is

no longer protector, but attacker instead.

Following the revelation that YHWH leads the invading horde, three successive

clauses in Joel 2:11 describe YHWH's army and emphasize its invincibility. They are

linked together since they all commence with an asseverative כִּי.[110] The first two כִּי

clauses operate in parallel, describing YHWH's encampment as very great (רַב מְאֹד) and

referring to the ones obeying his commands as mighty (עָצוּם). YHWH thus comes against

his own people at the head of an attacking force that is both numerically overwhelming

and physically capable. Then, the final כִּי clause explicitly announces the day of YHWH

and declares that it is great (גָדוֹל) and very terrifying (וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד).[111]

YHWH's leadership of the army may reflect a modification of the expected

function of the Zion tradition mentioned in Joel 2:1. Instead of proclaiming salvation the

Zion tradition now sounds an alarm as the day of YHWH approaches, full of portents of

doom and disaster.[112] The one who is supposed to dwell in Zion and guarantee its

impregnability is now depicted as the one leading the attacking force. This depiction of

YHWH also has some apparent conflict with the prophet's previous messages. Joel 1:6–7

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surprising, since there is a close link between the trembling of nature and the portrayal of the divine warrior (Job 26:10–12; Isa 13:6–13; Nah 1:4–6; Hab 3:8–15).

[110] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 164.

[111] The combination of the adjectives הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא appears to have two different connotations. On one hand, these adjectives can refer to power of YHWH in positive terms, usually calling on YHWH to intervene in strength on a supplicant's behalf (cf. Neh 1:5; 4:8; 9:32; Dan 9:4). On the other hand, these adjectives can carry a more threatening overtone, where the implied audience seeks to avoid having the power of YHWH unleashed against it. The latter connotation seems to hold true for the texts that use these adjectives to describe the day of YHWH (cf. Joel 2:11; Mal 3:23). Consequently, while YHWH's attributes of greatness and fearfulness are celebrated when YHWH and the implied audience are in accord, the same attributes can evoke consternation when the context suggests that YHWH will unleash his power against the implied audience.

[112] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 48.

contains three uses of the first person singular nominal suffix ("my land," "my vine,"

"my fig trees") whose antecedents are YHWH.[113] In that passage, the prophet portrays

YHWH as bewailing the invasion whereas in this passage he is the guiding force behind

it. YHWH's care and concern for his land are now juxtaposed with his leadership of the

invading army.

The day of YHWH inclusio in these verses is significant for the understanding of

this rhetorical unit. This concept is essentially a day of divine appearance where the deity

intervenes in unmistakable power. Prophetic literature often portrays it as a day in which

YHWH's judgment will fall upon his own covenant community (cf. Amos 5:18–20; Zeph

1:16; Ezek 13:5), although it can also have a salvific element when YHWH directs his

wrath against foreign nations (cf. Isa 13:6–22; Joel 3:4; 4:14; Obad 15).[114] This inclusio

in Joel 2 reflects an intensification of the concept from Joel 1. Whereas Joel 1:15

suddenly transforms the discussion from a relatively literal description of locust invasion,

Joel 2:1 and 2:11 bracket a scene that on its own transitions from earthbound to

cosmological imagery.[115]

The locusts in Joel 2:1–11 are essentially harbingers of the day of YHWH and

their purpose is to provoke a response from the implied audience. By describing this day

as "near," in Joel 2:2 the text leaves open the possibility that the full effects of the day

can be mitigated if the community responds in the ways that the text will reveal.[116] The

following mention of the day of YHWH in Joel 2:11, however, indicates that time is

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[113] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 157.
[114] Finley, *Joel*, 40. This element will come out in the discussion of later references to the day of YHWH in this book.
[115] LaRocca-Pitts, "Day of Yahweh," 290–91.
[116] Finley, *Joel*, 41.

drawing short since it is described as if it had arrived. It is no longer "near." Instead, the

day of YHWH is "great and very terrible."[117] The locust invasion has caused much grief

and destruction, but the text uses it to indicate that this is only a foretaste of what could

occur when the day of YHWH comes in full.

The overall effect of this stunning revelation in Joel 2:11 lies in creating an

overwhelming sense of despair and desperation. If YHWH leads this invading host that

prefigures the ominous day of YHWH, to whom can the community turn for salvation?

Joel 2:11 is the "emotive psychological nadir of the entire prophecy" since at this point it

appears that there is no escaping this catastrophe.[118] YHWH's presence among the

invaders sets up the final summation, "for great is the day of YHWH, very terrifying"

(כִּי־גָדוֹל יוֹם־יְהוָה וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד), and the poignant rhetorical question "Who can withstand it?"

(וּמִי יְכִילֶנּוּ) that follow.[119]

Rhetorical questions in general seek to evoke an established reality or social value

while guiding the audience towards the proper implied response.[120] In Joel 2:11, the

rhetorical question evokes the full power of YHWH and the inescapable eventuality of

his day since the implied answer to "Who can withstand it?" is "no one" (cf. Mal 3:2). In

asking this question, the text creates significant tension concerning the capacity of the

community to survive the onslaught of YHWH's day. In evoking the overwhelming

authority of YHWH, the use of a rhetorical question in Joel 2:11 sets up the prophet's

portrayal of proper response that follows in Joel 2:12–17.

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[117] LaRocca-Pitts, "Day of Yahweh," 291.

[118] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 25.

[119] It is interesting to note that the verb in this final rhetorical question is in the prefix form, following affix verbs associated with divine action. This emphasizes the imperfective aspect of the question concerning whether it is possible to withstand the day of YHWH, which is an appropriate position to adopt since Joel 2:12–17 addresses this issue in detail.

[120] Wuellner, "Jesus' Sermon," 110.

Summary

The debate concerning the appropriate referent for Joel 2:1–11 is likely to

continue, even though viewing it as a reinterpretation or extension of the locust invasion

is the best solution. It is not necessary, however, to decisively resolve it in order to

understand the prophet's rhetorical purpose. This unit continues to strike resounding

notes of warning concerning the potential for catastrophic devastation. It heightens the

sense of threat found in Joel 1, with Linville referring to Joel 2:1–11 as the rhetorical

"*coup de grace*," implying that the appeals found in 1:15–20, even those uttered by the

prophet, have not been positively answered.[121] The ease with which the invading army

penetrates Jerusalem further depicts the implied audience's inability to withstand what is

coming. This unit culminates with the shocking declaration that the one behind the

invader is none other than YHWH, who commands the ravaging horde. YHWH thus

personally controls the portents of the day and makes it clear that behind the onslaught of

these invaders, he himself is at work.[122] The brief mention of "peoples" (עַמִּים) in Joel 2:6

may foreshadow the international effects of the day of YHWH that later chapters explore,

but the focus of Joel 2:1–11 is to establish that the day of YHWH will not be a day of

salvation. Instead, it is persuasively presented as a day of doom and disaster for the

implied audience that it cannot escape based on its own strength, which the plaintive

rhetorical question that ends this unit emphasizes.[123]

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[121] Linville, "Bugs," 296.
[122] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 48.
[123] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 48.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The effectiveness of Joel 2:1–11 is rooted in its potential to gain a hearing from

the implied audience so that the text can garner their assent and guide them to respond in

the ways that he will propose in the next rhetorical unit. The effect of this unit is to

indicate beyond doubt that YHWH's power is irresistible and that there is nothing that the

implied audience can to deter the unleashing of YHWH's day. The text creates significant

tension in the implied audience as it announces their doom. This tension must be relieved

through action, preferably action prescribed by the prophet as the messenger of

YHWH.[124] The powerful rhetorical question with which this unit concludes sets up the

necessity for the response that the text begins to articulate in the forthcoming verses. At

the very least, by tapping into the powerful day of YHWH tradition and directing its

wrath at the very community that it intends to influence, the text has created a

circumstance where the prophet would have the opportunity to present his solutions to the

issue at hand. Part of the rhetorical effectiveness of this unit is the way in which it creates

the necessity for the prophet's program of response in Joel 2:12–17.

Beyond the effect of Joel 2:1–11 in setting up the text's proposed response, the

rhetorical power of this unit is incredibly striking. The text's portrayal of YHWH as one

who can come in power against his own covenant people is one that would certainly seem

to garner the attention of any member of any audience. Wendland suggests that part of

the effect of this unit is to pose the question of whether the reading/hearing audience is

ready to experience YHWH's day, or if the full weight of its power still needs to

permeate the audience's consciousness.[125] Similarly, one can ponder the effect of the text

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[124] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 81.
[125] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 35.

portraying YHWH as one who employs powerful symbols of destruction such as locusts and invading armies to threaten the order of his own creation.[126] Joel 2:1–11 ought to evoke feelings of uneasiness and potentially questions concerning the nature of the divine as constructed in the imagination of the text.

This sense of disquiet is undoubtedly part of the rhetorical effect of Joel 2:1–11 for its implied audience and any later audiences. It raises dramatic questions concerning the nature of YHWH and the divine relationship with humanity. This text portrays YHWH as having the freedom to adopt whatever posture YHWH chooses towards the implied audience, even if it seemingly threatens their continued existence. To experience this text as Patrick and Scult require, that is, to read it in such a way so that its truth claims are active on the interpreter, brings the interpreter to a place of concern, or even questioning of the divine character.[127] Moments like these which undercut familiar and expected norms require intensive activity on the part of reading audience to bring the text to comprehensibility.[128] If this is the case, then Joel 2:1–11 creates a paradoxical situation in which the passivity of the implied audience in the wake of YHWH's actions requires greater activity on the part of the reader(s) to bring it into line with the expectations of the divine character, which is an incredibly challenging process. Of course, Joel 2:1–11 is one unit in a broader rhetorical discourse that paints a many-hued perspective of YHWH; however, this unit's rhetorical effects certainly include a sense of disquiet with regards to YHWH who threatens to lead a destructive horde against the deity's own covenant people.

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[126] Coggins, *Joel*, 42.
[127] Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*, 24.
[128] Iser, *Act of Reading*, 85.

Another factor in considering the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 2:1–11 again

reflects upon its position in the broader development of the book. While the implied

audience of the text and the broader reading/hearing audience struggle with the portrayal

of YHWH and the threat of devastation, it is important to recognize that this unit

represents the book's greatest moment of disorientation. The text attains this status given

its relationship with the preceding rhetorical unit. Joel 1:19–20 offers up a passionate plea

placed in the mouth of the prophet to YHWH to come and act because of the devastation

unleashed on the land and its people. In response to the appeal to YHWH in Joel 1:19–20,

Joel 2:1–11 indicates that YHWH will indeed come, but the nature of his appearance

portends further devastation and destruction. Joel 2:1–11 seems to indicate that the calls

to lament issued throughout Joel 1:1–14 and the lament cries of Joel 1:15–20 did not

receive a positive response and that YHWH is actually moving against his own covenant

community. Consequently, Joel 2:1–11 is the nadir of the text. This unit's rhetorical

effect is to delay the hope of salvation and to deepen the community's fear as the

rhetorical situation threatens to become overwhelming.

After the declaration of Joel 2:11 that YHWH leads the invading horde, the

remaining rhetorical units offer a way out of misery and despair. The remainder of this

prophetic text grapples with the issues that Joel 2:1–11 raises and they help to present a

more fully developed picture of YHWH and his connection to his covenant community.

The rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 2:1–11 is to provoke the implied audience to greater

action and consideration about how to respond to this shocking revelation and as this

response is being provoked, the text transitions into a passage (Joel 2:12–17) where it

offers its own vision of response. Thus, this unit is effective in provoking incredibly

challenging questions, but it is also effective in pushing the implied audience to continue

on through the remainder of the book where it seeks to provide resolution to the tension.

Conclusion

Joel 2:1–11 is a powerful continuation of the trajectory established in the previous

chapter, building upon the devastation of the locust plague and the introduction of the day

of YHWH. Joel 2:1–11 delves deeper into the day of YHWH, using it as an inclusio to

demarcate the boundaries of this unit. It emphasizes the power of the day by employing

cosmos-rending imagery that leads to the final despairing rhetorical question of Joel 2:11.

Between the boundaries of the inclusio, Joel 2:1–11 raises the level of threat against the

implied audience by describing the advance and assault of an unstoppable force against

Zion. Joel 2:1–11 again draws from the realm of locust imagery to describe the voracity

of the invaders, but it adds militaristic images, transforming the locusts into disciplined

soldiers who easily breach all defenses. The rhetorical strategy of this unit reaches its

climax in the stunning revelation that YHWH is at the head of the invaders, uttering the

divine voice to command them in their assault against Zion. This revelation pushes this

prophetic text to its nadir, indicating that there is no escape for the implied audience from

the unleashed day of YHWH. Joel 2:1–11 effectively demonstrates to the implied

audience that it cannot stand against YHWH and modify the exigence that it faces on its

own. Instead, the only effective response is to continue to listen to the prophetic word and

hope that it provides a means of escaping the day of YHWH.

Chapter Five: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 2:12–17

Introduction

Joel 2:12–17 expresses the heart of the message of this book. In this rhetorical

unit the text attempts to construct an appropriate response for the implied audience to the

devastating situations that it details in Joel 1:1–2:11. Joel 2:12–17 intertwines human and

divine perspectives, calling on the implied audience to return to YHWH and even

providing the prayer that they should offer, while indicating YHWH's desire for the

implied audience to respond appropriately. Further, Joel 2:12–17 uses its appeal for the

implied audience to turn to motivate YHWH to turn in response. This interplay and the

prophet's construction of the implied audience's cry establish the foundation for the turn

from devastation to restoration that begins with YHWH's actions in Joel 2:18. Joel 2:12–

17 effectively offers renewed hope, indicating that there is the possibility of avoiding the

imminent destruction detailed in the day of YHWH. This hope is rooted in the prophet's

construction of the implied audience's response and in YHWH's sovereign and gracious

character.

Rhetorical Unit

Joel 2:12–17 commences with a phrasal hapax legomenon וְגַם־עַתָּה ("even now").

This most likely reflects a disjunctive use of וֹ since it is attached to a non verbal

constituent.[1] Van der Merwe and Wendland compare וְגַם־עַתָּה with the text-deictic phrase

וְעַתָּה. They argue that the two phrases are not synonymous, suggesting that the addition

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[1] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 49; cf. Waltke and O'Connor §39.2.3a–c on the disjunctive function of *waw* when attached to a non-verbal constituent. On the uniqueness of וְגַם־עַתָּה, see Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 125.

of גַם indicates that the focus of Joel 2:12 is this fronted phrase.[2] In other words, וְגַם־עַתָּה does not merely reflect a logical continuation from Joel 2:11; instead, the use of גַם helps to focus attention on עַתָּה.[3] In this instance, עַתָּה is best understood as a temporal adverb that shifts the implied audience from the announcement of the day of YHWH towards their own response.

A change in speaker, marked by the formula נְאֻם־יְהוָה also marks the beginning of this rhetorical unit. The voice of YHWH breaks in to call for the community to return and to demonstrate this through lament activities such as fasting and weeping. Alongside the change in speaker, there is also a shift in tone as the text changes from descriptions of the invader in Joel 2:1–11 to directives addressed to the implied audience throughout Joel 2:12–17.[4] This provides an appropriate response to the revelation of Joel 2:1–11 which emphasizes YHWH's leadership of the army that assaults Zion.[5] It also demonstrates its distinctiveness from Joel 2:1–11 since that unit establishes the inadequacy of any human response to the exigence of the divinely-sanctioned assault. Joel 2:12–17 builds upon that situation and begins to provide prophetic guidance to the implied audience concerning the response they ought to make.

Joel 2:12–17 also begins to offer answers to the climactic rhetorical question that ended 2:1–11. The ability to withstand the onslaught of YHWH's power on the coming day of YHWH is linked to the people's willingness to respond in lament and return to

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[2] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 126.

[3] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 126. "It is reasonable to regard 2:12 as a clause which has a fronted adjunct as its focus. This means that the appeal in 2:12 would be interpreted as follows: 'And even now, says Yahweh, return to me ...'"

[4] Finley, Joel, 51. Finley also notes the topic shift that goes alongside this shift in tone since Joel 2:12–17 changes from announcing judgment to offering a program of escape.

[5] Wendland, Prophetic Rhetoric, 20. Joel 2:1–11 concludes with YHWH uttering the divine voice against Zion, while Joel 2:12–17 shifts the point of view so that YHWH now speaks directly to the implied audience.

YHWH. This unit then uses the same signal for closure as that of Joel 2:1–11. It

concludes with another poignant rhetorical question in 2:17, in the context of a prayer

that the prophet instructs the implied audience to offer to YHWH. In that prayer, the

prophet places the question "where is their God?" (אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם) upon the lips of the other

nations who look upon Judah's plight and question YHWH's sovereignty. This rhetorical

question creates significant tension and it sounds an ominous note for the future of God's

people who are left hanging in the balance.

The identification of Joel 2:12–17 as a rhetorical unit has the support of most

interpreters, but there are objectors.[6] Sweeney, in particular, argues that the major

division of the book occurs within this proposed rhetorical unit. He detects the aperture of

the second half of the book at Joel 2:15 rather than at 2:18 or 3:1 as is usually thought.[7]

This argument has some credibility since Joel 2:15 begins with the same imperative

phrase ("blow a *shofar* in Zion!") that introduces the previous rhetorical unit (cf. Joel

2:1). Following this command, Joel 2:15 contains two imperative phrases ("sanctify a

fast! call a sacred assembly!") that also occur in Joel 1:14. These quotations of previous

imperatives push Sweeney to argue that since these quotations come from previous

rhetorical units (Joel 1:2–20 and 2:1–14 in his understanding), this verse summarizes all

that comes before.[8] Further he notes that Joel 2:18 begins with a *waw*-consecutive form,

which suggests to him that it is tied to the preceding verse and does not begin its own

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[6] Those who identify Joel 2:12–17 as a cohesive textual unit include Finley, *Joel*, 51; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 172–74; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 132–33; Barton, *Joel*, 75–77; Prinsloo, *Theology*, 49–50; Allen, *Joel*, 76–77.

[7] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 166–67. See also Ogden who divides the text using the repeated calls to blow a trumpet in Zion in Joel 2:1, 15; Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 29–31.

[8] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 167.

rhetorical unit. This last concern is valid and the question of the relationship between Joel 2:17 and 2:18 is potentially problematic.[9]

This understanding of the rhetorical unit, however, has flaws that render it unlikely. It diminishes the transitional nature of Joel 2:12–14 that moves from a prophetic declaration of disaster towards a divinely-offered hope for restoration.[10] Sweeney also points to the imperatives in Joel 2:15 as markers of disjunction, commencing a new unit. This assertion, however, overlooks the presence of imperatives (שֻׁבוּ ;וְקִרְעוּ) that govern the call to response in Joel 2:12–13. Consequently, imperative verbs containing instructions for the implied audience from the prophet or from YHWH dominate both Joel 2:12–14 and 2:15–17, suggesting continuity between these verses rather than disjunction. It is not until Joel 2:18 that the text changes focus from prophetic commands to cry out to YHWH and instead issues promises of restoration and revitalization. Further, Joel 2:12–17 contains a large concentration of cultic terminology that binds the whole of the rhetorical unit together. from terms describing lament activities, names of cultic sacrifices, and specific reference to the priests.[11] There is also an element of lexical cohesion between Joel 2:12 and 17 which both call for weeping and use nominal (וּבְכִי) and verbal (יִבְכּוּ) forms from the same root to do so.[12] In light of this, it is quite appropriate to regard 2:12–17 as a coherent rhetorical unit that seeks to provide an appropriate response to the threat articulated in Joel 2:1–11.

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[9] See the discussion in the following chapter for why Joel 2:18 is best understood as the aperture of the next rhetorical unit.

[10] Dillard. "Joel." 280.

[11] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 49. This terminology includes the triad of fasting, weeping and mourning in Joel 2:12b, the promise of blessing in the form of renewed sacrifices in Joel 2:14, the calls to fast and gather in sacred assembly in Joel 2:15–16 and the identification of cultic locales and personnel in Joel 2:17.

[12] Finley, *Joel*, 51.

Rhetorical Situation

This unit is pivotal in the development of the rhetorical situation within Joel. Joel 1:1–2:11 describes the threat of the locust invasion and ultimately reveals its divine sanction. These passages establish the exigence that drives the whole of the prophetic message; the land and its inhabitants are under an overwhelming assault led by YHWH that threatens all aspects of their existence. Joel 2:12–17 drives the life-cycle of the rhetorical situation forward by building from the evidence of the exigence and moving towards a detailed program of response for the implied audience. There is an initial element of response in Joel 1:15–20, but the assault described in Joel 2:1–11 indicates the necessity for a more detailed program of response. In Joel 2:12–17 the text finally presents a comprehensive plan that declares that there is a way for the implied audience to properly react to the exigences of locusts, drought and an invading army. In essence, Joel 2:12–17 attempts to work through the implied audience to correct the exigence. This unit intends to affect them with its discourse so that they will act appropriately.[13]

The description of YHWH in previous rhetorical units significantly affects the rhetorical situation of Joel 2:12–17. Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20 portray YHWH as the one to whom the prophet personally calls out for relief and respite (Joel 1:19) while urging the implied audience, through the means of an all-encompassing sacred fast, to do likewise (Joel 1:13–14). YHWH's answer in Joel 2:1, however, only worsens the circumstances for the implied audience by threatening the very existence of Zion, even though it is still supposedly the mountain of YHWH's holiness. The capstone comes in the statement that YHWH himself leads the invader in Joel 2:11. This deepens the gravity

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[13] Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*, 34.

of the rhetorical situation by revealing to the implied audience that the one to whom they

are instructed to cry out is threatening to unleash a day of powerful divine intervention

upon them.[14] Thus, it is striking when Joel 2:12 begins with "even now" (וְגַם־עַתָּה) since

the text combines the imagery of the locust invasion, drought, military threat, and finally

divine wrath in order to build the exigence of the situation to its highest point.

When considering the discussion of the overwhelming nature of the exigence in

Joel 2:1–11, it is important to note that the response that the text requires does not

respond directly to either the locust plague or the military assault. The implied audience

does not have the capacity to remedy directly these exigences by removing the locusts or

resisting the invading army. Instead, Joel 2:12–17 creates a rhetorical situation in which

the audience needs to accept their constraints and call out to the one with the authority to

ameliorate the situation.

Rhetorical Strategy

As mentioned above, Joel 2:12–17 adopts a different orientation towards

persuasion than did the preceding unit. Whereas Joel 2:1–11 focuses upon description,

ultimately leading to the revelation that YHWH leads the attackers, Joel 2:12–17 employs

many direct commands from the text to the implied audience. In Joel 2:12–17 both

YHWH and the prophet issue imperatives that call this audience to act in accordance with

their prescriptions of how to remedy the exigence of the rhetorical situation (Joel 2:12,

13, 15, 16, 17). This unit thus demonstrates the features of deliberative rhetoric. The

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[14] Joel 1:15 foreshadows YHWH's opposition when it briefly mentions the day of YHWH in the context of the locust invasion and drought. YHWH, however, remains silent in Joel 1. Joel 2:1–11 increases the level of threat when YHWH speaks and "utters his voice" to assert command over the force threatening Zion (Joel 2:11).

principal aim of this section is exhortation, calling the audience to the response that the text dictates.[15] Joel 2:1–11 provides the reason for issuing imperatives since it reveals that this disaster has divine sanction. Now the text changes its tone and offers what it deems to be an appropriate response. While the text does not record an explicit response to the urgings in this rhetorical unit, it is evident that in this section the text is attempting to urge the community to act in order to address the problems that the preceding units have laid out.

Significantly, Joel 2:12–17 is the final unit in which the text issues direct commands to the implied audience to respond in order to ameliorate the situation. The following unit (Joel 2:18–27) employs three imperatives directed towards the land, the livestock, and the people but these call for rejoicing and celebration in the wake of YHWH's powerful actions. Succeeding units continue to describe YHWH's restorative actions for Judah and his punitive actions against foreign nations. The imperatives in the following units are directed towards foreign nations (Joel 4:9–13) where they emphasize the futility of the nations' actions to challenge YHWH's power; these verses may call the nations to respond, but their response is to face their foreordained destruction. The text's venture into deliberative rhetoric in this unit is very significant in the argument of the book. The description of the exigence in Joel 1:1–2:11 leads to this call for response and the focus on YHWH's actions in 2:18–4:21 flows out of what the text calls the implied audience to do in this situation.

Within this deliberative orientation, Joel 2:12–17 has two distinct subunits that move from generality to specificity. The first is Joel 2:12–14 and it is a call to return to

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[15] Kennedy, *New Testament*, 20.

YHWH uttered by the prophet that is rooted in a description of the character of YHWH.

Two imperatives from the root שׁוב govern the rhetoric of these verses. There is some

potential confusion involved in identifying the speaker in Joel 2:12–14 since it shifts

from first person divine address in the first imperative "return to me" (שֻׁבוּ עָדַי) in 2:12 to

third person prophetic address with the second imperative to "return to YHWH your

God" (וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) in 2:13. This fusion of the identities of the messenger and

his or her divine commissioner is a common feature in prophetic literature.[16] Its

occurrence in this particular rhetorical unit may also reflect the text's use of Exod 34:6 in

its description of the divine character since there is a similar potential for confusion in

identifying the speaker that takes place in that passage.[17]

The second subunit, Joel 2:15–17, expands upon the initial calls to return (שׁוּב) to

YHWH that govern the preceding imperatives. Joel 2:15–17 offers a specific picture of

how the implied audience should respond, which includes providing the location of the

response, the composition of the audience, and the words of response. This second

subunit assumes the establishment of an attitude of turning which permits it to describe in

greater detail the interaction that it should create between the community and their God.

Joel 2:12–14: A Call to Turn

Joel 2:12–14 introduces the general parameters of the "turn" that the text proposes

as the appropriate response to the exigence of the rhetorical situation. It reads like a

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[16] On the nature of prophetic authority and the necessity for close identification with a deity, see Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*, 69–70. Concerning the juxtaposition of human words and the divine word in prophetic proclamation see the discussion of Jeremiah's commissioning in Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 43–47.

[17] Crenshaw, "Who Knows?" 191.

prophetic "call to repentance," which is characterized as a straightforward and expected

prophetic form that consists of an appeal for repentance, followed by statements that

should motivate repentance (cf. Isa 1:19–20; Jer 3:12–13; 4:1–2; 22:3–5; 25:5–6; Ezek

14:6–11).[18] The text's apparent use of this form in Joel 2:12–14, however, gives rise to

some interesting questions given the preceding units of this book. The most pressing

issue concerns the text's silence regarding the "sin" from which the community needs to

repent. Scholars propose many different possibilities ranging from lack of regard for the

prophetic word (Wolff), critique of the Jerusalem cult (Redditt), and the possibility of

syncretistic or idolatrous worship (Ahlström).[19] Unfortunately, the lack of explicit

reference in the text to any specific form of wrongdoing renders these informed

speculations.[20]

Nogalski tries to nuance the portrayal of the implied audience's guilt by using his

understanding of *Stichwort* connections in the broader Book of the Twelve to argue that

Joel's proximity to Hosea brings in the perspective of guilt.[21] Nogalski also tries to

reverse the argument from silence and claim that since there is no explicit statement that

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[18] Simkins, "Return to Yahweh," 42; Prinsloo, *Theology*, 53. Raitt attempts to break this category down further, suggesting that the appeal for repentance can incorporate a divine messenger formula, a vocative address and admonitions. The admonitions are essential to the form, while the other two criteria are optional. The motivating factors include promises that YHWH will respond, accusations of guilt and threats of punishment. Accusations of guilt are the most common motivating feature, with Joel 2:12–13 and Isa 55:6–7 being the only passages in which Raitt does not find an accusation of guilt. For a full analysis of the features of a prophetic call to repentance, see Raitt, "Prophetic Summons," 30–49.

[19] See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 40–42; Redditt, "Peripheral," 225–40; and Ahlström, *Joel*, 26.

[20] See Crenshaw, "Joel's Silence," 255–59. Crenshaw addresses the perspectives of Wolff, Redditt and Ahlström and effectively locates the assumptions that they have to make in order to support their theories. This brief critique reveals the lack of textual standing for their assumptions.

[21] Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 19–22. Nogalski claims that "Joel deliberately picks up where Hos 14:2ff leaves off…In addition, further connections to images of guilt from Hosea's message to Israel imply that Joel transfers this guilt to his own message to Jerusalem." Schart appeals to Iser's theory of an "information gap," to suggest that readers must import Hosea's understanding of Israel's guilt in order to place this call to return in proper context; Schart, "First Section," 142; cf. Iser, *Act of Reading*, 168–69. Along similar lines, see Clendenen, "Textlinguistics," 395–96, who suggests that Joel relies on the implied audience's knowledge of traditions related to repentance in order to indicate that there is sin for which they need to repent.

this is unjust suffering, Joel assumes that the people are guilty.[22] Similarly, House argues

that reading Joel "canonically," means that Joel's announcement of catastrophe comes as

a natural response to Hosea's warnings of impending judgment.[23] Requiring the

interpreter to draw from Hosea, however, at least partially invalidates reading Joel as its

own discrete literary unit. As discussed earlier, one can defend the practice of reading

prophetic books on their own by citing the presence of features that provide evidence of a

book's essential integrity. These include titles and incipits, unique conclusions, and

unique systems of cross-references and idioms.[24] Further, one can challenge Nogalski's

list of *Stichworter* connecting Hosea and Joel and argue that they are common words that

do not necessarily require borrowing from one prophetic work to the other.[25] Ultimately,

the ability to read prophetic books as prophetic books and the critique of the Hosea-Joel

catchword phenomenon renders less persuasive Nogalski and House's strategy of

importing the guilt of the community from Hosea to Joel.

The question of the community's potential guilt in Joel 2:12–14 requires further

exploration especially when one considers how the lack of an explicit statement

articulating the community's guilt causes consternation among some interpreters. Shapiro

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[22] Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 17. Nogalski buttresses his approach by appealing to Solomon's temple dedication speech in 1 Kgs 8:37–39. That speech makes reference to necessity for those appealing to YHWH to know "the affliction of his own heart" in order for YHWH to act to alleviate disasters including locusts and drought.

[23] House, *Unity*, 130. House's theory regarding the narrative structure of the Twelve suffers badly in his discussion of Joel. He considers Hosea and Joel as the books that start the downward trajectory of the Twelve since he claims that these books focus on sin against YHWH. As mentioned above, he can only establish this in Joel on the basis of inference since Joel never mentions the sin of the community. Joel's silence on sin stands in marked contrast to books such as Hosea and Amos which delve into great detail concerning the community's transgressions.

[24] Ben Zvi, "Prophetic Books," 152–53; Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 47–83.

[25] Coggins, "Innerbiblical," 77. The list consists of זאת ("this"), יֹשְׁבֵי ("dwellers"), יַיִן ("wine"), גֶּפֶן ("vine"), דָּגָן ("grain"). Coggins does not dispute some level of connection between Hosea and Joel but he argues that this relationship should be placed in the broader context of Joel's quotations and allusions from the rest of the Old Testament.

writes that this passage does not give us, "sinners in the hands of an angry God; rather they are people in the hands of a megalomaniacal God."[26] This perspective stands in tension with the text's own description of YHWH's character in Joel 2:13 but the idea of YHWH acting against the implied audience without an explicit statement of their guilt hovers uncomfortably over the interpretation of this passage.

One attempt to explain this tension is to question whether Joel's call should fit into a scheme that reflects a pattern of sin-judgment-repentance-blessing. Commenting on the need to find an appropriate sin, Simkins states, "if Joel calls the people to return to Yahweh, surely they had sinned! Like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, we must search out and identify that sin."[27] The pervasiveness of the search for sin suggests itself in the proposal that the lack of mention of a sin is an occasion for the community to engage in self-reflection to see where they may have erred (cf. Lam 3:40).[28] This search, however, is not the only framework in which to understand the rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:12–14. It is possible to make the argument instead that the language of Joel 2:12–14 is oriented towards lament and not repentance in the wake of sin. According to this formulation, Joel 2:12–14 would then continue the stream of lament cries found throughout Joel 1 (Joel 1:5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 18 and potentially Joel 2:15–17).[29] The lament cries in Joel 1 urge the community to cry out and the lament activities of "fasting, weeping, and mourning" found in Joel 2:12–14 are part of the text's strategy to call the community to respond to the exigence of the rhetorical situation by acknowledging that only YHWH can restore the implied audience.

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[26] Shapiro, "Joel," 201.
[27] Simkins, "Return to Yahweh," 43.
[28] Allen, *Joel*, 79.
[29] Ogden, "Joel 4," 97.

The lack of an identifiable charge against the community appears to fit with cries

of lament since they do not require some pre-existing sin, but may even contain

protestations of innocence (Pss 7:3–5; 59:3–4). In the case of lament, the call to turn to

YHWH is one that intends to express the community's utter dependence upon YHWH in

the face of crisis.[30] This perspective may free the interpreter from speculation concerning

the identification of a sin that occasioned the events described in Joel 1:1–2:11. This

permits the argument that the text's silence on the issue of the implied audience's guilt

should be taken at face value, rather than searching for intertexual inferences that may

establish the community's sinfulness.[31] Given the prophetic propensity to explicitly

identify the sins from which they are calling the nation to repent in other passages (cf. Isa

5:8–30; Jer 5:1–17; 44:1–14; Ezek 8:1–18; Amos 4:4–11; Zech 1:1–6), the absence of an

explicit statement of sin may suggest that it is worthwhile to seek an alternative

explanation.[32]

In place of an understanding that equates calamity with guilt, Simkins interprets

the call to return in Joel 2:12–14 against the background of an honour/shame model

derived from cultural anthropology. Bechtel offers a working definition of shame in an

Old Testament context:

> The feeling of shame is a response to failure or inability to live up to
> internalized ideals, social identifications, and roles inculcated by parents

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[30] Ogden, "Joel 4," 105. Ogden suggests that the fact that the suffering is undeserved is what gives rise to the anguish evident in the cries to YHWH.

[31] Crenshaw, "Who Knows," 188. "In times of trouble, whether deserved or undeserved, turning to YHWH was the appropriate response inasmuch as he alone could remove the adversity."

[32] Clendenen, "Textlinguistics," 393–95. Clendenen provides a useful chart that examines the Minor Prophets according to a fourfold scheme that includes: i) indictment; ii) instruction; iii) judgment; iv) incentive/salvation. He notes that Joel and Nahum are the two books that are missing explicit mention of the first element. He imports indictment into Joel through the command to "return to me," potentially echoing Ahlström's identification of improper worship. Clendenen's chart, however, also highlights the oddity of Joel's seeming silence concerning the guilt of the implied audience in contrast with the rest of the Minor Prophets who explicitly state their indictment.

and society, which dictate expectations of what a person "should" be able to do, be, know or feel.[33]

This proposal is controversial since the expected vocabulary of shame does not occur in this passage, although it does surface in Joel 2:17 in the plea for YHWH not to let the community become an object of scorn (חֶרְפָּה).[34] Simkins argues, however, that the disasters described earlier in the book create an appropriate context for considering the community's shame. Essentially, the devastation mentioned in the previous pericopes causes the Judahite community to experience shame since it was unable to live up to its expected religious duties.[35] The cessation of sacrifices mentioned in the previous chapter is evidence of this situation (cf. Joel 1:9, 13). The text's call to the Judahite community in this model directs the community to engage in worship with actions of mourning and in return the prophet offers the potential that YHWH might turn and restore their honour.[36]

Simkins' proposal has been challenged since there are questions concerning whether he oversteps the applicability of an honour/shame model by giving it an international focus.[37] Stiebert states that the anthropological studies that discuss honour/shame models focus on small-scale societies and do not necessarily translate into the broader context of international relations.[38] One can challenge this critique, however, by appealing to examples of what appears to be communal shaming activity within the

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[33] Bechtel, "Perception of Shame," 80. Bechtel attempts to maintain a distinction between shame and guilt, but acknowledges that both states can arise from similar circumstances. Bechtel also has useful commentary on the internal and external societal pressures that lead to shame and guilt, noting that shame relies more on external sanction while guilt relies more on internal conscience; Bechtel, "Shame as Sanction," 47–76.

[34] Stiebert, Construction, 78–79, notes the absence of typical shame terminology in Joel 2:12–14. Huber compiles this terminology, identifying the terms בוש, כלם, הפר, קלה and חרף; cf. Huber, "Biblical Experience of Shame/Shaming," 53. None of these terms occur in Joel 2:12–14.

[35] Simkins, "Return to Yahweh," 51–52.

[36] Simkins, "Return to Yahweh," 52.

[37] Chance, "Anthropology," 144.

[38] Stiebert, Construction, 79.

context of warfare or diplomacy (2 Sam 10:1–5; Isa 20:1–5).[39] Consequently, the

questions remains open as to whether Simkins could demonstrate that the Judahite

community would actually care that they were shamed in the eyes of these other nations.

Simkins would need to claim that the concept of shame was similar for both the implied

audience and these unnamed "nations."[40] Similarly, there are questions as to whether the

category of "honour" is appropriate to describe what the community experiences when it

worships YHWH by sacrificing properly, and "shame" to describe the lack of sacrifices.[41]

Conceivably, one could understand the cessation of sacrifice as a grave situation without

importing the loaded terminology of honour and shame.

These critiques are important reminders of the necessity for methodological rigor

when appropriating models from other disciplines, but it is possible to maintain the idea

of the Judahite community's shame at least for considering how the text constructs the

rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:12–17. There are other examples in which the Old Testament

rhetorically takes into account how foreigners would perceive YHWH and the Judahite

community as valid reasons that motivate YHWH's actions. On two occasions, the Old

Testament describes how Moses uses an understanding of how the Egyptians would

perceive Israel's destruction as a means of persuading YHWH to relent from sending

punishment (Exod 32:11–14; Num 14:11–16). Also Ps 79 pleads for Jerusalem's

restoration as a matter of YHWH's glory since its destruction allows the nations to

question YHWH's power (Ps 79:10). The usefulness of these examples for advancing the

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[39] Bechtel, "Shame as Sanction," 65–70. Both texts reflect examples of attempts to bring shame on the community as a whole. Isaiah mimics the fate of captives and the Ammonite king mistreats David's envoys to express a change in status that eventually requires a communal response.

[40] Chance, "Anthropology," 145.

[41] Stiebert, *Construction*, 79. Stiebert suggests that Simkins' use of the social values of "honour" and "shame" are rather generic if he intends to argue that honour consists of joyful activity while shame consists of the inability to perform the correct sacrifices.

honour/shame perspective, however, is mitigated by the fact that they all occur in contexts responding to Israel's sinful behaviour.[42] YHWH may act to restore Israel and preserve the divine reputation but in these examples Israel merits the punishment from which YHWH relents.

A slightly stronger example occurs in 2 Kgs 18–19, where Sennacherib's taunting of Hezekiah includes equating YHWH with the impotent gods of other nations whom the Assyrians conquered (2 Kgs 18:35).[43] If the Judahite community falls, then YHWH is vulnerable to shame since he failed to protect what he claimed. YHWH, however, responds to this foreign perception and asserts divine authority over this king, reaffirming supremacy over a mortal ruler (2 Kgs 19:28). This example contains no explicit mention of Judah or Hezekiah's sin but rather focuses on YHWH's response to the *hubris* of the Assyrian ruler.

Within Joel itself, the idea of restoring communal honour may manifest itself after considering other potentially more overt references to the community's shame found in Joel 1–2. Joel 1:11 explicitly calls on the farmers to be ashamed (הֹבִישׁוּ) as a result of the agricultural failure, possibly since this could be seen as an example of YHWH's lack of regard for the community. This reference and the threefold occurrence of the similar root יָבֵשׁ in Joel 1:12 create a word-play in which the shame of the people is tied to the withering of joy.[44] Looking ahead to Joel 2:18–27, Joel 2:19 promises that YHWH will not allow his people to be objects of scorn amongst foreign nations. The word used for

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[42] Exodus 32:11–14 describes the aftermath of the Golden Calf incident, Num 14:11–16 records Moses' plea for YHWH to spare Israel in the wake of their refusal to enter the land, while Ps 79:5 pleads with YHWH to forgive the sins of former generations and restore the current generation.

[43] Bechtel, "Perception of Shame," 87–89. See the discussion of YHWH's vulnerability to shame as the counterpart of the requirement to offer praise and honour to YHWH.

[44] See the discussion of the rhetorical strategy of Joel 1:11–12

scorn in this verse is חֶרְפָּה, which also occurs in Joel 2:17 in the context of the people's

plea to YHWH. Further, Joel 2:26 and 27 both contain the phrase וְלֹא־יֵבֹשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם

("and my people will not be ashamed again"), summarizing YHWH's restorative activity.

According to Joel 2:18–27, one of the most notable results of YHWH's intervention will

be to restore the community from its shame, detailed in the breakdown of the sacrificial

system in Joel 1:5–14. YHWH's intervention in Joel 2:18–27 may also imply that the

prophet's call to "return to YHWH" sparks the implied audience to call out to YHWH in

hopes of divine intervention.

The discussion above considers the possibility of the honour/shame interpretation

of Joel 2:12–17 but also reveals the difficulty of separating YHWH's actions to maintain

the divine reputation from the potential sin of the community. Consequently, it is

necessary to once again consider the possibility of the implied audience's guilt in the

rhetorical flow of Joel 2:12–17. A stronger case for importing guilt is found in Joel's

conversations with other Old Testament texts. As many interpreters note, Joel is replete

with references to other texts which it uses in the course of its rhetorical strategies.[45]

Specifically, the list of calamities that the implied audience faces in Joel may reflect

elements of Solomon's dedicatory prayer for the temple in 1 Kgs 8:37–39, which

mentions famine, pestilence, blight, mildew, locusts, or enemy invasions as reasons for

the community to reflect on its potential errors.[46] A few verses later, 1 Kgs 8:48 uses

similar language to Joel 2:12 in constructing its response, suggesting that if the

community will return to YHWH will all their hearts (וְשָׁבוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּכָל־לְבָבָם) in the wake of

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[45] Some of these parallels are identified in Mason, *Zephaniah*, 117–21, who suggests the presence of "stock" oracles concerning divine activity, while also drawing attention to the parallels in thought between Joel and Zech 9–14. See also the chart in Crenshaw, *Joel*, 27–28, that identifies potential verbal parallels.
[46] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 156.

their sin, then YHWH may act restoratively (cf. Deut 30:2; 2 Chr 6:38; Jer 24:7). This resonance with Solomon's prayer may suggest the presence of guilt in Joel 2:12–14.

Similarly, the declaration of YHWH's character in Joel 2:13 echoes its use in Jonah 4:2, where the citizens of Nineveh clearly acknowledge their misdeeds before YHWH and seek divine forgiveness by calling for a turning from their "wicked ways" (מִדַּרְכּוֹ הָרָעָה) in Jonah 3:8.[47] The question "who knows?" (מִי יוֹדֵעַ) how YHWH might respond also links the context of Joel and Jonah, when the Ninevites ask the question concerning the utility of repenting before YHWH (cf. Joel 2:14; Jonah 3:9). There also may be a connection in Joel's assertion that the day of YHWH is near with the identical announcement in Isa 13:6–9 that clearly punishes guilty Babylon.[48] In effect, while agreeing with Ben Zvi's perspective on reading prophetic books as discrete literary units, it is still possible to see the resonances with other biblical literature that may inform proper interpretation and suggest the context of guilt for this rhetorical unit.

In summary, there are two strong, competing perspectives concerning the nature of the response that the prophet requires of the implied audience in Joel 2:12–14. The lack of an explicit statement of guilt may suggest an interpretation that moves into the realm of lament, turning to YHWH as the only hope for restoration amidst desperate circumstances. Conversely, the circumstances described in Joel 1:1–2:11 and the actions commanded in Joel 2:12–13 suggest intertextual resonances that activate the concept of guilt and the need for repentance before YHWH will act restoratively. This issue yields

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[47] See below for a more detailed analysis of the resonance between Joel 2:13 and Jonah 4:2 and the ways in which they employ this description of the divine character.

[48] Schmitt, "'Reue Gottes,'" 300–01. The parallel with Isa 13:6–9 is useful but not convincing on its own since the target of the day of YHWH in Isa 13 is clearly Babylon. While Joel may borrow some of the same phraseology, it does not necessarily have to import the context of a guilty nation whom YHWH judges for its oppression.

no simple resolution but the intertextual connections and the presence of sin in passages

where YHWH acts restoratively to preserve the divine reputation may tilt the balance

towards the presence of guilt in Joel 2:12–17.[49]

The next step is to move beyond the broad discussion of the nature of the call in

Joel 2:12–14. The specific wording reveals the text's emphasis on the concept of turning

to YHWH in hopes of restoration. Joel 2:12 begins with וְגַם־עַתָּה and the divine

pronouncement formula (נְאֻם־יְהוָה). The initial וְגַם־עַתָּה focuses the situation, suggesting

in the wake of the declaration of the day of YHWH that immediate response is required.[50]

The divine pronouncement formula puts the imperative that follows into the mouth of

YHWH. The use of this formula is a rhetorical move that underscores that the upcoming

offer of salvation comes from YHWH. While it is a formula frequently employed to

conclude prophetic oracles, this is its only occurrence in Joel, which adds to its emphatic

impact.[51]

The divine word is also particularly powerful since it follows directly after the

declaration in Joel 2:11 that YHWH is the one leading the invading host. YHWH may

utter his voice at the head of the army that comes against Zion, but before all hope fades

the text portrays YHWH speaking once again to the implied audience and providing a

way to avoid the foretold devastation. The text first creates the context in which it is

YHWH who comes in wrath and judgment, but before judgment occurs YHWH calls the

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[49] Dempsey, "'Turn Back.'" 58–59. Dempsey admirably captures the ambiguous nature of the question of the community's guilt by noting that in Joel, ill-fortune brings about responses of pain, suffering and lamentation, while the prophetic call of Joel 2:12–13 seems to use the vocabulary of penitence and prayer.
[50] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 81.
[51] Barton, *Joel*, 77. Crenshaw draws a distinction between the paucity of prophetic oracular formulae in Joel and Haggai and Zechariah who "peppered" their messages with such formulae. The scarcity of the formulae in Joel maintains the rhetorical effect of emphasizing that what follows is a divine word. See Crenshaw, "Who Knows," 187–88.

community to turn, with the understanding that this may avert the approaching disaster

(cf. Joel 2:14).[52]

The command in Joel 2:12 is for the implied audience to "return to me with all

your hearts," is constructed on an imperative form of the root שוב. This verb is very

common in the Old Testament and its semantic range extends from simply turning around

physically to meanings laden with theological significance. The use of שוב in Joel 2:12–

14 clearly falls into the theological category, discussing the relationship between YHWH

and the implied audience. The typical use of this root in "covenantal" contexts is to call

for a return or repentance to YHWH (2 Chr 30:6; Isa 1:27; 6:10; 9:12; 10:21; 19:22; 31:6;

Jer 3:1, 7, 10, 12, 14, 22; 24:7; Hos 3:5; 5:4; 6:1; Amos 4:6, 8–11; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7).[53]

Essentially, this verb calls for a re-establishment of the disrupted relationship between

YHWH and his people.[54] In the context of Joel 2:12, which lacks an explicit statement of

guilt, the idea of returning to YHWH at the very least requires the implied audience to

reorient its thoughts towards YHWH whose manifestation is near (Joel 1:15; 2:1).[55] If the

intertextual activation of guilt and sin is correct, then this command also carries the

nuance of calling the community to return to YHWH in repentance. Interestingly, YHWH

also can be the subject of שוב, denoting a change of divine disposition concerning a

particular course of action.[56] This occurs typically in reciprocal relationship with a

turning back to YHWH on the part of the community (2 Chr 30:6; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7).[57]

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[52] Dillard, "Joel," 280.
[53] Holladay, Root, 147.
[54] Holladay, Root, 120, 147.
[55] Wolff, Joel and Amos, 52–53; cf. also Fabry, "שוב," 507–08. Wolff and Fabry suggest here that the rhetorical effect of the command to return to YHWH here is to acknowledge the divine sovereignty and submit to judgment.
[56] Pratt, "Historical Contingencies," 186.
[57] Holladay, Root, 148–49.

The use of an imperative form of the root שׁוב in Joel 2:12 definitely emphasizes

the idea of returning to YHWH given the triad of activities indicating appropriate

response that conclude the verse: fasting (וּבְצוֹם), weeping (וּבְבְכִי), and mourning

(וּבְמִסְפֵּד). These are stock responses to situations where the community needs to

demonstrate commitment to its deity, hoping for a divine reversal of the circumstances.[58]

Examples of these terms abound in the Old Testament including David fasting for the life

of the child conceived in adultery (2 Sam 12:16), prophetic calls to weep (Isa 22:12; Jer

31:9), and descriptions of mourning (Jer 6:26; Amos 5:16, 17; Mic 1:8). Engaging in this

triad of activities reflects the community's "utter dependence on Yahweh the faithful and

compassionate deliverer."[59] It is also notable that the only other occurrence of these three

terms together in the Old Testament is Esth 4:3, where the exiled Jewish community

engages in these activities in the wake of learning about Haman's plot. This parallel is

interesting since it is a context of lamentation without a description of a specific prior sin,

however, the lack of a command to return to YHWH means that interpreters ought not to

draw too strongly on this parallel.[60] Overall, Joel 2:13 extends a hope of salvation and

calls on the implied audience to hear and respond with appropriate activities.

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[58] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 49. Ogden suggests that these activities are expressions of the implied audience's total dependence on aid from YHWH; Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 30.

[59] Ogden, "Joel 4," 105.

[60] The ambiguity concerning whether the calls to fasting, weeping and mourning necessitate repentance continues when one looks at these terms individually. The word for "fasting" (צוֹם) occurs twenty-six times in the Old Testament and while certain fasts are in response to sin or guilt (2 Sam 12:16; Neh 9:1; Jer 36:6, 9; Jonah 3:5), others seem to reflect an appeal to YHWH in the midst of desperate circumstances where sin may not be involved (2 Chr 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Pss 35:13; 69:11; 109:24; Dan 9:3). Isaiah 58:1–12 calls for repentance to replace fasting, suggesting that the community's fasts do not necessarily imply a repentant attitude; cf. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 166–67. Similarly, the word for "weeping" (בְּכִי) can reflect both contexts of repentance (Isa 22:12; Jer 3:21; Mal 2:13) and sorrow over lament-worthy events (Deut 34:8; 2 Sam 13:36; 2 Kgs 20:3; Ezra 3:13; Jer 31:16). Finally, the word for "mourning" (מִסְפֵּד) can also reflect both contexts of repentance (Isa 22:12; Jer 6:26; Zech 12:10) and lamentation over difficult circumstances (Gen 50:10; Ps 30:12; Ezek 27:32; Amos 5:16). Consequently, the use of these terms is not conclusive in indicating whether or not the prophet is trying to evoke repentance in this context.

In the first clause of Joel 2:13 the text implores its audience to "rend" their hearts

and not simply their clothes. In doing so, the text resonates with a broader prophetic

tradition that calls for genuine turning as opposed to rote genuflection to correct rituals

and formulae. Amos is an exemplar of this tradition as seen in Amos 4:4–5 and 5:21–23

where he castigates the religious observances that the community does not offer in the

proper spirit (cf. Isa 58:1–12; Jer 7:1–8; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:1–8). Joel, however, is not

engaging in "anticultic" prophecy since the remedy that the text proposes is rooted in the

cultic context (cf. Joel 2:15–17).[61] Instead, the text's call in Joel 2:12 is for deep inner

response to the crisis.[62] The prophet's prescription for how to "rend" hearts is for the

community to engage in fasting and weeping under cultic leadership in the temple. Thus,

this imperative is a call for the people's internal states to match their external actions.

Joel 2:12 concludes with calls for the people to use expected forms in their responses,

while Joel 2:13 implores the audience to have their hearts mirror their outward actions.

The next phrase in Joel 2:13 restates the command to return to YHWH, again

using an imperative form from the root שׁוּב. At this point the tone shifts from first to third

person so that the voice of the prophet breaks in and implores the audience to "return to

YHWH your God." This second imperative from the root שׁוּב develops the concept of

turning further, moving from the initial appeal to turn to supply a reason for turning that

is firmly rooted in the character of YHWH. Following the imperatival שׁוּב, the text draws

quite noticeably from the divine "character credo" of Exod 34:6–7 to support the

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[61] Barton, *Joel*, 80.
[62] Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 30. Essentially, this verse intends to call the implied audience into wholehearted and united pleading for divine assistance in the wake of the many crises detailed throughout the early sections of the book.

command to שׁוּב.[63] These verses describe the character of YHWH as Moses receives the

second copies of the stone tablets in the aftermath of the golden calf incident where

Israel's sin is on full display. They claim that YHWH is compassionate and gracious,

slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, and one who both forgives iniquity and

punishes the unrepentant. This summary of YHWH's character appears in other Old

Testament passages in a variety of literary genres, suggesting its pervasiveness in the

Hebrew understanding of its deity (Num 14:18, Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Nah 1:3; Jonah

4:2 and Neh 9:17, 31b).[64]

The use of this creed in Joel 2:13b is not an exact citation since it does not include

the declaration that YHWH visits punishment on the generations following those who

disobey.[65] The final phrase in Joel's use of this credo is וְנִחָם עַל־הָרָעָה ("he relents from

evil"), which is not derived from Exod 34:6–7. The verbal root נָחַם with YHWH as its

subject occurs several times in the Old Testament. Typically, it implies that YHWH

changes his mind or relents concerning punishment that he was going to visit upon either

his people or foreign nations (Jer 4:28; 15:6; 20:16; Amos 7:3, 6; Zech 8:14).[66] This same

credo with the additional phrase also occurs at Jonah 4:2, where Jonah uses it as an

accusation against YHWH for showing mercy to Nineveh.[67] While Joel 2:13 shows the

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[63] Concerning Joel's use of Exod 34:6–7, see Lang, "Das Exodusgeschehen," 68–74. Lang suggests that Joel imports the broader context of Exodus through this citation, especially in its potential to activate a divine turning towards mercy.

[64] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 136–37. Ahlström suggests that this phrase is part of a temple liturgy, arguing that its praising phraseology is at home primarily in the centre of religious observance; cf. Ahlström, *Joel*, 24–25. For a chart marking the variations in the reuse of Exod 34:6–7, see Clark, *The Word Hesed*, 248.

[65] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 342–47. Fishbane notes other passages that use this formula without the final declaration of intergenerational punishment, including Deut 7:10 and Jonah 3:9.

[66] See also Jer 20:16 and Ezek 24:14 for negated examples of נחם where YHWH claims that his punishment cannot be averted.

[67] Coggins, "Innerbiblical," 79. Zapff notes the differing directions in which the books of Joel and Jonah take the same phrase, stating, "On the one hand, it functions as a reason to motivate Israel to return to Yahweh; while on the other hand, it functions as a reproach to Yahweh because of his patience with Nineveh, put in the mouth of Jonah with satiric intent," Zapff, "Perspective on the Nations," 299. The

character of YHWH primarily in relationship with his own covenant people, Jonah 4:2

moves outward and demonstrates that YHWH's gracious and compassionate character

has universal ramifications. It even offers the possibility of restoration to Israel and

Judah's enemies, much to that prophet's chagrin.[68] Thus, the different prophetic reuses of

the character credo demonstrate the flexibility of the motif, with Joel and Jonah both

considering the implications of YHWH's character as it applies to their distinct

situations.[69]

Interestingly, verbal forms of the root נחם occur in Exod 32:12, 14, where Moses

and YHWH debate the fate of idolatrous Israel during the golden calf episode. In Exod

32:12, Moses uses an imperative form of נחם (וְהִנָּחֵם), directed at YHWH, while in Exod

32:14, the text employs an indicative form (וַיִּנָּחֶם), stating that YHWH will not destroy

Israel. Based on this verbal parallel, it is probable that the addition of this piece onto the

character credo in Joel and Jonah draws in the conversation between Moses and YHWH

in Exod 32:7–14 alongside Exod 34:6–7.[70]

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question of which text borrows from the other remains an open question on account of questions concerning the time of the composition of both books. For the priority of Jonah, see Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, 77–79; Bolin, *Freedom beyond Forgiveness*, 171–72. For the priority of Joel, see Allen, *Joel*, 228; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 345–46; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 273. Dozeman offers the most appropriate approach and leaves the question open in order to offer readings of Joel in light of Jonah and vice-versa; cf. Dozeman, "Inner-biblical," 213–18. Strazicich suggests that Joel repatriates the character credo away from Jonah's universalized application; cf. Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 154.

[68] Dozeman, "Inner-biblical," 222–23. Dozeman does see a universalizing element in the Joel passage. He draws on the questions of how catastrophes might affect YHWH's credibility from Joel 2:17 and Exod 32:12 in order to argue that YHWH's actions towards his own covenant community are intertwined with those of foreign nations. This potential universalizing element, however, is subsumed in Joel under the concern for the fate of Judah, which involves judgment on the nations in Joel 4.

[69] Schultz, "Ties that Bind," 39–40. Schultz notes that variations of Exod 34:6–7 also occur in Mic 7:18–19 and Nah 1:3, which provides a linkage between these four books of the Minor Prophets.

[70] Dozeman, "Inner-biblical," 221. Dozeman rightly suggests that the addition of the phrase declaring that YHWH can turn from evil in the character credo that Joel and Jonah employ is, "anchored in the same narrative context in which the formula in introduced in the Torah." Clark also works through the narrative context of Exod 32–34 and notes how it brings together YHWH's kindness and severity, presenting these characteristics as complementary and suggesting that YHWH has the sovereign freedom to invoke them at the time of his choosing; Clark, *The Word Hesed*, 247–52.

The rhetorical effect of combining this earlier piece with the established character credo is well worth considering. The text declares that YHWH relented (וַיִּנָּחֶם) in Exod 32:14 which purchased Israel a stay of execution, but according to the narrative the community had to be cleansed of its guilt through the actions of Exod 32:19–29 before YHWH would reissue the Ten Commandments and make the creedal statement of Exod 34:6–7. This parallel may help with the reading of guilt in Joel 2:12–14 since in the Exodus narrative, Moses has to act as intercessor in order to preserve the community and call on YHWH to relent. Only his pleading with YHWH spared them complete devastation (cf. Exod 32:30–35).

In Joel 2:12–17 there is an opportunity for the community itself to respond appropriately to the announcement of YHWH's character in Joel 2:13. The placement of the character credo is quite apt since what follows in Joel 2:15–17 is a detailed program of exactly how the community should appeal for YHWH's salvation and restoration. YHWH may "relent" (וְנִחָם) from his intention, but the Joelian text reminds the community that there are actions that they should undertake in order to demonstrate proper turning to YHWH, even if the text does not provide an explicit indictment against them.

In the wake of Joel's adaptation of the character credo the prophet puts forward a question emphasizing the inscrutability of YHWH's character. In asking "who knows? (מִי יוֹדֵעַ) whether YHWH will turn and change his mind at the beginning of Joel 2:14, the text provides an open door for an amelioration of the present dire circumstances. This question is a prophetic "perhaps," leaving open the possibility of reprieve since the implied answer to this question is negative, emphasizing divine freedom (cf. 2 Sam

12:22; Esth 4:14; Ps 90:11; Ecc 2:19; 3:21; 6:12; 8:1; Jonah 3:9).[71] The text does not

guarantee that the above-mentioned acts of penitence will change YHWH's mind, but it

does indicate that this possibility is worth pursuing.[72]

Interestingly, the question מִי יוֹדֵעַ also is found in Jonah 3:9 and 2 Sam 12:22 in

contexts where showing penitence before YHWH can hopefully reverse dire

circumstances.[73] Significantly, the key verb שׁוּב occurs once again in Joel 2:14, this time

in an indicative form (יָשׁוּב). YHWH is its subject which establishes a word-play where

the "turning" of the community through fasting, weeping and mourning may establish the

context for YHWH to "turn" in response. Joel 2:14 pairs יָשׁוּב with וְנִחָם, a verb repeated

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[71] Crenshaw, "Expression," 274–75; Reimer, "Overlooked Term," 341. Crenshaw identifies two categories of מִי יוֹדֵעַ texts. The first (including Joel 2:14) provides for the possibility of reprieve, while the second seems to close the door towards redemptive action. The second category reflects a skeptical worldview where the inability to know what YHWH will do leads to resignation. Reimer correctly identifies that the impossibility of knowing all facets of God's behaviour is what is at the core of both categories of מִי יוֹדֵעַ texts.

[72] Dempsey, "'Turn Back,'" 56–57. Fishbane aptly states, "although YHWH 'relents' he does so for his own reasons. Thus, like oracles, the words and acts of repentance are also not magical: YHWH does not relent *because* of them," Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 346–47. Pratt presents a similar view, arguing that this question indicates that those who turn to YHWH can have no specific expectation of divine turning; Pratt, "Historical Contingencies," 193. In contrast, Cooper overstates the case by suggesting that Joel's perspective is that YHWH is forced to turn because of this description of the divine character. He tries to make this claim in a comparison to Jonah 4:2, which, he suggests, preserves divine freedom by confounding the expectations of the prophet; Cooper, "Divine Caprice," 161–63. This approach devalues the power of the question "who knows?" in Joel 2:14. The fact that YHWH turns in Joel 2:18 does not negate the tension that this question creates. Fretheim helpfully reverses the argument and suggests instead that the potential for divine turning stands in contrast to claims of arbitrariness in divine action. Instead, YHWH's ability to turn away from destruction reflects the extent of YHWH's intention to execute YHWH's salvific intentions; Fretheim, "Divine Repentance," 60–61.

[73] Dillard, "Joel," 280–81. In keeping with the theme of YHWH's sovereignty it is interesting to note that in the case of Jonah 3:9, the ones posing the question and engaging in penitence (Ninevites) did see YHWH change his mind while in 2 Sam 12:22, David's penitence did not reverse the curse on the child born out of his adultery with Bathsheba. Bolin argues that even in Jonah 3:9, the question מִי יוֹדֵעַ has a negative answer since even on occasions when YHWH does change his mind, there is still typically an episode of punishment (cf. 2 Sam 12:22; Ps 90:11). This allows the audience of Jonah to read YHWH's change of mind through the lens of Nahum in which Nineveh is guaranteed destruction; Bolin, *Freedom Beyond Forgiveness*, 143–47. While this intertextual linkage is interesting, this approach robs the Jonah narrative of some of its dramatic tenor. The tension in the dialogue between Jonah and YHWH in Jonah 4 depends on YHWH granting full pardon to Nineveh because of its repentance. This emphasizes YHWH's freedom to show mercy to whomever YHWH chooses.

from the previous verse.[74] Reusing נִחַם plays off the description of YHWH's character in 2:13b since Joel 2:14 offers an opportunity to test YHWH's ascription as one who relents from punishing in the wake of how it calls the implied audience to respond.

The hope that the community's response to the commands to שׁוּב from Joel 2:12–13 could lead to a divine שׁוּב in 2:14 establishes the context for the remainder of the verse. The sign of this divine turning will be the leaving behind of a blessing (בְּרָכָה וְהִשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו) which the verse then further breaks down as a grain offering (מִנְחָה) and a drink offering (וָנֶסֶךְ). This phrase expresses yet another example of the text's use of "momentary suspense," since it refers first to the general blessing before breaking it down into its constituent parts.[75]

These two offerings recall Joel 1:9, 13 where the locust infestation destroys the crops so that the priests cannot make these sacrifices. The promise of a restored מִנְחָה וָנֶסֶךְ is a synecdoche implying a full turning of YHWH from wrath to mercy.[76] In order for the community to make these offerings to "YHWH their God" (as the final clause of this verse claims), YHWH must replace the destroyed harvest and restore agricultural prosperity. The text thus portrays blessings and the offering of sacrifices as two sides of the same coin, both indicating a restored relationship between YHWH and the implied audience.[77] The hope of Joel 2:14 is that YHWH's abundant provision is a sign of restored relationship.

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[74] The first verb, יָשׁוּב, is in the prefix conjugation and the two following verbs, וְנִחָם וְהִשְׁאִיר, are in the form of the *waw*-relative + affix conjugation. In this case, they take on the sense of the preceding prefix verb, which is appropriate given that they follow the question מִי יוֹדֵעַ. This preserves YHWH's freedom by describing potential divine action using the verb form that expresses modality. On the modal use of the prefix conjugation, see Waltke and O'Connor §31.4a–g. On the *waw*-relative + affix conjugation, see Waltke and O'Connor §32.2.1d.

[75] Van der Merwe and Wendland, "Word Order," 125.

[76] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 139.

[77] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 85.

In summary, Joel 2:12–14 establishes the general parameters of the prophetic argument for the proper response to the situation previously described. The call is for the implied audience to "turn" to YHWH with appropriate actions including fasting, weeping and mourning. In response, the text points to the possibility of a divine "turning," rooted in its description of YHWH's character. The text does not guarantee what YHWH will do, but it indicates that appropriate activity on the part of the implied audience is the first step in evoking a divine response that will change the situation from devastation to restoration.

Joel 2:15–17: Detailing the Turn

Joel 2:15–17 delves more deeply into the specifics of the desired response that the text demands of the implied audience and how it places pressure on YHWH to respond in return. Joel 2:15 first links this unit back to the preceding unit by reusing imperatives from previous passages. The first command to blow a trumpet in Zion (תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִיּוֹן) echoes Joel 2:1. In Joel 2:15, the context suggests that the prophet employs this command not to warn of invasion but rather to call for a communal gathering to appeal to YHWH in a cultic context (Lev 25:9; 2 Sam 6:15; 1 Chr 15:28; 2 Chr 15:14; Pss 81:4; 98:6). Reissuing this imperative re-establishes the exigence of the invading army which has led the text to call for sacral gathering.

The subsequent two imperatives in Joel 2:15 make evident the cultic orientation of this call to sound the trumpet. The prophet reissues the same commands found in Joel 1:14 (קַדְּשׁוּ־צוֹם קִרְאוּ עֲצָרָה) which also call the community to fasting and to gathering in

sacred assembly.[78] The reuse of these commands also helps to identify the target of these imperatives. Joel 2:15 does not identify to whom the text directs these imperatives, but when they occur in Joel 1:14 they are clearly directed towards the priests mentioned in Joel 1:13. Consequently, Joel 2:15 anticipates Joel 2:17 and issues directives to the priests who lead the community in calling out to YHWH.

The use of these imperatival phrases differs slightly since Joel 1:14 simply issues the calls to assemble and lament while Joel 2:15–17 expands further upon these imperatives and gives much more detail concerning who is supposed to assemble and what should be the nature and content of their lament.[79] Thus, the reuse of imperatives in Joel 2:15 invokes exigences from both Joel 1:1–14 and 2:1–11, lending significant weight to the program of action that the text describes in the following verses.

The next verse begins to expand the calls to lament by first issuing further commands to assemble. Joel 2:16 commands the gathering of the people (עַם), followed by a generational merismus that details the intended scope of the congregation. The summons is all-encompassing, calling on everyone from elders (זְקֵנִים) to children (עוֹלְלִים) and nursing infants (יֹנְקֵי שָׁדָיִם) to attend regardless of their age.[80] The latter half of Joel 2:16 again echoes images from Joel 1:8 by commanding even those about to be married to leave their preparations and join the rest of the community in sacred assembly before

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[78] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 166–67. As noted, Sweeney sees the reuse of commands from Joel 2:1 and Joel 1:14 as a signal that the new rhetorical unit commences with the call to sound the trumpet in Joel 2:15 since it recalls elements from the preceding rhetorical units. Notably, however, this still holds true if one posits Joel 2:12–17 as a rhetorical unit, since the imperatives found in Joel 2:15 could be said to derive from Joel 1:1–14 and Joel 2:1–11.

[79] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 54–55.

[80] Unlike Joel 1:2, 14, the elders are not paired with the inhabitants of the land which would indicate a merism of leaders and the rest of the people. Instead, the focus is generational, suggesting that everyone from the eldest to the youngest is required to attend this cultic gathering. The gravity of the situation is such that only a full response from the entire community is sufficient since everyone from eldest to youngest is probably feeling its effects; cf. Crenshaw, *Joel*, 140.

YHWH. Unlike Joel 1:8, the bride in Joel 2:16 has not lost her partner. The text, however, calls the bridal couple to depart from their private chambers and join in the communal cry to YHWH, emphasizing the preeminence of the call to assemble.[81] Newly married couples were supposed to be exempt from elements of cultic service (Deut 20:7; 24:5), and thus the prophetic call for them to join in the fast further indicates the totality of the commitment to "turning" that the text requires.[82] The prophet asserts that the exigence of the situation requires every member of the community to assemble, effectively detailing what the implied audience must do to return to YHWH with all their hearts (cf. Joel 2:12).

Joel 2:17 moves from enumerating who is called to attend this assembly to how it is supposed to proceed. This verse displays immense attention to detail, as the prophet states precisely who is to offer up the petitions, the location from where they are to do so and the exact wording of the petition.[83] Concerning who is supposed to utter the petition, the prophet commands the priests to lead the community in this time of lament and crying out to YHWH. This recalls the similar command of Joel 1:13 for the priests to don sackcloth and cry out to YHWH from the temple. Both of these passages offer responses to the ominous day of YHWH and its threat to the covenant people that require priestly leadership. This reflects a prophetic concern to create cohesion out of seeming chaos; the priests retain their leadership role in the community even at a time when the sacrificial

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[81] The two nouns used to describe the chamber are חֶדֶר and חֻפָּה. Both most likely refer to a private location where the marriage could be consummated (for חֶדֶר as the bridal chamber, see Song 1:4; Judg 15:1; 2 Sam 13:10; for the only other use of חֻפָּה see Ps 19:6). Calling on the bridal couple to leave this chamber and join the assembly communicates the urgent necessity of the prophet's call to assemble.

[82] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 141 draws parallels to Jer 7:34; 16:9 and 25:10 which use the plight of the bride and bridegroom during enemy invasions to describe the totality of the foretold destruction.

[83] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 141.

system was in disarray (cf. Joel 1:9, 13).[84] This creates a time and a space of sanctuary

where the community can remember and reflect on YHWH's character as mentioned

above, even with the looming threat of the day of YHWH.

On this occasion the command to the priests is more specific, calling on them to

weep between the porch and the altar (בֵּין הָאוּלָם וְלַמִּזְבֵּחַ). This is a reference to the open

area immediately in front of the temple which was a normal place for offering

sacrifices.[85] This location was a buffer zone separating the people from the holy place but

it was also considered sanctified space devoted to YHWH.[86] This geographical location

precedes the verb "to weep" and its subject "the priests," which foregrounds the location

of the petitions. Through this first half of the verse, the text places the responsibility for

appropriate response into the hands of the priests whom the text calls to lead the sacral

assembly. They are the ones who are to lead the people to gather in the place of worship

and to cry out to YHWH.

The latter half of this verse provides the words that the priests are to utter in their

prayer to YHWH. These begin with two short petitions for YHWH to act in a restorative

manner and conclude with a plaintive question appealing for divine intervention.[87] It is at

this stage where the prophet's articulation of the community's "turning" now makes the

rhetorical move towards calling for a divine "turning." The prophet employs the jussive

וְיֹאמְרוּ in order to introduce these petitions and place them in the mouths of the priests.

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[84] Linville, "Day of Yahweh," 106. Interestingly, Linville views the call to gather as essential to re-establishing social cohesion in the context of failed sacrifices articulated in Joel 1. Re-engaging in ritual, even rituals of mourning and crying out to YHWH acknowledges YHWH's authority over the implied audience.

[85] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 168. See 1 Kgs 8:64 for a description of sacrifices occurring in this location.

[86] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 141–42. This is made evident in Ezek 8:16–18 where priests appear to be engaging in idolatry in this space, causing YHWH to state that he will no longer listen to them.

[87] Allen, *Joel*, 83.

The first petition begins with the imperative חוּסָה ("have compassion!") followed by a vocative use of the divine name and it concludes with the prepositional phrase עַל־עַמֶּךָ ("upon your people") which functions as the object of the imperative directed towards YHWH. The second person pronominal suffix on "your people" is a useful way of building up pressure upon YHWH to respond since it refers to the divine claim of ownership over this community (1 Sam 10:1; 1 Kgs 8:53; 2 Kgs 21:14; Isa 19:25; Micah 7:18; Pss 33:12; 68:10; 106:5). The parallel term נַחֲלָתְךָ ("my inheritance") from the second petition reinforces this perspective since it reflects the tradition of land belonging to YHWH. By paralleling "my people" with "my inheritance," the prophet employs covenant terminology to stress the intimate relationship between YHWH, the community and the land promised to their forefathers.[88]

The second petition of Joel 2:17 moves from the positive imperative "spare!" to a negated imperative not to give over the community into disgrace. Joel 2:17 expresses this desire twice, beginning with לְחֶרְפָּה ("into reproach"). The second word which follows immediately after לְחֶרְפָּה is the infinitive construct לִמְשָׁל, which in this case is probably a synonym for the preceding word.[89] Typically, חֶרְפָּה appears in the Old Testament in contexts indicating disgrace and shame that rests on a given individual or group.[90] Consequently, Joel 2:17's use of חֶרְפָּה relates to the concept of outside observation that

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[88] Prinsloo, *Joel*, 56.

[89] The root מָשַׁל can also mean "to rule over." The LXX tradition follows that interpretation (τοῦ κατάρξαι αὐτῶν ἔθνη). However, the proximity of this word to לְחֶרְפָּה suggests that the meaning of לִמְשָׁל is probably synonymous. Linville argues for a polysemic interpretation, claiming that interpreters ought to invoke both meanings here. He understands both the concepts of "reproach" and being ruled over by foreigners as challenges to God's sovereignty and ability to protect his chosen inheritance; Linville, "Letting the 'bi-word' rule," para 12–14.

[90] Kalmanofsky, *Terror*, 39; Kutsch, "חרף," 203–15. See Jer 23:40; 31:19; 51:51.

informs the latter half of Joel 2:17. This verse identifies the nations as the ones who would see the community in this light if YHWH does not intervene.

Again, the text employs a strategy of momentary delay, first referring to those observing the state of the Judahite community with a generic pronoun before identifying these onlookers as "them, [that is] nations" (בָּם גּוֹיִם). Outside observation of Judah's state worsens the situation since it turns Judah into a public spectacle among foreign and hostile nations. By extension, this image also challenges YHWH since YHWH is the one who permits the community to fall into this state. The double reference to reproach and shame in the first half of Joel 2:17 emphasizes the urgency of the petition. The prophet tells the priests and people to offer up this prayer in order to place pressure on YHWH to "turn" and rectify the situation. The text carefully constructs the plea so that YHWH's divine character is at issue if YHWH does not choose to respond.

Similar to the previous unit, this section also ends with a climactic rhetorical question in Joel 2:17. The last phrase of Joel 2:17 follows the entreaties to not let the community experience the scorn of its neighbours. It envisions a collection of surrounding nations looking upon the distress of the Judahite community and disparaging both them and their deity. The final question is directed at YHWH, asking why he would permit these nations to say amongst themselves "where is their God?"[91] This question heightens the stakes by putting YHWH among those whom the nations are mocking. This question resonates with the Sinai tradition and Moses' pleas to preserve Israel in spite of its apostasy after the golden calf incident (Exod 32:12; Deut 9:26–28).[92] Both of these

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[91] The final phrase of Joel 2:17 reuses the term עַמִּים ("peoples") that also occurs in Joel 2:6. On that occasion, the "peoples" trembled in the wake of the approaching invader while in this instance they turn and disparage YHWH and the community that he claims.

[92] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 143.

scenarios share in their identification of Israel's destruction with the perceived

powerlessness of YHWH.

The rhetorical strategy at work in Joel 2:17 is one in which the prophet constructs

the voice of the "nations" as a means of broaching potentially blasphemous thoughts

concerning YHWH's character. If these unnamed "nations" suggest that YHWH is

powerless, the community itself cannot be charged with turning from YHWH. The text

here thus issues an appeal to YHWH to act in a salvific manner to preserve his people,

but also to preserve his own divine reputation from being besmirched by outsiders.[93]

Overall, the "turning" of the people is expressed through engaging in activities described

in Joel 2:12–13 and in their utterance of the plea found in 2:17. Now, the prophet

effectively places the onus upon YHWH to "turn" in response and to act to reverse the

dire circumstances that YHWH has previously permitted to fall upon YHWH's own

people.

Summary

This rhetorical unit develops the depiction of YHWH and the relationship with the

implied audience. Joel 2:1–11 focuses on the approach of the great and terrible day of

YHWH, with YHWH leading the invading army that overruns Mount Zion. In contrast,

Joel 2:12–17 urges the community to beseech YHWH to intervene on their behalf and to

not unleash the full power of that day against those who cannot withstand it.[94] YHWH is

the source of devastation in Joel 2:1–11, but Joel 2:12–17 reverses the perspective and

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[93] Barton considers it odd that the rationale employed in this cry to YHWH does not restate the attributes of YHWH's character mentioned in 2:12–14. It is not because YHWH is gracious or merciful that he is called to respond here, but rather on the basis of preserving his reputation; Barton, *Joel*, 84.

[94] Prinsloo, *Joel*, 56.

portrays YHWH as the means of salvation. Joel 2:12–17 tries to persuade the implied

audience to respond so that YHWH will act and move the situation from devastation to

restoration. Essentially, these verses petition YHWH to reinstate relationship with the

implied audience by acting to restore rather than destroy.

The text opens up the possibility of restoration occurring with its call to return to

YHWH and its reuse of Exod 34:6–7, but it does not presume too much since it asserts

the impossibility of knowing what YHWH will do. The strategy of earlier rhetorical units

emphasizes the overwhelming nature of the exigences that the community faces, while

offering little hope. Joel 2:12–17 represents a significant development in the life-cycle of

this prophetic book since it both creates the potential for hope rooted in the divine

character, and then explicitly lays out how the community can act to realize this hope.

The rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:12–17 is to require a complete and total commitment

from all members of the community to respond by turning back to YHWH. The text

commands them to gather under the leadership of the priests and cry out, beseeching

YHWH to remember that they are YHWH's inheritance and that YHWH's divine

reputation is caught up with their fate.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

Out of all the units within Joel, this particular passage may offer the most hope for

gauging its rhetorical effectiveness on the level of the text's implied audience. Joel 2:12–

17 sets out a plan of action rooted in its understanding of the divine character. The call is

to "return to YHWH" and engage in appropriate acts demonstrating the sincerity and

gravity of this return. The hope is that in doing so, YHWH himself will turn and will

establish himself as the Judahite community's covenant partner and protector. This identity would hopefully trump YHWH's identity as the leader of the locust army. This stands in stark contrast to Joel 2:1–11 which offers no possible modification of the exigence. Joel 2:12–17, however, adopts a different perspective and while not denying YHWH's authority to unleash the day of YHWH, it opens up the possibility of response that the implied audience can make to modify the exigence.

Joel 2:12–17 is admirably constructed to try to evoke this response. It begins by offering a window of hope in the wake of Joel 2:11 and then proceeds to put forward a plan to realize this hope. The prophet's reuse of Exod 34:6–7 strengthens the possibility of restoration by reinforcing YHWH's willingness and desire to act on the implied audience's behalf, even after one of Israel's most egregious periods of apostasy. The specificity of Joel 2:15–17 presents a potentially effective approach since the prophet guides the implied audience towards fully crying out to YHWH, using the words that the prophet commands. On account of his intermediating function, the prophet has the authority to detail what actions may cause YHWH to respond positively. Consequently, the prophet's presentation should be effective in persuading the implied audience to adopt this course of action. Following Joel 2:11, a detailed plan of response to the crises at hand that is rooted in the acknowledgment of YHWH's character should persuade the implied audience that its hope for survival rests in its willingness to act in the manner that the prophet requires.

The potential for effective response to Joel 2:12–17 is also tied into the broader conception of prophetic oracles of woe and doom. Specifically, Joel 2:12–17 operates under the assumption that an appropriate response can turn back pronouncements of

judgment. A classic example occurs in the aftermath of the prophecy of Jonah 3:4, whose

language and portrayal of YHWH resonates quite closely with Joel 2:12–17. The words

of Jonah's prophecy did not appear to allow any room for hope ("yet forty days and

Nineveh will be overthrown"), however, the overwhelming response of the Ninevites

persuaded YHWH to withhold destruction. Eagleton approaches this issue by appealing

to speech-act theory, and arguing that while Jonah's prophetic declaration might appear

to be constative, it actually functions as a performative; that is, speech that creates

conditions for actions.[95] Ironically, Jonah's response to YHWH's decision to spare

Nineveh reveals his hope that his prophetic word would be constative and that Nineveh

would meets its doom.

Another contribution to the discussion of rhetorical effectiveness in Joel 2:12–17

comes from drawing a distinction between the illocutionary intent and perlocutionary

effects of judgment oracles. Essentially, the illocutionary intent is to announce and

activate potential judgment which could provoke a variety of perlocutionary responses

including lament and penitence from the audience of those oracles.[96] Houston

differentiates between illocution and perlocution in order to explain what happens when a

prophetic pronouncement of doom is averted, arguing that it is still a valid oracle since its

illocutionary intent was to activate the announcement of divine judgment; the

perlocutionary responses it creates in its audiences do not invalidate its illocutionary

force even if these responses cause the judgment to be turned aside (cf. Jer 18:7–10).[97]

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[95] Eagleton, "J. L. Austin," 233. Möller also welcomes the move to the performative level of prophetic language, claiming that it forces the interpreter to move beyond the surface level of the text and to engage with its deeper communicative strategy; Möller, "Words," 370

[96] Houston, "Speech Acts,"187.

[97] Houston, "Speech Acts," 184.

One can even apply this perspective to oracles proclaiming unconditional judgment and understand that they might have the perlocutionary effect of leading their audiences to respond in hopes of avoiding the declared punishment.[98]

In the case of Jonah, the text portrays a prophet who does not want there to be room for a divine change of heart, yet it occurs despite the fact that the prophetic speech does not open this door. In Joel 2:12–17, the capacity for averting prophesied disaster is even stronger, since on this occasion the prophet explicitly makes this option available. The text establishes the imminence of doom in the preceding rhetorical units, but Joel 2:12–17 provides the proper perlocutionary response. The exigences of locust plague, drought, and invasion establish the potential of devastation, but the proclamation of these threats is not the final word. The text explicitly urges the implied audience to act in a way that could turn aside these threats based on its portrayal of YHWH's character. Consequently, it is possible to see that Joel 2:12–17 has the capacity to effect change on its implied audience based on how it establishes the possibility of YHWH turning and changing his course of action alongside the appropriate actions of his people.

Ideally, the text would record that the community to whom Joel prophesied either heeded his prophetic call and engaged in the prescribed activities or refused to do so. The text, however, remains silent on the subject, just as it remains silent on the specific identity of the "sin" that seems to provoke this prophetic call to return to YHWH. One can argue, however, that the conceptual gap between Joel 2:17 and 2:18 opens up room to consider how the text might construct the implied audience's response to this particular

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[98] Möller, "Words," 368–69. Möller also points to the reaction of the Ninevites in Jonah 3 and David's response to Nathan's oracle in 2 Sam 12 as evidence of the perlocutionary effect of oracles of doom.

unit.[99] Essentially, readers may need to supply some "transitional material," and assume

that the implied audience did as the text commands and uttered the proposed prophetic

responses in order to best understand the progression of the text.[100]

In the space in between these verses, the text moves from a cry to YHWH to act

so that foreign nations will not mock YHWH's name to a statement of jealousy and pity

for the land and the people. The character of YHWH described in Joel 2:13 comes to the

forefront when the deity who leads an assault against Zion transforms into the deity who

enacts total restoration. It is conceivable that hidden here in the transition between Joel

2:17 and Joel 2:18 is the implication that the text assumes an appropriate response by the

implied audience which creates the conditions for YHWH to act restoratively. Therefore,

the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 2:12–17 comes to light as the remainder of the book

moves from announcements of doom to promises of restoration for its implied audience.

Conclusion

Joel 2:12–17 commences the process of advancing the rhetorical situation in order

to turn this prophetic text away from scenes of devastation and offers the potential of

restoration rooted deeply in the character of YHWH. This rhetorical unit interacts with

Exod 34:6–7 and Jonah 4:2 to illustrate the potential for restoration on account of

YHWH's gracious and compassionate nature. It calls the implied audience to respond by

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[99] On the function of gaps in literature, see Iser, "Indeterminacy," 1–46. Iser suggests that such gaps are what invite the reader to participate in the text, adding to its aesthetic quality and its ability to affect the reader. Iser discusses this theory of gaps with specific reference to serialized novels which tended to leave off at a point of climax, ensuring involvement of the reader to consider how the tension might be resolved. One can see a similar climactic moment at the conclusion of Joel 2:17 with the unanswered rhetorical question that draws the audience in to consider whether YHWH will respond to the people's appeal.

[100] Barton, *Joel*, 87. Barton notes that when an audience followed a prophetic command, the text typically makes this explicit. He draws a parallel to Mal 3:16–17 where the claim that "those who revered YHWH spoke to one another" stands in for obedience to previous prophecy.

committing itself to YHWH through its actions and its innermost beliefs, in hopes that it

may avoid the situation described in Joel 2:1–11. Joel 2:12–17 not only calls the implied

audience to return to YHWH, but also details the exact nature of who should gather and

what they should declare. It employs wordplay on the verb שׁוּב to suggest that the implied

audience's actions of turning to YHWH should lead YHWH to שׁוּב in turn. The prophet's

portrayal of YHWH's character and the detail of the program of response reflect an

effective appeal to the implied audience that it ought to cry out to YHWH amidst the

crises that it is facing. Joel 2:12–17 does not record an explicit response from the implied

audience but it appears to imply through the gap between Joel 2:17 and 2:18 that the

community responds in obedience, prompting YHWH to respond by enacting restoration.

This is evident in the forthcoming rhetorical units that highlight the reversal of

circumstances because of YHWH's actions.

Chapter Six: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 2:18–27

Introduction

Joel 2:18–27 is one of the key points of transition in the text. At this juncture the

text moves from appealing to the human audience to declaring the responses of YHWH.

The tenor of the text changes from threat and exhortation to promises of presence and

provision. Joel 2:18–27 again uses the exigences of locust infestation and agricultural

hardship as the backdrop against which it portrays YHWH's restorative activity. Joel

2:18–27 continues to reveal the interconnected nature of the text as it refers to specific

crises from Joel 1:1–2:17 which it reverses. The rhetorical purpose of this passage is to

persuade the implied audience that YHWH intends to act on their behalf and that their

proper response is to rejoice. This builds to the final promise that YHWH dwells in their

midst, which should further persuade them to trust the promises of restoration.

Rhetorical Unit

Joel 2:18–27 provides the divine response to the call to cry out to YHWH that

governs Joel 2:12–17. As mentioned in the initial discussion concerning Joel's

compositional unity, Joel 2:18, along with Joel 3:1, is a primary point of perceived

disjunction in the text. Some who divide the book into two distinct halves do so at this

point.[1] Dividing the book between Joel 2:17 and 2:18 can be described as a "division

according to form," in which 2:18–4:21 articulates YHWH's response to the prophetic

call to lament in 1:2–2:17.[2] The switch to restoration in Joel 2:18 does reflect a major

shift in the tenor of the book. Similarly, there is also a major division in the gap between

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[1] Dillard, "Joel," 285–86; Coggins, *Joel*, 45; Allen, *Joel*, 42–43.
[2] Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 2.

Joel 2:27 and 3:1 where the text changes from addressing an immediate and urgent

exigence to looking towards an indeterminate future.[3] Nogalski refers to this as a

"division according to content."[4] It is also undeniable that the book's outlook distinctly

broadens in Joel 3–4 and moves from speaking primarily about the Judahite community

to discussing in detail the fate of foreign nations who oppose YHWH.[5]

Against such theories of textual division one should also remember Prinsloo's

caution against overemphasizing the discontinuity between Joel 2:18–27 and preceding

units since it can be argued that 2:18–27 fulfills the hope raised in 2:12–17.[6] The question

"who knows?" from the previous unit opens up the potential for YHWH to perform the

restorative acts that characterize this unit. YHWH answers that question powerfully in the

affirmative, promising to guarantee the future survival and prosperity of his people. The

division between Joel 1–2 and 3–4 also should not be stated too strongly. There is also

significant lexical overlap between the two "halves," especially related to the day of

YHWH.[7] Phrases such as: "the great and terrible day of YHWH" (Joel 2:11; 3:4), "the

day of YHWH is coming" (Joel 2:1; 3:4), "the heavens and the earth quake" (Joel 2:20;

4:16), and "YHWH gives forth his voice" (Joel 2:11; 4:16) occur in both "halves" of Joel.

These connectors are useful reminders of the value of reading this text in its entirety;

noting and exploring these connections help the interpreter to consider the rhetorical

power of the imagery and prophetic declarations.

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[3] Finley, *Joel*, 68–69.
[4] Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 2.
[5] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 203.
[6] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 64. This search for continuity characterizes Prinsloo's approach to the book of Joel since he is one of the few interpreters who refuses to divide the book into two "halves."
[7] Simkins, Yahweh's Activity, 203.

If one focuses specifically on Joel 2:18–27, the text provides sufficient indicators to determine the boundaries of the rhetorical unit.[8] The content helps to determine the aperture of this unit since the text ceases to instruct the community in how to cry out to YHWH, which is the prevalent mode of address in Joel 2:12–17. Instead, Joel 2:18–27 shifts towards reporting and mediating the divine word. While some argue that Joel 2:18 concludes the previous unit,[9] others note that the waw-consecutive chain of four verbs in 2:18–19 makes a compelling case for linking 2:18 with 2:19 since it would be odd to see a unit break in the middle of a waw-consecutive chain (וַיֹּאמֶר; וַיַּעַן; וַיַּחְמֹל; וַיְקַנֵּא).[10] Thus, following the climactic rhetorical question that ends Joel 2:17, it is more in keeping with the syntax of the text to understand that Joel 2:18 is the beginning of a new rhetorical unit.

After the elaborate description of YHWH's response, the text signals the close of this rhetorical unit through the use of epiphora.[11] The same phrase וְלֹא־יֵבֹשׁוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם ("my people will never be ashamed") concludes both Joel 2:26 and 2:27, bringing the description of YHWH's restorative acts to a ringing crescendo. The remainder of Joel 2:27 further indicates that its function is to close the rhetorical unit. It contains a modified formula of divine recognition introduced by וִידַעְתֶּם ("you will know") that states that YHWH's actions are proof of both his power and his relationship with the community.[12] The text adds a statement of YHWH's presence in the midst of Israel to the use of the formula in Joel 2:27. The use of this relatively well-established formula in conjunction

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[8] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 62.

[9] Merx, *Die Prophetie*, 106–07. According to this reading, the proposed unit of Joel 2:12–18 would include the divine response to the communal lament.

[10] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 143; Dillard, "Joel," 286.

[11] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 50–51.

[12] For a fuller discussion of the divine recognition formula and its rhetorical impact in Joel 2:27, see the following discussion of rhetorical strategy.

with the use of epiphora in the final clause effectively signals the end of this rhetorical unit.[13]

Within these boundaries, Joel 2:18–27 contains several subunits. Joel 2:18–20 describes YHWH's restorative actions, including the removal of the invading army from Joel 2:1–11. It commences with a narrative introduction (Joel 2:18–19a) followed by a series of first person indicative verbs where the voice of YHWH breaks in and promises restoration (Joel 2:19b–20). Joel 2:21–24 presents prophetic commands to the implied audience to rejoice in response, providing lavish descriptions of all that YHWH promises to do on their behalf. These commands stand in marked contrast to the imperatives calling for fear and lamentation from the previous units. Finally, Joel 2:25–27 again reverts to the voice of YHWH, providing divine reassurances of YHWH's commitment to restore and promises of his presence among the implied audience.

Rhetorical Situation

Joel 2:18–27 inaugurates a significant shift in the life-cycle of the text's rhetorical situation. In earlier rhetorical units, the text establishes its implied audience through the merismus of elders and inhabitants of the land and further delineates it through the sequence of imperatives addressed to specific sub-groups (Joel 1:1–14). It again stresses the intended extent of the implied audience in the commands for everyone from the elders to the children to attend the assembly of Joel 2:16. The text also describes at great length the exigence of a locust infestation that ultimately reflects the unleashing of the day of YHWH against this implied audience in Joel 2:1–11. The text constrains the implied

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[13] Wendland, "Discourse Analysis," 5.

audience by indicating that they cannot resist these catastrophes and that their only hope is to cry out to YHWH in hopes of divine intervention. The rhetorical situation changes in Joel 2:12–17 with the text adopting a motivating tone, urging the implied audience to respond and cry out to YHWH in hopes of alleviating the exigence directed against it. Joel 2:18–27 continues the transition. The locust army provides the primary exigence, but this rhetorical unit details in depth the final resolution of that threat.

The most dramatic shift in the rhetorical situation of Joel 2:18–27 concerns the text's positioning of YHWH. In previous rhetorical units, YHWH has either not acted, or worse, been revealed as the one driving the exigence that threatens the existence of the Judahite community (Joel 2:10-11). In this rhetorical unit, YHWH finally acts to remedy the exigence, rather than to exacerbate it further (Joel 2:20). The locust army that ravages the land and even penetrates the sanctity of Zion meets its demise beyond the borders of the land. This is an incredibly important moment of transition in the text's rhetorical situation since YHWH's actions, both salvific and destructive, dominate the remainder of the prophetic book. Interestingly, the text does not explicitly claim that the community responded as directed by the previous rhetorical unit; instead, it focuses upon the actions of YHWH.[14]

The text signals YHWH's change of position within the life-cycle of the rhetorical situation in several ways. First, the narrative snippet found in Joel 2:18–19 provides YHWH's motivation for the actions that unfold in the remainder of the rhetorical unit. Secondly, the text provides significant portions of direct address where YHWH speaks in the first person to the implied audience, indicating YHWH's actions on their behalf (Joel

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[14] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 163.

2:19–20; 2:25–27). Thirdly, the text employs a preponderance of pronominal suffixes that

link YHWH to the implied audience. Throughout Joel 2:18–27, YHWH has pity on "his

land" and "his people" (Joel 2:18), for whom he is "YHWH your God" (Joel 2:23, 26,

27), while also laying claim to them in the first person through the phrase "my people"

(Joel 2:26, 27). All of these linkages between YHWH and the implied audience signal

forcefully YHWH's change of position concerning the exigence that dominates the

image-world of Joel 1:1–2:17.

Joel 2:18–27 maintains the same implied audience as previous rhetorical units, as

the reference to the "children of Zion" makes apparent (Joel 2:23). As mentioned above,

in this rhetorical unit, the key point of emphasis for the implied audience is its

relationship to YHWH. Prior references to Zion commanded either a warning (Joel 2:1)

or a summons to sacred assembly (Joel 2:15) to respond to the threat of the day of

YHWH. Now, the text commands the implied audience to rejoice since its relationship

with YHWH is restored. The text expands the scope of the audience slightly with

imperatives directed towards the land and its creatures (Joel 2:21–22). These references

cohere with the threats against the land and its creatures in prior rhetorical units (cf. Joel

1:10, 17–20; 2:3).[15] These examples of personification lead into the address to the people

of Zion in Joel 2:23, adding further weight to its call to rejoice since the prophet

commands the people to follow the lead of the land and its creatures.

Finally, this study does not claim that the prophet uttered these words against the

backdrop of an actual year of agricultural recovery, just as it does not claim that Joel 1:1–

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[15] In Joel 2:21–24, the text calls upon the land (אֲדָמָה), the beasts of the field (בַהֲמוֹת שָׂדָי) and the children of Zion (בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן) to respond to YHWH's actions. These groups reflect some of those called to fear in previous descriptions of devastation (cf. Joel 1:8, 18; 2:1).

2:17 reflects an actual locust invasion or drought.[16] Instead, it is undeniable that in the

"world of the text," that informs this rhetorical unit, there is a strong sense that exigences

of invasion and divine threat have been turned on their heads when YHWH decides to

intervene. The image-world that drives the rhetorical situation of Joel 2:18–27 reflects

intentionally upon the catastrophes mentioned in previous rhetorical units in order to

reverse them fully.[17]

Rhetorical Strategy

Broadly speaking, Joel 2:18–27 inaugurates a programmatic reversal of the

catastrophes found in Joel 1:1–2:17 that culminates in the repeated assurance וְלֹא־יֵבֹ֥שׁוּ עַמִּ֖י

לְעוֹלָ֑ם ("And my people will not be ashamed again") found in the final clauses of Joel

2:26 and 2:27. The previous rhetorical unit concludes in Joel 2:17 with a prophetic call

for a sacred assembly at which the text urges the community to make entreaty to YHWH

for him to prevent his people from becoming objects of scorn and derision among

foreigners. The rhetorical question אַיֵּ֖ה אֱלֹהֵיהֶֽם ("where is their God?") hangs in the air

and bears the full weight of the catastrophes described in the first part of the book. The

text has thus far attempted to articulate fully the gravity of the situation while proposing a

course of action where it calls the implied audience to lament and cry out using language

that recalls the character of YHWH. These cries rhetorically entreat YHWH to respond in

mercy lest inactivity sully YHWH's reputation.

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[16] For an attempt to locate the promises of restoration within the framework of the Israelite agricultural calendar, see Nash, "Palestinian," 117–35.

[17] For the fullest detailing of the elements of reversal, see Deist, "Parallels," 63–69.

Joel 2:18 then commences the transition from calling the implied audience to lamentation, focusing now on divine response. There is a conceptual ellipsis between Joel 2:17 and 2:18, perhaps leading to the inference that the sacred assembly gathered and spoke as the prophet commanded.[18] Unfortunately it is impossible to make this claim in the "world behind the text" with any degree of certainty, but it is possible to view this passage as presenting a picture of the "rhetorical effectiveness" of Joel 2:12–17. The prophetic appeal to the implied audience essentially prompts the response that reverses YHWH's prior orientation towards the covenant community.[19] The great promise of reversal continues all the way through Joel 2:27 which concludes this rhetorical unit by offering comfort and assurance that YHWH will make his presence known so that his people will not experience shame.

This unit puts forward a different type of argument than that found in the preceding rhetorical unit. Instead of direct address to the audience that provided detailed instructions as to their course of action in the wake of dire circumstances, Joel 2:18–27 focuses on YHWH and the actions that YHWH takes in response to the implied audience's presumed response to the prophet's entreaties. This unit builds off of the hope offered in the description of the divine character in Joel 2:13. YHWH is no longer the one leading the invaders against Zion as in Joel 2:11, nor is YHWH the inscrutable figure

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[18] Nash, "Palestinian," 115. Allen states that it was "Joel's privilege" to present an oracle of salvation in this rhetorical unit since the appeals in Joel 1:1–2:17 are presumed to have been successful; Allen, *Joel*, 86–87. Simkins takes a different approach and argues that Joel 2:18–27 is related epexegetically to the preceding material, claiming that, "the oracle of salvation logically precedes and becomes the motivation behind Joel's summons for the people to return to Yahweh." Simkins builds this case off of a parallel to Isa 44:21–23, where a proclamation of salvation seems to precede a call to return; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 191. This interpretation, however, reads against the most common grammatical usage of *waw*-relative + prefix forms, which as Simkins himself admits, is to indicate temporal succession. Therefore, since there is a logical and coherent case for interpreting Joel 2:18–19 in temporal succession to previous material, this is probably the most appropriate course to follow.

[19] For further detail, see the discussion of "rhetorical effectiveness" that follows.

who may turn and have mercy in 2:12–17. Instead, YHWH becomes the implied

audience's stalwart protector and provider in this unit. The focus on YHWH and his

powerful, positive acts causes this passage to fit most readily into the category of

epideictic rhetoric, which Kennedy defines as rhetoric which intends to persuade its

audience to hold or affirm a point of view in the present, such as celebrating or

denouncing a person or quality.[20] In this case, Joel 2:18–27 focuses on YHWH as the

deity of the implied audience and celebrates YHWH's ability and willingness to act on its

behalf.

As mentioned in the discussion of Joel 1:15–20, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca

claim that epideictic discourse frequently has an educational function, serving to

strengthen the adherence of the target audience to a given set of generally accepted

principles or beliefs.[21] This resonates with Joel 2:18–27 since this unit focuses upon the

idea of YHWH as the one who is able to do mighty deeds that enact salvation for the

implied audience. This is an important element of the Old Testament's understanding of

covenant relationship with YHWH (Exod 7:3–5; 15:1–18; Judg 6:13; Isa 29:14; Jer 21:2;

Mic 7:15).[22] In detailing how YHWH can enact salvation and restoration, this passage

offers reasons why remaining faithful to YHWH in all circumstances is so vital to the

community's continued existence. In other words, this unit does not introduce anything

surprising or shocking into its description of YHWH; rather its focus on YHWH's

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[20] Kennedy, *New Testament*, 19.

[21] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 51–54. Interestingly, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca note that employing epideictic rhetoric requires the strongest qualifications to speak to the subject at hand since the rhetor is upholding the views of the entire community. In this instance, one who speaks through the office of the prophet would seem to be most qualified to make known the actions of YHWH which strengthen the connection to the implied audience.

[22] See Lind on the tradition that for Israel, faithfulness and trust in the ability of YHWH to act decisively were at the core of its proper relationship with YHWH; Lind, *Yahweh*, 171.

restorative activities reminds its implied audience of the core theological concepts of

protection and provision that should characterize their relationship with YHWH.

The focus on the character and direct actions of YHWH is an interesting

development in the rhetorical approach of this book.[23] In praising YHWH and promising

restorative acts the text potentially adds greater persuasive power to its previous calls to

cry out and return. The text provides promises of total restoration without explicitly

indicating that the community acted upon the previous call to lament and return.

However, by reminding the implied audience of the character of YHWH as a deity who is

powerful and who cares for the community, the text can strengthen adherence to its

program of calling its implied audience to return to YHWH. It is possible to see how the

implied audience would be more likely to follow the prophet's lead in acknowledging the

sovereignty of YHWH in the wake of revelations that YHWH is going to act powerfully

on its behalf.

Joel 2:18–20: YHWH Enacts Restoration

Joel 2:18–20 clearly establishes from the outset that YHWH is the agent who

brings about the great changes revealed throughout this rhetorical unit. YHWH's activity

is the subject of four successive verbs in 2:18–19a. The fact that this verbal sequence is in

the *waw*-consecutive + prefix conjugation is somewhat problematic since this verbal

conjugation is typically the backbone of narrative accounts of past action, which appears

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[23] Griffin aptly notes that YHWH's direct actions are typically positive for the implied audience, bringing about recovery and blessing. Meanwhile, the expressions of disaster are attributed to YHWH indirectly, especially through the vehicle of the locusts as an invading army (cf. Joel 2:1–11). Thus, when the text presents YHWH as the primary actor in a rhetorical unit, one expects positive repercussions for the implied audience; Griffin. *God of the Prophets*, 166.

incongruous with the preceding unanswered commands of Joel 2:12–17.[24] The temporal

orientation of this passage, however, looks beyond the locust invasion and drought report

in Joel 1:1–2:17 and offers YHWH's response to these threats. Probably the most helpful

way to consider this issue is to suggest that these verses provide the promise of future

reversal presented in a familiar prophetic style where they appear to foretell what has

already happened.[25] Against the backdrop of the devastation portrayed in Joel 1:1–2:17,

this style strengthens the sense of relief that the implied audience would experience.

Consequently, the calls for rejoicing that follow in Joel 2:21–23 may fall upon more

receptive ears.

The occurrence of narrative in conjunction with prophetic oracles also has

parallels elsewhere in the Old Testament. Zechariah 1:6 records the response of the

immediate audience to that text's call for a return to YHWH (cf. Hag 2:12–15; Mal 3:16).

Zechariah 1:6 answers the injunction to "return to me" that Zech 1:3 places in the mouth

of YHWH with two waw-consecutive + prefix conjugation verbs detailing the response.

The text records that the community repented (וַיָּשׁוּבוּ) and spoke (וַיֹּאמְרוּ) words accepting

the validity of the prophetic oracle. Joel 2:18 differs since its series of waw-consecutive +

prefix conjugation verbs reflect the actions of YHWH, rather than that of the community,

but this difference is appropriate since the conclusion of Joel 2:17 effectively challenges

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[24] Joüon, §118c. The difficulties of interpreting a waw-consecutive chain at this point has led to some suggestions for alternative readings. Merx, for example, suggests repointing the waw-consecutives and understanding them instead as jussives ("May YHWH become jealous for his land…may he say 'I am sending you grain'"). In this case, everything from 2:18 to the end of the book is attached to the prayer of Joel 2:15–17 uttered by the priests; Merx, Prophetie, 91. This approach looks like an attempt to smooth over a difficult syntactical problem. Prinsloo also helpfully notes the difficulties inherent in joining Joel 2:17, which refers to YHWH in the second person, to Joel 2:18, which refers to YHWH in the third person; Prinsloo, Theology, 64.

[25] Barton, Joel, 87. Barton suggests further that ultimately this problem of temporal orientation fades into insignificance in the transmission history of the text since the value of these words is rooted in their ability to provide assurance of divine concern in the midst of calamity.

YHWH to act. Whereas Zech 1:6 is a response to the command to "return to me," Joel 2:18 begins to answer the question "where is their God?" In both cases, the occurrence of a narrative structure in a prophetic passage points to a response that generates further prophetic declarations.

The occurrence of the four verbs in such short order provides the answer to the rhetorical question lingering from 2:17. That passage concludes by imploring YHWH to preserve his divine reputation and act powerfully. YHWH as the subject of the verbal sequence in Joel 2:18–19a demonstrates that the desired response is forthcoming. The two verbal clauses of Joel 2:18 describe characteristics of God that will come to the forefront in this rhetorical unit. The first verb, וַיְקַנֵּא, describes the relationship between YHWH and the implied audience. It has a dual aspect where first YHWH's jealousy indicates that the deity brooks no rivals and promises punishment when Israel fails to worship YHWH alone (cf. Exod 20:3–5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; Josh 24:19). Notably, both instances of the Decalogue highlight YHWH's jealousy (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9), suggesting that the use of וַיְקַנֵּא in Joel 2:18 recalls this foundational creed.[26]

The second aspect of YHWH's jealousy refers to the deity's passionate commitment to the people and the deity's refusal to allow anyone to wrest them away (Isa 9:7; Ezek 39:25; Zech 1:14). These two senses coalesce around the concept of

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[26] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 167. Strazicich suggests that the use of the character credo from Exod 34:6–7 strengthens the possibility of allusion to this part of the Decalogue in Joel 2:18. Joel creatively employs these descriptions, using YHWH's graciousness and compassion to motivate the implied audience to return to YHWH, while using YHWH's zeal to introduce promises of divine restoration. Further, Brueggemann offers a discussion of the dual-pronged reality of YHWH and קִנְאָה. Brueggemann notes both YHWH's harsh responses when Israel strays (Deut 32:16, 21), but also YHWH's passionate commitment to Israel when circumstances dictate (Zeph 3:8); Brueggemann, *Theology*, 293–97. There is similar rhetorical force expended in detailing the depths of YHWH's קִנְאָה in both its positive and negative senses for Israel. Reuter traces the trajectory of this verb across the Old Testament before concluding that YHWH's concern for his people defines its highest level of passionate commitment; Reuter, "קנא," 56–57.

YHWH's unique relationship with the implied audience; YHWH evinces wrath when the

Judahite community turns away but YHWH is also committed to its well-being and will

intercede when the people sincerely cry out.[27] Joel 2:18 invokes the latter sense of קָנָא,

with the idea that in the wake of the community's cries from Joel 2:12–17, YHWH will

again demonstrate commitment and the ability to save. This strengthens the covenantal

bond between YHWH and the implied audience.

The object of וַיְקַנֵּא in Joel 2:18 is לְאַרְצוֹ ("for his land"), which parallels the object

עַמּוֹ ("his people") attached to the following verb. These two objects together emphasize

that YHWH's restorative activity covers the totality of both the people and the land on

which they dwell. This is fitting since previous rhetorical units highlight threats against

both the covenant people and their land, especially their agriculture. The second verb,

יַחְמֹל, ("he had compassion") echoes and emphasizes YHWH's zeal. It highlights

YHWH's mercy which is necessary in this situation given the deprivations described

previously (Jer 15:5; Ezek 16:5; Zech 11:5, 6; Mal 3:17).[28] The attribution of these

characteristics to YHWH provides the orientation for reading the remainder of this unit,

where divine jealousy and compassion move YHWH to act restoratively.

Joel 2:19 begins to detail the elements of YHWH's promised restoration. The

verse commences with the latter two verbs of the waw-consecutive sequence (וַיֹּאמֶר; וַיַּעַן).

Joel 2:19 reuses the divine name as the explicit subject of both וַיַּעַן, and וַיֹּאמֶר and reuses

לְעַמּוֹ as the object of YHWH's response. These repetitions draw YHWH's connection to

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[27] Barton, *Joel*, 88.

[28] Hubbard, *Joel*, 66. Hubbard looks to the story of an Egyptian princess rescuing Moses from the river for an example of the compassion described by חָמַל (Exod 2:6). See also the examples of negated חָמַל to describe YHWH's lack of compassion over Judah's sins (Ezek 5:11; Lam 2:2, 17, 21); Crenshaw, *Joel*, 149.

the implied audience to the forefront, highlighting both the one who acts in this rhetorical

unit and those who benefit from YHWH's actions. The two verbs in Joel 2:19 also

introduce first person divine speech that continues through 2:20. Shifting the implied

speaker here is a potentially powerful rhetorical strategy since it pushes past the

mediation of the prophet in presenting the divine word. By constructing the voice of

YHWH in the first person, the text demonstrates to the implied audience that YHWH is

speaking and promising these good things.

The first element of YHWH's speech is the promise to restore agricultural

prosperity. YHWH's speech commences with הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ ("Behold I am sending"), which is

an emphatic particle with a first person singular suffix followed by a participle. This

syntactic construction occurs mostly in prophetic literature or in narrative accounts of

prophecy. It stresses imminent action, usually performed by YHWH.[29] The subject of this

syntactic construction is typically YHWH, and it normally introduces divine promises or

threats (cf. 1 Sam 25:19; 2 Sam 12:11; 1 Kgs 5:19; 11:31; Jer 1:15; 2:35; 6:21; 35:17;

Ezek 4:16; 11:3; 22:19; 23:22; Hos 2:8; Amos 6:14; 7:8).[30] Crenshaw eloquently

describes the rhetorical effect of the construction הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ by stating, "The promised

event is on the verge of taking place; YHWH is poised to inaugurate a new era."[31] This

sense of anticipation drives the promises that the text proclaims in Joel 2:18–27.

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[29] Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 137–40. For further discussion of the participial function of introducing imminent action, see Joüon §121e. h. Also, Van der Merwe et al. §44.3.4i, gives examples of how הנה can introduce an important change of perspective. This is evident in Joel 2:19 since this phrase commences the description of YHWH's restorative action whereas previously YHWH has either been silent or acted against the implied audience.

[30] Humbert, "La formule hébraïque," 58–64. Humbert tallies 125 examples of this syntactic construction and asserts that 118 of them introduce either a divine promise or threat. This syntactic construction is most prevalent in Jeremiah and Ezekiel which account for over half of the occurrences. but it is also sprinkled throughout other prophetic books as well as occurring in narrative contexts.

[31] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 150.

Joel 2:19 then proclaims that YHWH is restoring a trio of agricultural crops to the

land. These are הַדָּגָן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיִּצְהָר ("grain, new wine, and fresh oil"). These crops were

both staples of the community's diet and essential to its worship offerings to YHWH

(Deut 14:22–23; Neh 13:12; Hos 2:8).[32] Significantly, Joel 1:9–10 mentions these same

three crops when describing the devastation of the locust plague and the cessation of

offerings at the temple. YHWH's act of restoring these three crops to the community thus

reverses the description of deprivation and despair from the previous rhetorical unit. The

next phrase in Joel 2:19 succinctly emphasizes the totality of YHWH's activity since the

text declares that not only will YHWH restore these crops, but also that the gift will be

enough to satisfy (וּשְׂבַעְתֶּם) the needs of the community.[33] Thus, YHWH's promised

actions in Joel 2:19 banish the spectre of famine from Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20, replacing

calls to fast (Joel 1:14; 2:15) with assurances of feasts.

The final phrase of Joel 2:19 begins to reverse an element of the cry that the text

prescribes for the community in 2:17. One of the pleas in Joel 2:17 is for YHWH to

prevent his people from becoming a reproach (חֶרְפָּה) among the nations. In Joel 2:19,

YHWH declares that he will never let this happen again, that he will not let them become

a reproach among the nations (וְלֹא־אֶתֵּן אֶתְכֶם עוֹד חֶרְפָּה בַּגּוֹיִם). YHWH's speech indicates

that he will supplement the restoration of agricultural prosperity with the restoration of

the community's standing among the nations. In doing so YHWH will resoundingly

demonstrate that these signs of the divine presence among them provide the answer to the

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[32] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 169. The mention of these three crops in Neh 13:12 combines their value as sustenance and as worship offerings. Nehemiah reinstitutes tithing of the grain, wine and oil to the temple so that the Levites can return to ministering there without having to go find food. Consequently, restoring grain, wine and oil in Joel 2:19 indicates both sated appetites and renewed cultic worship.

[33] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 150. Crenshaw correctly notes that this single verb summarizes everything that YHWH promises to accomplish in Joel 2:18–27.

question "where is their God?" In essence, the full stomachs that YHWH promises to the

people in Joel 2:19 are representative of the divine commitment to eliminate their

vulnerability to the mockery of foreign nations.[34] Overall, Joel 2:19 paints a picture of

YHWH's renewed commitment to the community spoken in the first person. YHWH

demonstrates it through his promises to alleviate fully both the physical and

psychological distress created in Joel 1:1–2:17.

The divine speech of Joel 2:19–20 also reverses the threat of invasion from Joel

2:1–11. Joel 2:20 describes how YHWH will push the invading host out of the land.

Joel's use of the term הַצְּפוֹנִי ("the northerner") to refer to the invader in this verse raises

some interesting interpretive issues. This term is an example of the text's "almost studied

ambiguity" since it would appear to be applicable equally to locusts, an apocalyptic army

or a foreign invader.[35] Although the noun is singular, its reference is most likely to the

invading horde of Joel 2:1–11 as a collective entity. Some attempt to apply the term

"northerner" to a literal locust invasion, arguing that the locusts in this invading horde

arrived from the north, even if the standard direction from which they would enter Israel

is south or east.[36] This assertion, however, cannot be proven and it does not capture the

full significance of the concept of "the northerner."

The term הַצְּפוֹנִי has a broader significance beyond simply identifying the direction

of attack used by the invading horde of Joel 2:1–11. The Old Testament employs the idea

of the north or the northerner to refer to Israel's great historical enemies, whose invasions

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[34] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 150.

[35] Dillard, "Joel," 286.

[36] Allen, *Joel*, 88, argues for locusts from the north. Kapelrud makes the counterargument concerning how locusts would typically enter from the south or east; Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 96–107. Garrett suggests that locusts may not be in view here since the text justifies this force's destruction because of its pride; Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 357. See the discussion below on the meaning of הגדיל לַעֲשׂוֹת in this passage.

typically came from the north due to the implausibility of attack across the eastern desert

(Isa 41:25; Jer 1:13–15; 4:6; 6:22; 10:22; Ezek 26:10; 38:6, 15; Zech 2:10).[37] The attempt

to pin down a specific identity for this foe in all cases has proven futile, but the image of

the northerner as a great enemy remains.[38] The identity of the north in Canaanite

mythology as the abode of deities, typically at Mount Zaphon, provides another element

to this term.[39] The concept of a northern dwelling for deity occasionally finds its way into

the Old Testament (Job 37:22; Ps 48:3; Isa 14:13; Ezek 1:4).[40] Given this complexity, the

designation of this invading host as הַצְּפוֹנִי is probably a reference to its significance, not

to a specific marker of geographical provenance.

In the case of Joel 2:20, it is possible that this verse represents a fusion of the

latter two concepts: an invincible invader coming from the abode of the divine.[41] This

makes sense in light of Joel 2:10 which introduces theophany into its description of the

invading force. Joel 2:10 describes the shaking (רָעֲשׁוּ) of the heavens, a word that

developed associations of announcing the return of chaos as part of a supra-historical

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[37] Dillard, "Joel," 287.

[38] There are several options for identifying the northern enemy, including Cazelles, who posits a Scythian incursion around the time of Josiah; Cazelles, "Zephaniah, Jeremiah," 129–50. Whitley links this enemy to Babylonians on account of the threat they posed Judah after the battle of Carchemish; Whitley, "Carchemish," 163–73. Childs attempts to loosen the historical moorings of this foe, attaching it to the idea of a chaos myth that threatens creation; Childs, "Enemy from the North," 187–98. Reimer offers the best way forward, suggesting that one ought not to look for a monolithic tradition of the northern foe, but rather view it as a motif-complex that could be employed creatively to speak of judgment coming against both Israel and other nations; Reimer, "'Foe' and the 'North,'" 223–32. This helps to make sense of passages like Jer 50:1–3 which speak of the northern enemy coming against Babylon, which is often identified as the northern enemy itself. Kapelrud adopts essentially the same perspective in his detailed excursus, suggesting that Joel is alluding to Jeremiah and emphasizing a mythic element of motif-complex; Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 93–108.

[39] Clifford, *Cosmic*, 57–73.

[40] Dillard, "Joel," 286.

[41] Ahlström, *Joel*, 32–34. Ahlström rightly cautions against trying to parse the image too closely, claiming that "logic and symbols should not be played against each other." In this case, the multiple hues of the "northerner" build upon each other to construct a powerful enemy against whom YHWH will act.

cataclysm.[42] This shaking occurs because of the great revelation of Joel 2:11 that this invasion has divine sanction; none other than YHWH thunders at the head of this army. Therefore, according to Simkins, "For Joel the locusts were the enemy from the north; they were the enemy army brought up by Yahweh from his dwelling in the north against Judah."[43] The text transforms the idea of a locust invasion that had divine sanction in the earlier rhetorical unit and reads it against the traditions of the enemy from the north in Joel 2:18–27. The locust army is the "northerner" of Joel 2:20 inasmuch as its invasion in Joel 2:1–11 culminates in the declaration that YHWH leads the army and threatens the created order.

After identifying the enemy as the "northerner" with all of its theological ramifications, Joel 2:20 details its destruction. YHWH, the one who sanctioned the invasion, promises to return and drive out the great foe. This is a rather shocking role reversal since YHWH now turns on the invading force formerly under divine leadership.[44] The description of YHWH's actions resonates with divine warrior traditions since the text makes YHWH the primary actor; the role of the people is only to rejoice in YHWH's victory.[45] Again, this reversal points back to the efficacy of the text's calls in Joel 2:12–17; from the nadir of Joel 2:11, the implied audience is now assured that

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[42] Childs, "Enemy from the North," 197. Childs performs a diachronic survey of the use of רשע, arguing that it became associated with the "enemy from the north" tradition when this enemy began to take on suprahistorical characteristics. He specifically connects Ezek 38:18–20 with Joel 2:10, 20 on the grounds that a cataclysmic shaking of the cosmos is the result of the battle with the "enemy from the north."

[43] Simkins, Yahweh's Activity, 197. See also van Leeuwen who supports the idea that Joel is portraying the locusts as "the northerner" since they are both a great enemy and have divine sanction for their activities in Joel 1:2–2:11; van Leeuwen, "'Northern One,'" 98–99. Conflating the locusts with the image of the northern enemy heightens their threat and consequently strengthens the power of YHWH's restorative activity.

[44] Note that the text explicitly states that YHWH leads this invader in Joel 2:25.

[45] Sherlock, The God Who Fights, 31. Sherlock notes that YHWH could intervene in a variety of fashions ranging from military to miraculous, however, any response from Israel that did not exude trust and faithfulness could lead to the renewal of threat.

YHWH will not abandon it. Instead, its potential turn to YHWH helps to inaugurate

YHWH's promises of protection.

Joel 2:20 claims that YHWH will push this powerful invading horde into a

parched and desolate land incapable of fulfilling its needs. There is poetic justice at work

in this description since YHWH declares that the invader will suffer the fate of thirst and

deprivation that it threatened to inflict on YHWH's covenant community in previous

rhetorical units. Joel 2:3 articulates how the invader turned the Edenic landscape into a

wasteland using the adjective שְׁמָמָה ("desolate"), which now recurs in Joel 2:20 to

describe the final fate of this invader. The attacking horde that brought devastation in its

wake will ultimately find itself suffering the fate of its victims.

The verb describing YHWH's action, וְהִדַּחְתִּיו ("I will drive it"), evokes images of

an enemy scattering in defeat, which effectively reverses the descriptions of the invaders'

rigid discipline in Joel 2:7–8 (cf. Jer 8:3; 24:9; Dan 9:7; Ezek 4:13).[46] No longer does this

invading horde maintain ranks. Instead, YHWH's actions disrupt its activities,

culminating in its destruction at YHWH's hands. The force of the verb וְהִדַּחְתִּיו continues

into the following verbless clauses which the definite direct object marker introduces.[47]

These clauses create a geographical merismus, describing how YHWH's actions will

push the head of the invading army into the Dead Sea in the east and its tail into the

Mediterranean to the west. This merismus indicates that YHWH's actions will cleanse

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[46] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 151–52.

[47] There is a text-critical issue here where the Septuagint uses the verbal form ἀφανιῶ to translate the adjectival form שְׁמָמָה. The Septuagint is probably reading שׁמֹמתי in this instance. The Septuagintal reading appears to reflect an attempt to smooth out the reading by supplying a verb just before a phrase marked by the definite direct object marker. The Masoretic text is probably preferable since it is the more difficult, but still comprehensible reading.

the land by pushing the enemy to the periphery and accomplishing its destruction in the

waters that form the natural boundaries of the land.

Joel 2:20 concludes its description of destruction by employing olfactory imagery.

It consists of two parallel clauses, both beginning with *waw*-consecutive affix verbs from

the root עָלָה which are each followed by a noun referring to the invaders' stench (בָּאְשׁוֹ,

צַחֲנָתוֹ) as they are destroyed.[48] Many ancient and modern commentators note the

putrefaction of locust bodies when the swarm dies, suggesting that the stench may once

again point to the locusts as a key part of the image-world that governs the description of

the invader.[49] The effect of these images is to create a vivid picture of the utter

destruction of the invading force by describing the smell of its rotting corpses as what

remains of the formerly invincible enemy.

The final clause of Joel 2:20 provides the reason for the punishment that YHWH

inflicts in the earlier clauses of this verse. This clause reads כִּי הִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת ("for it has

done great things"). The subject of the verb הִגְדִּיל is unexpressed which leads to

interpretive confusion since a similar phrase concludes the following verse. The sole

difference is that the final phrase of Joel 2:21 explicitly identifies YHWH as the verb's

subject (כִּי־הִגְדִּיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת). Based on this close parallel, it is possible to see YHWH as

the subject of the clause in 2:20 and argue that either the divine name was elided during

the process of transmission,[50] or that the verb is part of YHWH's speech and should

instead read in the first person as אַגְדִּיל.[51] This would make evident YHWH's agency as

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[48] The term צַחֲנָתוֹ is a *hapax legomenon*, however the repetition of the verb and the exactly parallel syntax between the two clauses pushes the interpreter to understand it as a synonym of בָּאְשׁוֹ.

[49] Simkins cites the example of Augustine who described the death of a locust swarm as something with enough stench and toxicity to spark a pestilence; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 195.

[50] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 55.

[51] Sellin, *Das Zwolfprophetenbuch*, 166.

the one who performs "great things." Neither eliding the divine name nor emending the

verb, however, have any textual support and remain conjectural.[52]

There is another solution that does not require changing the Masoretic text and is

probably preferable. It is possible to argue instead that the "northerner" from earlier in

the verse is the unexpressed subject of הִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת in Joel 2:20.[53] Accordingly, it is a

result clause, giving justification for YHWH acting to destroy it. The "great deeds" (הִגְדִּיל

לַעֲשׂוֹת) that it performs are references to its self-aggrandizement.[54] This clause may have

a parallel in Isa 10:5–19, which is another prophetic passage that describes a foreign

invader as a divine agent of punishment. Similarly, when the invading host (Assyria)

exceeds its commission, YHWH directs his wrath upon it (cf. Hab 2:16–19).

A parallel in Ps 35:26–27 further suggests that the "northerner" is the subject of

הִגְדִּיל in Joel 2:20.[55] That passage uses the root גָּדַל as a participle that refers to overly

proud enemies of the psalmist (הַמַּגְדִּילִים) in Ps 35:26. Psalm 35:27 then uses a jussive

form of the root (יִגְדַּל) to call the audience to magnify YHWH for vindicating the

psalmist.[56] Consequently, it is conceivable that this final clause of Joel 2:20 is the first

step of an intricate wordplay. It promises that YHWH will destroy the invading army

completely on account of the "great deeds" that it has done, but it also sets up the

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[52] See also Miller's work on the linguistics of ellipsis. The direction of the potential ellipsis in Joel 2:20, 21 is backward since the extra constituent occurs in Joel 2:21. Miller claims that such "backward ellipsis" only occurs when the elided constituent is in the final position of line (cf. Ps 20:8); Miller, "Linguistic Approach," 263–65. This may help argue against the presence of ellipsis in Joel 2:20, 21, since YHWH is not the final constituent of Joel 2:21. One cannot make this argument too strongly, however, since Miller focuses solely on the elision of verbs but the position of the supposedly missing constituent in Joel 2:20, 21 may suggest that ellipsis is not occurring here.

[53] See Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 192; Prinsloo, *Theology*, 77; Allen, *Joel*, 89–90; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 152; Dillard, "Joel," 287.

[54] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 77.

[55] Allen, *Joel*, 89.

[56] See also Zeph 2:8, 10 for further examples of texts that employ גָּדַל in a pejorative sense.

attribution of "great deeds" to YHWH in Joel 2:21. YHWH's "great deeds" overwhelm the "great deeds" of the invading horde.

Overall, Joel 2:18–20 inaugurates YHWH's programmatic reversal of the destruction described in Joel 1:1–2:17. It announces YHWH's change of heart and introduces first person divine speech in which YHWH promises to restore agricultural abundance to the land and destroy the foreign invader. Whereas YHWH thunders at the head of the army in Joel 2:11, the text now has the deity speak in the first person to signify the divine commitment to restore the implied audience. The rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:18–20 also draws deeply from previous rhetorical units. YHWH's promises to send sustenance including grain, new wine, and oil specifically liquidate that which was lacking in Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20. Further, the text claims that YHWH's actions signify that the community is no longer a reproach among the nations, directly answering the plea that the text constructs for the implied audience in Joel 2:17.[57]

Joel 2:21–24: Calls to Rejoice

Joel 2:21 begins a new subunit in which the text switches from first person divine speech to imperatives from the prophet. These imperatives provide the prophet's evaluation of the preceding description of YHWH's actions, which is to call upon the implied audience to rejoice. The prophet creatively first addresses the land, followed by the animals and finally the children of Zion. This progression from inanimate object, to animals, to humans demonstrates the fullness of the restoration brought about by YHWH's actions since YHWH restores everything that was devastated in Joel 1:1–2:17.

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[57] Deist, "Parallels," 64.

The delay in referring to the children of Zion also heightens the climactic effect. By first

addressing the land and the animals, the prophet builds up to the commands addressed to

the implied audience as the culmination of the sequence. The implied audience shares in

the positive repercussions for the land and the animals, ultimately rejoicing in the fullness

of YHWH's actions.

The flow of Joel 2:21–24 resembles that of a thanksgiving psalm containing i) a

command or exhortation; ii) vocative addressee; iii) reason for jubilation introduced by

כִּי; and iv) designation of the divine basis of the rejoicing (cf. Pss 117; 135).[58] Joel 2:21

begins with the command אַל־תִּירְאִי ("be not afraid!"), followed by a vocative

identification of the land (אֲדָמָה) as the object of the imperative.[59] It then echoes the first

command when it employs further imperatives גִּילִי וּשְׂמָחִי ("shout and rejoice!") before

using כִּי to introduce YHWH's actions as the reason for adopting this attitude.[60] These

two imperatives point to a reversal of Joel 1:16; a verse that employed nominal forms of

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[58] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 153; Prinsloo, *Theology*, 71. Allen differentiates between thanksgiving psalms and their prophetic adaptations on the grounds that the Psalms tend to reflect on an attribute of YHWH or specific deed YHWH accomplished, while the prophets use the form to point toward an event that YHWH will create (cf. Isa 44:23; 54:1–3; Zeph 3:14–15; Zech 2:14; 9:9–10); Allen, *Joel*, 90. Joel 2:21–24 may also resonate with the literary form of an *Aufruf zur Freude* ("Summons to Joy"). Boda examines nine prophetic texts, including Joel 2:21–24, which seem to reflect this form. Boda notes that those texts that address a female city figure reflect military victory as the reason for celebration (Isa 12:6; 54:1; Zeph 3:14–15; Zech 2:14; 9:9–10; Lam 4:21) while those that do not use the metaphor of a female city figure reflect harvest contexts, with some potential invocation of military imagery (Hos 9:1; Joel 2:21–24); Boda, "Daughter's Joy," forthcoming. This is an appropriate form of response for the text to require since the threats portrayed in Joel 1:1–2:17 are oriented around locusts that ravage the landscape and have the attributes of a military force.

[59] Conrad detects some resonance between Joel's use of the command not to fear and its use in Jer 46:27–28; Zeph 3:16–18a; and Isa 10:24–27. While the command not to fear could be addressed to warriors and kings, it also could be used to address a community for whom YHWH will fight as the divine warrior. Joel 2:21 and 2:22 both contain elements common to these other אַל־תִּירָא pericopes including the command itself, a designation of the addressee and statements of the basis of assurance. Joel 2:21 and 2:22 differ from these other אַל־תִּירָא pericopes in that their addressees are non-human: the "earth" and "beasts of the field" respectively; Conrad, *Fear Not*, 122–23, 168–69. Joel 2:23, however, does address the "children of Zion," although with commands to "shout" and "be glad" instead. The parallels are not perfect, but the idea of YHWH acting powerfully on behalf of his covenant community may connect these verses with other אַל־תִּירָא pericopes.

[60] All three of the imperatives in Joel 2:21 are in the feminine singular form, taking their number and gender from אֲדָמָה, which is the vocative addressee.

these roots (שִׂמְחָה וְגִיל) to describe the results of the cessation of sacrificial worship at the temple.[61] The commands to the earth to shout and rejoice essentially reverse the elimination of "gladness and joy" in Joel 1:16.

The final phrase of Joel 2:21 is כִּי־הִגְדִּיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת ("for YHWH has done great things") which, as discussed previously, completes a wordplay with the previous verse.[62] Joel 2:21 contrasts YHWH's agency in performing "great things" over and against the "great things" of the invading locust army which is doomed to destruction. Essentially, the earth (אֲדָמָה) needs to fear no longer since YHWH promises to drive this seemingly great army into destruction outside of the boundaries of the land. Joel 2:21 shifts the emphasis for the implied audience's hope from YHWH's character to YHWH's actions; whereas the text's appeal to cry out to YHWH is rooted in the divine nature (Joel 2:13), the process of restoration shows YHWH's character in action. YHWH's "great deeds" cause the land to rejoice since they overcome and reverse the "great deeds" of the invading host.[63]

Joel 2:22 unfolds in a fashion similar to the previous verse. It too begins with a command not to fear (אַל־תִּירְאוּ), followed by an identification of the addressee in the vocative, and concluding with statements articulating the basis for assurance that are introduced by כִּי.[64] The addressees on this occasion are the collective "beasts of the field"

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[61] Deist, "Parallels," 64.

[62] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 192.

[63] Interestingly, this same declaration of YHWH's great deeds occurs in Ps 126:2–3, which is a psalm celebrating the return of the captives from exile thanks to YHWH's actions. Strazicich tries to draw the context of Ps 126 into this use of this phrase in Joel 2:21, arguing that the text is trying to relive the dream of restoration made explicit in Ps 126; Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 180–81. This presumes, of course, that one can firmly date the composition of Joel after the composition of Ps 126 which may be likely, but is not certain.

[64] The command not to fear differs from Joel 2:21 in that this command is in the masculine plural form as opposed to the feminine singular. The object of the verb in 2:21 is the land (אֲדָמָה) which agrees with the number and gender of the verb. The object of the verb in 2:22 is the beasts of the field (בַּהֲמוֹת שָׂדַי) which is a feminine plural construct chain that does not agree with the gender of the verb. This probably reflects the

(בַּהֲמֹות שָׂדָי). Joel 1:16–20 details the deprivations suffered by different animals through

its use of drought imagery, encapsulating their suffering with a description of their moans

(מַה־נֶּאֶנְחָה בְהֵמָה). Thus, Joel 2:22 effectively reverses the picture of animals suffering by

appealing to them in the vocative before describing agricultural renewal.

Joel 2:22 lacks an explicit statement attributing the restoration to YHWH, but one

can infer it from the declaration of Joel 2:21 that YHWH has done "great things." Joel

2:22 details these "great things" and uses כִּי to introduce the first great deed; a vivid

picture of a desert land producing lush vegetation. The verb is דָּשְׁאוּ whose only other use

in the Old Testament is Gen 1:11 in YHWH's command for the earth to fill with flora.[65]

This calls to mind Joel 2:3 which describes the locust army as ravaging an Edenic

landscape.[66] In employing a verb associated with the creation narrative, the text hints at

the prospect of paradise restored because of YHWH's powerful acts. The object of דָּשְׁאוּ

is נְאֹות מִדְבָּר ("pastures of the wilderness"), which the text is reusing from Joel 1:19, 20.

In the earlier occurrence, fire consumed the נְאֹות מִדְבָּר, putting an emphatic capstone on

the image-world of drought that threatened the community's survival. In Joel 2:22 the

text reverses the image completely since it declares that the fields will no longer burn;

rather, they will abound with vegetation.

The remaining phrases in Joel 2:22 echo and enhance the idea of renewed

prosperity. The particle כִּי again introduces further descriptions of renewed agricultural

prosperity that give assurances that the addressee should heed the command to "fear not."

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convention that the masculine plural is the base form for verbs in the second person (cf. Ruth 1:4b; Amos 4:1). Cf. Joüon §150a; Dillard, "Joel," 298; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 55.

[65] The presence of this verb and sequence of restoration that goes from land, to animals to people seems to echo the creation order. See Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 181.

[66] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 154.

These assurances include trees that bear their fruit (עֵץ נָשָׂא פִרְיוֹ), specifically mentioning

fig trees and vines (תְּאֵנָה וָגֶפֶן) that yield rich produce. These same words occur in Joel 1:7

as part of the imagery depicting the totality of the locusts' ravaging. Now, they produce

their fruit in remarkable abundance. The word חֵילָם ("their strength/abundance")

describes their output. The Old Testament uses it frequently to describe military strength,

whether describing a great army or strong fighters within it (cf. Judg 6:12; 11:1; 1 Sam

1:9; 16:18; 1 Kgs 11:28; 2 Kgs 5:1; Jer 32:2; 34:1; Ezek 17:17; 27:10). Notably, the

previous use of חַיִל in this text occurred in Joel 2:11, referring to the army that YHWH

brings against Zion. In this instance the text uses what was once a word indicating threat

to announce blessing since it refers to the output of the vines and fig trees.

In the wake of the commands to the land and the animals, Joel 2:23 continues the

progression of addressees by calling upon the children of Zion to shout and rejoice in

YHWH.[67] These commands echo Joel 2:21 by using similar imperatives that differ only

in number and gender from those that the text directs towards the land (גִּילִי וְשִׂמְחִי). Joel

2:23 fronts the addressees, commencing with וּבְנֵי צִיּוֹן ("children of Zion") prior to the

imperatives. This syntactic shift helps to mark this verse as the climax of the sequence of

imperatives.[68] Joel 2:21–23 demonstrates the breadth of YHWH's restorative activity by

moving from the land, to the beasts to God's people; from inanimate to animate to

human.[69] Each step draws closer to the implied audience who ought to respond to the

text's dictates. Following the addresses to the land and the animals, the prophet now

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[67] Dillard, "Joel," 289.

[68] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 69.

[69] Dempsey admirably expresses the scope of YHWH's restorative activity by noting that Joel 2:21–24 contains "hopeful words that speak of redemption and restoration, with humanity and the natural world in relationship with each other and God in relationship with both," Dempsey, "Hope Amidst Crisis," 276. In these verses, YHWH inextricably intertwines restoration for the land and its inhabitants.

focuses specifically on YHWH's actions towards the children of Zion. The assurances that compel the "earth" and the "beasts of the field" to "fear not" also provide YHWH's community in Zion with reasons to rejoice.

Joel 2:23 announces the reasons for rejoicing by again employing the particle כִּי, which mirrors the syntax of the previous two verses. The first phrase articulating these reasons creates one of the more complicated interpretative issues in the entire book. The Masoretic text states that YHWH will give to the community הַמּוֹרֶה לִצְדָקָה, the interpretation of which is the subject of significant debate. The LXX quite obviously has a different reading here since it has τὰ βρώματα ("food"). Suggestions for this reading include either המאכל לצדקה[70] or הבריה לצדקה[71] in the Hebrew text. Within this specific rhetorical unit the Septuagintal reading seems to echo Joel 2:21–22 with the promise of food in the wake of commands to shout and rejoice.[72] It is difficult, however, to determine a text critical error from either of these proposed original readings that would lead to the Masoretic form הַמּוֹרֶה. It is more likely that the LXX is trying to exegete a difficult passage by offering a reading that seems more contextually appropriate. In this case, the interpreter must wrestle with the complexities inherent in the Masoretic text.

Attempting to determine the meaning of הַמּוֹרֶה לִצְדָקָה is challenging. The word הַמּוֹרֶה has multiple senses, two of which may be applicable in this context. First, it can refer to a teacher or instructor (Gen 12:6; Deut 11:30; Judg 7:1; Isa 30:20). This, along with the following לִצְדָקָה, leads to the translation "teacher for righteousness," which the

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[70] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 199; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 55. Simkins notes that the root אָכַל is found in Joel 1:16, which may strengthen the Septuagintal reading since Joel 2:18–27 does explicitly reverse calamities found in Joel 1:15–20.

[71] Dillard, "Joel," 289.

[72] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 199.

Targum and Vulgate appear to have followed.[73] This has piqued scholarly interest in light

of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community. Some seek to find

parallels between this passage and the concept of a "teacher of righteousness" from

Qumran. The absence of references to Joel 2:23 in the extant Qumran literature, however,

argues against this explanation.[74]

Another possibility is that this phrase is a cryptic reference to a new Davidic

figure as teacher and leader, derived from the political vacuum following the

disappearance of Zerubbabel.[75] The degree of uncertainty surrounding the date of

composition for this book, however, means that this proposal remains highly speculative.

Further, the idea of a teaching figure appearing here in the middle of an extended

description of YHWH's agricultural blessings is also rather incongruous. If this is the

sense that the text intends, one would expect further description of this figure and his

import.[76] Instead, the text highlights YHWH's salvific deeds and offers no further

description of a promised leader who brings powerful teaching.

Another alternative is to understand הַמּוֹרֶה as a reference to rainfall, probably the

autumn rains that prepared the ground for ploughing and sowing.[77] This would be a rare

use of the term since Ps 84:7 is the only other passage that may contain מוֹרֶה with this

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[73] Dillard, "Joel," 289. The Targum reads מלפיכון בדכו ("teacher of merit"), while the Vulgate reading is *doctorem iustitiae* ("teacher of justice").

[74] Roth suggests that the Qumran community interpreted this verse "out of its context" to appropriate the idea of a teacher of righteousness; there are, however, no references to this verse in any extant Qumran documents; Roth, "Teacher," 93–95; cf. Crenshaw, *Joel*, 155. Sellers suggests that לִצְדָקָה was a scribal addition brought on by the proximity of הַמּוֹרֶה. This scribe presumably would have belonged to a circle familiar with Qumran teachings; See Sellers, "Teacher," 93–95. This hypothesis, however, suffers from a lack of evidence to identify this scribe.

[75] Ahlström, *Joel*, 107–10. Ahlström does not offer specifics of who this figure might represent other than to assert that he would be the leader of the Jerusalem cultus and perhaps also assert a certain degree of authority in the political sphere. The lack of specificity combined with the oddity of a reference to a teaching figure in the context of this passage renders this proposal unlikely.

[76] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 155.

[77] Allen, *Joel*, 92–93.

meaning. The other term for this rain is יוֹרֶה, which occurs in Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24; and

Hos 6:3. Despite its rarity, there are strong reasons to consider rainfall the most

appropriate reading of this word in this context. The strongest evidence comes from the

context of the remainder of the verse. Joel 2:23b declares that YHWH will send down

rain using the unambiguous term גֶּשֶׁם ("rain," cf. Gen 7:12; 8:2; Lev 26:4; 1 Kgs 17:7;

18:45; Isa 44:10; 55:10; Amos 4:7; Hos 6:3), followed by the appositional construction

מוֹרֶה וּמַלְקוֹשׁ בָּרִאשׁוֹן. Again the disputed term מוֹרֶה appears, this time in conjunction with

מַלְקוֹשׁ which clearly refers to spring rains that strengthen the crops before harvest (Deut

11:14; Prov 16:15; Job 29:23; Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3; Zech 10:1). The close connection to

מַלְקוֹשׁ which follows גֶּשֶׁם suggests that this phrase is an example of merismus, where

מוֹרֶה וּמַלְקוֹשׁ explains that YHWH's sending of rain will extend over both expected

rainfall seasons.[78] Looking back to the first half of the verse, it is reasonable to propose

that if מוֹרֶה refers to rains in Joel 2:23b, then it also refers to rains in 2:23a.[79]

Understanding מוֹרֶה as a synonym for rain still leaves the challenge of

determining its relationship to the phrase לִצְדָקָה ("to/for righteousness") that follows. At

first glance it is difficult to see how the text intends to link rainfall in relationship with

the concept of righteousness. One explanation is that לִצְדָקָה refers to order or a sense of

what is right and appropriate.[80] In this case the sense is that the rain will fall in its

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[78] Allen, *Joel*, 93. See also Futato who does excellent work categorizing the different words for rain in the Old Testament. He demonstrates that מָטָר and גשם are the overarching terms for rainfall, while מַלְקוֹשׁ and יורה/מורה are restricted to describing rainfall in a specific season. He aptly characterizes the relationship between the two levels of words as that of "genus and species," Futato, "Sense Relations," 82–94.

[79] In contrast to Ahlström who asserts that it is unlikely for מורה to have the same sense in both instances. Ahlström points to its articular use in Joel 2:23a versus its anarthrous use in 2:23b and attempts to make the argument that 2:23a is a title referring to a teacher; Ahlström, *Joel*, 108. This argument, however, does not carry enough weight to overturn the surrounding context that focuses upon rain and the gifts that it provides for the community.

[80] Coggins, *Joel*, 48; Sweeney, *Twelve*, 172.

naturally allotted time and amount, which helps to guarantee the return of agricultural

prosperity. This proposal is possible, but those who support it fail to provide further

examples of לִצְדָקָה where it has the sense of "appropriateness." Another suggestion is

that לִצְדָקָה should be understood in a collective sense, referring to "righteous ones," or

those for whom YHWH will bring rain.[81] This proposal, however, suffers from a dearth

of evidence suggesting that לִצְדָקָה could take on a collective sense.

Arguably, the best trajectory to follow for determining the meaning of לִצְדָקָה is

the one that proposes that the *lamed* simply denotes relationship between the two words

and that the concept expressed here is that YHWH will send rain in accordance with his

righteousness and relationship with the community.[82] YHWH's actions bring

righteousness in the sense that YHWH's saving act of bringing rainfall reveals this divine

characteristic to the community (cf. Isa 46:12; 51:6; 56:1; 59:9; 60:17; 61:10). This

suggestion gains further strength since it also resonates with other passages where the gift

of rain can represent blessing and right covenant relationship (Lev 26:3–4; Deut 11:13–

14), while the lack of rainfall represents covenant sanction (Lev 26:18–20; Deut 28:23–

24; 1 Kgs 8:35–36).[83] This focus is also in keeping with the concern of Joel 2:18–27 to

re-establish the relationship between YHWH and the community for whom he is jealous

and upon whom he intends to have compassion in Joel 2:18–19.

The rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:23 takes shape in light of the discussion above.

Essentially, Joel 2:23 continues to highlight the complete restoration of agricultural

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[81] Rabinowitz, "Guides," 397. Rabinowitz find examples of צדק that he believes should be translated in a collective fashion (Isa 1:26; Jer 31:23; Ecc 3:16–17), however, he provides no other example for לִצְדָקָה.
[82] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 116; cf. Sweeney, *Twelve*, 172; Allen, *Joel*, 93. Kapelrud claims that "this solution, besides being the easiest, is also probably correct."
[83] Dillard, "Joel," 289.

bounty through renewed rainfall as the result of YHWH's intervention. It begins by

calling upon its implied audience to respond, commanding them to rejoice in light of

YHWH's actions on their behalf. The descriptions of destruction in Joel 1:1–2:17

characterize a year of agricultural failure in all respects, while the celebration of

restoration in Joel 2:18–27 describes a year of agricultural abundance in which every

element necessary for prosperity, including abundant rainfall, comes to fruition.[84] The

imagery extends below the surface of the earth since Joel 1:15–20 introduces the concept

of drought on top of the locust plague and uses it to create further vivid pictures of

famine and distress for both people and animals. In response Joel 2:23 refers to abundant

rains that raise the level of the water table to provide substantial water for both animals

and crops.[85]

Following the description of the return of much-needed rain, the third person

prophetic speech concludes in Joel 2:24 with more pictures of agricultural prosperity. It

introduces no new imperatives, instead offering further descriptions of YHWH's actions.

This verse creates an inclusio with Joel 2:19 by again referring to grain, new wine and oil

as products that YHWH will supply. Both Joel 2:19 and 2:24 use the same words for new

wine and oil (תִּירוֹשׁ וְיִצְהָר), but employ synonyms for grain (Joel 2:19 has הַדָּגָן; 2:24 has

בָּר). The use of synonyms for grain may relate a new element introduced in Joel 2:24 that

associates the grain, new wine and oil with their respective places of manufacture. The

verse declares that the threshing floor (הַגֳּרָנוֹת) will have the grain while wine-vats

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[84] Nash, "Palestinian," 116.

[85] Nash, "Palestinian," 122–24. It is not necessary to accept Nash's entire argument that this unit actually represents a physical year of good crops in order to make use of her observations concerning the totality of the restoration envisioned in this unit. The text positions the figure of the prophet as speaking during a time of bounty and the imagery of turning every shortfall into abundance demonstrates the text's strategy to persuade the implied audience that following its program would yield positive results.

(הַיְקָבִים) overflow with new wine and oil. The term בַּר indicates clean grain after the completion of the winnowing process (Jer 23:28).[86] Mentioning the threshing floor and the wine-vats places emphasis on the finished product that is ready for consumption; YHWH's restorative actions result in agricultural produce that meets the community's needs.

The repeated mention of agricultural produce stresses the reversal of Joel 1:10 and the cessation of sacrifices to YHWH because of the scarcity of these items. Abundance is again in view in light of the parallel verbs וּמָלְאוּ and וְהֵשִׁיקוּ of which these crops are the subjects. While מָלֵא is a common verb referring to filling, שׁוּק is found only three times and indicates being filled to overflowing (Joel 4:13; Ps 65:10).[87] Thus, the end result of YHWH's "great things" is the guarantee of overwhelming prosperity and abundance that will completely satiate the community that suffered from want in the previous units.

Overall, Joel 2:21–24 details YHWH's restorative actions while adding in commands to rejoice and celebrate. The scene transitions from devastation to restoration thanks to YHWH's actions and the text tries to evoke a response from the implied audience based on the statement in Joel 2:21 that YHWH has done "great things" (הִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת). These "great things" are primarily the restoration of various crops from the conditions of drought and insect infestation. The addressees of the imperatives transition from the earth to the animals to culminate in the call to YHWH's covenant people in Zion to respond and rejoice. The totality of those whom the text calls to respond matches the

[86] Dillard, "Joel," 290. For a detailed look at the process of threshing that results in the final grain product, see Borowski, Agriculture, 65–69.
[87] Crenshaw, Joel, 156–57.

totality of YHWH's restorative acts; both elements demonstrate that YHWH is now

acting for the benefit of the implied audience, the children of Zion.

Joel 2:25–27: YHWH's Promises

Joel 2:25 returns to first person speech that the text places in the mouth of

YHWH. This shift emphasizes again who it is that enacts these great promises of

restoration. It states that YHWH will repay (וְשִׁלַּמְתִּי) the devastation that the locusts

caused. The verb שָׁלַם occurs elsewhere in legal contexts and designates payment for

incurred losses (cf. Exod 21:34, 36–7; 22:1–5, 12–13).[88] The direct object of the verb is a

matter of some dispute. The text appears to state that YHWH will repay the "years"

(הַשָּׁנִים) that the locusts have consumed. Some have suggested that it should instead be

read as שְׁנַיִם or "double," indicating that the recompense will far exceed the damage.[89]

This interpretation avoids the diachronic question of whether the term "years" is

appropriate if both Joel 1:1–14 and 2:1–11 refer to the same locust infestation.[90] Dillard,

however, effectively defends the possibility of the "years" interpretation by noting that

שְׁנַיִם is anarthrous and lacking the direct object marker on the other rare occasions where

it is used to indicate a double amount (cf. Exod 22:3, 6, 8; Deut 21:17; 2 Kgs 2:9).[91] His

suggestion is that the impact of the locusts on one year's harvest would also affect that of

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[88] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 157. Given the semantic range of שלם in the piel, it may be possible to consider it another piece indicating that the community was not necessarily guilty of a sin that drew the wrath of YHWH down on them. Crenshaw draws a parallel to Job, who was restored to prosperity after undeservedly losing what he owned, however, this parallel would be strong if שלם were found in Job 42.

[89] See for example Nash, "Palestinian," 126.

[90] Barton, *Joel*, 89.

[91] Dillard, "Joel," 292. The word that more frequently indicates double amounts is מִשְׁנֶה (cf. Gen 43:12, 15; Exod 16:22; Deut 15:18; Job 42:10; Isa 61:7; Jer 16:18; Zech 9:12).

the ensuing year, thus the term הַשָּׁנִים is appropriate.[92] Ultimately the significance of this

issue fades when considering the rhetorical strategy of the verse. Joel 2:25 attributes these

words of restoration to YHWH, showing the continuing reversal of YHWH's intentions.

The one who threatened punishment through the great locust army is now responding

with blessing.

Joel 2:25 also makes important allusions to two earlier verses in its description of

the restoration that YHWH will enact. It refers explicitly to the locusts using a series of

synonyms (הַיֶּלֶק, וְהֶחָסִיל וְהַגָּזָם, הָאַרְבֶּה) which also occur in Joel 1:4.[93] In reusing all of the

words for locust in this verse, the text emphasizes the totality of the restoration; just as

the devastation came about in hammering waves, so shall the restoration fully reverse

each separate wave. The second allusion in this verse follows the words for locust where

it employs an appositional construction to identify them as YHWH's army (חֵילִי) that

YHWH sent among them. This refers back to Joel 2:11 and its description of YHWH

thundering at the head of the invading army. The first person pronominal suffix on חֵילִי

stands out in a rhetorical unit where the text uses pronominal suffixes to devote

significant attention to emphasizing the connection between YHWH and the implied

audience. This suffix makes explicit YHWH's leadership of the invading locusts, but

ultimately the barrage of suffixes connecting YHWH to the covenant community reveal

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[92] See also Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 193, who asserts that the locusts' activities occurred over the space of two years, positing two separate waves of locusts.

[93] The order in which the text lists these words for locusts differs between these two texts. Joel 1:4 has הַגָּזָם, הָאַרְבֶּה, הַיֶּלֶק, הֶחָסִיל while Joel 2:25 has הַגָּזָם, הֶחָסִיל, הַיֶּלֶק, הָאַרְבֶּה. This may provide further evidence that the different words for locust do not make reference to sequential stages in their development.

the new state of affairs with the relationship. Thus, Joel 2:25 takes those previously

prophesied disasters and claims that YHWH's restorative activity will overcome them.[94]

Joel 2:26 continues to describe the reversal of what the locusts have done to the

community. It commences with a rare grammatical construction in which two infinitives

absolute אָכוֹל וְשָׂבוֹעַ ("to eat and to be satisfied") follow the initial conjugated verb

וַאֲכַלְתֶּם ("you shall eat"). The first infinitive absolute also comes from the same root as

the conjugated verb. This paranomastic construction typically strengthens the force of the

conjugated verb, indicating that the community will eat in great abundance.[95]

The use of two postpositive infinitives absolute stresses the simultaneous or near-

simultaneous nature of the two activities, which indicates the totality of the reversal from

earlier images of starvation since the eating leads swiftly to satiation (cf. Judg 14:9).[96]

The choice of אָכַל in this verse is striking since the initial description of disaster in this

book commences with a fourfold usage of this verb describing the activities of the locusts

(Joel 1:4). The eating activities of the locusts effectively stripped the land bare and

threatened the community with starvation; in response YHWH will make it so that the

community itself can eat and satiate its hungers in repayment for what the locusts had

eaten.

The act of eating in Joel 2:26 then guides the implied audience towards praise.

This is an essential element of response that the text tries to evoke now that the situation

has taken such a drastic turn. The text calls on the implied audience to acknowledge that

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[94] This verse may also help with the identification of the invading horde in Joel 2:1–11. In this verse Joel appears to qualify the locusts as the "great army," which may strengthen the idea that 2:1–11 is a recapitulation of the locust invasion described in Joel 1.

[95] GKC §113l.

[96] Joüon §123m.

YHWH is the agent who causes these great reversals and that this should evoke a response of thanksgiving.[97] The text affirms YHWH's reestablished relationship by stating to the community that it will praise "the name of YHWH, your God" (אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם). The second person plural suffix on אֱלֹהֵיכֶם emphatically reflects this connection. The concluding relative clause accentuates the power of YHWH's actions, referring to YHWH as the one who acts magnificently or wondrously (לְהַפְלִיא).[98] Again the text emphasizes that the implied audience is the recipient of this blessing, stating to them that it is amongst you (עִמָּכֶם) that YHWH performs these great deeds.

Joel 2:27 summarizes how YHWH's restorative actions reaffirm his relationship with the community. This verse creates a "climactic affirmation of Yahweh's presence," emphasized in the opening clauses.[99] Joel 2:27 states in the first person, with YHWH as the implied speaker, that the community will know that YHWH is among them (וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי בְקֶרֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנִי).[100] The following clauses have YHWH declaring divine uniqueness (וַאֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאֵין עוֹד). These statements reflect a modification of the "divine recognition formula" that occurs in other parts of the Old Testament, notably Ezekiel and Zechariah (cf. Exod 6:7; 10:2; 16:12; Ezek 6:7, 13–14; 7:4; 11:10, 15:7; 16:22; 29:6, 9, 16; Zech 2:9; 4:9; 6:15). This recognition formula follows a declaration of YHWH's deeds, indicating that YHWH's actions reveal the depth of the divine commitment to the implied audience.[101]

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[97] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 79.

[98] For translating an infinitive construct preceded by a *lamed* adverbially, see GKC, §114o.

[99] VanGemeren, "Spirit," 83. Ogden correctly notes a threefold affirmation of YHWH's character in this verse: i) YHWH is among the community; ii) YHWH is their God; and iii) there are no other gods who can challenge YHWH; Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 26.

[100] Ogden identifies texts in Isaiah that echo this theme, suggesting that YHWH's self-revelation through divine actions on behalf of his people is a prevalent theological theme (Isa 45:5–6, 22). Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 36.

[101] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 74–75; Dillard, "Joel," 292.

The text's modification of the formula is notable in its insertion of the declaration that YHWH is in the midst of Israel. This declaration has parallels in other prophetic books (Zeph 3:15; Hos 11:9b; Mic 3:11).[102] The rhetorical strategy of explicitly stating YHWH's presence in the midst of the community again reflects upon and reverses material from Joel 1:1–2:17. Joel 1:15–20 concludes with an unanswered cry to YHWH, indicating divine absence, while Joel 2:1–11 concludes by naming YHWH as the one leading the assault. The first thing that Joel 2:27 emphasizes that the community will now "know" is that the deity who was either absent or hostile is among them, promising restoration.

After the declaration of YHWH's presence Joel 2:27 continues with the divine recognition formula. Interestingly, Joel 2:27 places extra emphasis on the fact that it is the divine voice uttering these words through a double use of אֲנִי. It is the last word of the first clause, acting as the subject of the phrase בְּקֶרֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל. It is also the first word of the next clause, in which YHWH again identifies himself as "your God" (אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) and asserts there are no rivals. The second person plural suffix continues the trajectory introduced by the statement that YHWH is in the midst of Israel; YHWH's actions throughout this rhetorical unit restore the relationship between the deity and the covenant community. This is in keeping with the typical use of the divine recognition formula which usually follows a statement or prophetic declaration of YHWH's actions; through these acts, the implied audience has to grapple with the reality of YHWH's presence and power.[103]

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[102] The text uses "Israel" as technical term to refer to all of YHWH's people, now embodied in the implied audience whom the text constructs as those who dwell in Jerusalem and the surrounding land.
[103] Dillard, "Joel," 292.

Alongside its function in the divine recognition formula, the phrase "I am YHWH

your God" frequently asserts YHWH's claim to the implied audience. Significantly it

also commences both descriptions of the Decalogue (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), which is

relevant seeing how the following statement of YHWH's incomparability mirrors the

concerns of the first commandment (Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7).[104] The declaration in Joel 2:27

that there is no other (עוֹד וְאֵין) stresses the exclusive nature of the relationship between

YHWH and the implied audience. It also evokes images of YHWH's restorative power

being put into action in connection with the repeated use of this phrase in Isaiah (Isa 45:5,

6, 14, 18, 21, 22). The magnitude of YHWH's acts in Joel 2:18–27 highlights the

authority that YHWH claims and the loyalty that YHWH desires.

The text demonstrates the full range of YHWH's commitment to the implied

audience in the final clauses of Joel 2:26 and 2:27 which both declare that YHWH's

people will never again be ashamed (לְעוֹלָם עַמִּי יֵבֹשׁוּ וְלֹא־). These clauses are identical,

leading some to view the second occurrence of this particular line as dittography.[105] The

rhetorical effect, however, of placing these clauses in a passage that speaks so eloquently

about YHWH's actions on behalf of the community argues against dittography. Instead,

the use of repetition in Joel 2:26 and 2:27 recalls the repetition of the phrase אָכְלָה וְאֵשׁ

הַמִּדְבָּר נְאוֹת ("and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness") in Joel 1:19, 20. In

both cases, these phrases demarcate the conclusion of their respective rhetorical units,

summarizing salient features of the prior discourse.[106]

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[104] Joel's עוֹד וְאֵין ("there is not another") in 2:27 seems to echo the idea expressed by "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7). This phrase also appears in Isa 45:5, 6, 18 in conjunction with other descriptions of YHWH's great deeds that demonstrate his uniqueness and power.

[105] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 56. Wolff asserts the phrase is original in Joel 2:27 alone, while Barton hedges by declaring that this could be dittography, but that if it is, it produces a rhetorically pleasing effect; Barton, *Joel*, 90.

[106] Thompson, "Repetition," 107; cf. Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 50.

In Joel 2:26 and 2:27 the divine assertion that YHWH will not allow the

community to be shamed follows a liturgical expression of either YHWH's great deeds

(Joel 2:26) or YHWH's uniqueness and authority over his community (Joel 2:27).[107] The

text strengthens this sense of authority in the repeated clause by employing עַמִּי ("my

people"). This marks the total transition from Joel 2:11 where YHWH thunders at the

head of "his army" which he leads against those whom he now chooses to protect. In this

rhetorical unit YHWH is no longer the destroyer, but the saviour and protector of the

children of Zion. This final repeated summary statement in Joel 2:26 and 2:27 provides

the powerful answer to the rhetorical question "where is their God?" that ended the

previous unit (Joel 2:17). Ultimately, the promises of divine activity and restoration

found in this unit serve as unmistakeable signs that YHWH "their God" is among them

and will not let them fall into disrepute.

Summary

This unit is an important turning point since Joel 2:18–27 reverses the previous

descriptions of insect infestation, drought, invasion and terrifying cosmological

phenomena signalling that the judgment of YHWH would come against the covenant

community. Prinsloo eloquently states, "what was a mere hope in the previous pericope is

now realized, the 'perhaps' of 2:14 has been fulfilled; the prayer has been heard."[108] This

rhetorical unit also demonstrates the validity of the character credo ascribed to YHWH in

Joel 2:13. YHWH executes a "turn" back to the implied audience and definitively

demonstrates gracious and compassionate qualities. Effectively, Joel 2:18–27 constructs

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[107] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 159.
[108] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 76.

YHWH's response to the prophet's proposal for how the implied audience should respond in Joel 2:12–17 and indicates that YHWH's actions move the situation from devastation to restoration.

The text indicates the transition towards restoration by interacting with previous rhetorical units. It ties many of the restorative promises to specific deprivations described in Joel 1:1–2:17, including agricultural ruin, interrupted worship and fear of invasion. Joel 2:18–27 effectively "liquidates the lack" that dominates the imagery of the earlier rhetorical units.[109] Joel 2:18–27 also readdresses the concept of the community's honour and shame from Joel 1:11 and 2:17. The abundant offerings promised here will permit worship of YHWH to occur as prescribed, while also demonstrating that YHWH acts mightily on behalf of the implied audience which should free them from the implied mockery of foreign nations. YHWH expresses graciousness through mighty deeds that eliminate the invader, restore prosperity and relationship with the implied audience. In return, the text calls the community to respond by praising YHWH again and acknowledging YHWH's status as the one true God, active amongst the people.[110]

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The consideration of the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 2:18–27 is tied closely to that of the preceding rhetorical unit (Joel 2:12–17). On the level of the text itself, Joel 2:18–27 seemingly implies that the preceding unit was effective in provoking the desired response from the implied audience since it potentially answers the question "who

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[109] Deist, "Parallels." 74. The exacting specificity with which Joel 2:18–27 reverses the calamities of previous rhetorical units helps to inform Deist's perspective that this book constructs its images on a literary level only; there are no events in the "world behind the text" to which this text refers.
[110] Prinsloo. *Theology*, 79.

knows? He may turn and have pity" (Joel 2:14) in the affirmative. Joel 2:18–27 goes to great length to detail the many elements of the "pity" that YHWH will show to the community through actions that both remove foreign threat and look forward to the return of prosperity and security. Unfortunately, Joel 2:18–27 lacks an explicit description of the community responding appropriately to the prophetic call to return to YHWH found in Joel 2:12–17. One would expect such an element to be present in order to justify the inauguration of the reversal of the catastrophes from the previous sections of the book.[111] As previously noted, however, the text is also devoid of an explicit description of the people's sin that would create a cause and effect relationship governing these catastrophes. This perhaps makes fitting the ambiguity created by the absence of a definitive communal response.

Ultimately, we cannot know if the prophet is proclaiming this message of restoration in a textual world in which the community obeys the text's commands to turn back to YHWH. The implication for the reading audience, however, is that the community responded to the prior prophetic commands as directed, clearing the way for this picture of complete restoration. The break between Joel 2:17 and Joel 2:18 creates a "conceptual gap," that forces readers to enter the text and imagine what would prompt such a shift in tone.[112] The best way to bridge this gap is to accept the efficacy of the call to return in Joel 2:12–17 and to understand YHWH's actions in Joel 2:18–27 as demonstrations of YHWH's gracious and compassionate character.

Consideration of the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 2:18–27 also involves noting specially the text's construction of YHWH in the wake of how it portrays the deity in

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[111] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 147–48.
[112] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 163.

earlier rhetorical units. The text portrays YHWH as having a major role in this rhetorical unit since the only agency that can ameliorate the situation is that of YHWH who reverses the tidings of woe and proclaims a time of weal. This stands in stark contrast to the previous rhetorical unit since it turns on the text's ability to persuade its implied audience to act. YHWH is briefly active in Joel 2:12, calling on the people to "return to me," but then YHWH is essentially silent as the prophetic call to lament unfolds. YHWH is active in Joel 2:1–11 but the text shockingly declares that YHWH directs that activity against the covenant community, threatening them with the in-breaking of the day of YHWH. In such a milieu, the persuasive effect of Joel 2:18–27 is to restore YHWH to the expected position as the deity who protects and intervenes on behalf of the covenant community. Joel 2:18–27 thus highlights YHWH's capacity for unilateral action and YHWH's freedom to bring both judgment and blessing. The text's effectiveness in reversing its previous portrayals of YHWH is evident throughout the rhetorical unit. The initial *waw*-consecutive verbs in Joel 2:18 reorient the implied audience's perspective towards YHWH, which is reinforced through the detailed descriptions of restorative actions that culminate in the divine recognition formula in Joel 2:27.

In order to consider further the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 2:18–27, it is helpful to again leverage Patrick and Scult's "hermeneutics of affirmation," in which the interpreter admits the ability to respond to the experience of the text.[113] From this perspective, Joel 2:18–27 is a necessary response that restores the interpreter's equilibrium after the text's shocking portrayal of YHWH as the head of the terrifying invader in Joel 2:10–11. This portrayal calls into question the character of the deity who

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[113] Patrick and Scult, "Rhetoric and Ideology," 66–67.

claims to enter into covenant relationship with Israel. There is a certain incongruity between the declaration of YHWH thundering at the head of the invader and the text's adaptation of the character credo in Joel 2:12; how could the gracious and compassionate figure of YHWH come against the covenant community in such a frightening fashion? Joel 2:18–27, however, persuasively reaffirms the validity of the character credo from Exod 34:6–7. YHWH does not abandon the people but rather acts powerfully to demonstrate a gracious and compassionate character. Joel 2:18–27 also effectively repatriates the use of the character credo in Jonah 4:2.[114] Whereas the text of Jonah universalizes YHWH's compassionate character, the text of Joel demonstrates that YHWH's character continues to work for the benefit of the covenant community. Thus, Joel 2:18–27 is effective in re-establishing an understanding of a gracious and compassionate deity who intervenes on behalf of those with whom YHWH has entered covenant relationship.

Overall, the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 2:18–27 hinges on its ability to engage the interpreter in filling the narrative gap between Joel 2:17 and 2:18 and its efforts to re-establish YHWH as the deity described in the character credo found in Joel 2:13. The description of YHWH's actions is effective in persuading the interpreter to enter a textual world in which the community responds to the prophetic call of Joel 2:12–17, and where YHWH returns to the expected position as the deity who restores the covenant community. Whereas Joel 2:1–11 reflects the nadir of the text with its portrayal of YHWH as leader of the enemy, Joel 2:18–27 inaugurates YHWH's program of

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[114] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 202.

restoration that begins with the promise of reversing the calamities of the locust invasion. Further rhetorical units build on this foundation.

Conclusion

Joel 2:18–27 is a pivotal rhetorical unit in the development of the text's persuasive argumentation. It builds off the climactic rhetorical question that concludes Joel 2:17 and goes to great lengths to assert that YHWH will respond to that question positively. Joel 2:18–27 connects to previous rhetorical units when it portrays YHWH as a deity who acts to restore fully all that the implied audience lost in the devastation described in Joel 1:1–14, 1:15–20, and 2:1–11. Joel 2:18–27 brings YHWH's actions to the forefront, reversing YHWH's silence or hostility from previous rhetorical units. YHWH's explicit responses further help to fill in the conceptual gap between Joel 2:17 and 2:18, suggesting that the implied audience heeded the prophetic call and responded appropriately, setting the stage for YHWH's magnificent actions. This description of YHWH as the one who reverses calamity and restores is a powerful rhetorical tool for persuading audiences to trust in the prophet's call to cry out to YHWH amidst desperate circumstances.

Chapter Seven: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 3:1–5

Introduction

Joel 3:1–5 is the second of two locations in Joel at which there appears to be the

greatest disjunction.[1] From this point forward, images rooted in natural phenomena such

as the locust plague and the accompanying agrarian hardships fade into the background.

Instead the remainder of the book describes scenes of restoration through the outpouring

of YHWH's Spirit, salvation for Judah and judgment against foreign nations. There is,

however, significant continuity in imagery between Joel 3:1–5 and Joel 1:1–2:27. Joel

3:1–5 echoes Joel 2:1–11 through its reuse of cosmological imagery and specific

vocabulary that describes YHWH's appearance and reveals that YHWH leads the

unstoppable invading force that assaults Jerusalem.[2] Now, beginning with this unit, the

text describes great acts of YHWH that again shake the cosmos and reveal YHWH's

power over all creation. Joel 3:1–5 also relates to Joel 1:1–2:27 by expanding upon the

promise of YHWH's presence in Joel 2:27. The outpouring of YHWH's Spirit makes

manifest YHWH's presence among the implied audience.[3]

The persuasive potential of Joel 3:1–5 is revealed through these echoes of earlier

passages and through its emphasis on the power of YHWH's actions. Joel 3:1–5 uses the

detailed description of the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit and the concomitant trembling

of the cosmos to establish the necessity of calling upon the name of YHWH in the final

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[1] Barton, *Joel*, 93; Simkins *Yahweh's Activity*, 209. See also the earlier discussion of rhetorical units and the ways in which scholars divide the two proposed "halves" of Joel.

[2] See the list of shared vocabulary in Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 8. It includes: בוא יום יהוה ("the coming of the day of YHWH"), חשׁך ("darkness"), and פליטה ("escaped group").

[3] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 83.

verse. This response provides the potential of rescue from the day of YHWH, which now

promises security in Zion rather than a divinely-sanctioned assault as in Joel 2:1, 11.

Rhetorical Unit

An introductory formula וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן ("It will be after this") marks the aperture of

Joel 3:1–5.[4] While its subject matter moves further away from Joel 1:1–2:27, this

particular formula refers to the preceding unit in order to establish its foundation. It is

"after" (אַחֲרֵי) the events described in Joel 2:18–27 that the great cosmological shaking

unfolds in Joel 3:1–5 (cf. Job 3:1; Isa 1:26; Jer 34:11).[5] Essentially, Joel 3:1–5 moves

away from the promises of material restoration in Joel 2:18–27 and introduces a new

horizon of YHWH's powerful presence into the discourse.[6] The closure of this unit

occurs at Joel 3:5 and it is marked by the threefold repetition of the divine name in the

final verse. The repetition of a key word or phrase like this may signal that a rhetorical

unit is reaching its closure (cf. Hos 1:9, 2:3, 25).[7] The presence of another introductory

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[4] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 80–81; Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 7. Contrary to the consensus position, Wolff argues that the divine recognition formula in Joel 2:27 (וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי בְקֶרֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנִי) does not represent a conclusion; instead, it reflects a transition in a "two-stage self-disclosure formula" that continues through Joel 3:1–5; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 65. Barton, however, successfully points out difficulties with Wolff's arguments. He notes that Wolff's construction of a "two-stage self-disclosure formula" involves viewing Joel 2:27 as only accomplishing a "temporary reversal," which runs contrary to the sense of finality inherent in the assertion that "my people will never again be put to shame." Further, the formula that begins Joel 3:1 suggests the aperture of a new rhetorical unit; Barton, *Joel*, 90–91; cf. Van der Merwe et al. §44.4.1.

[5] See the discussion below under "Rhetorical Strategy" for an examination of the meaning of "after this," in the context of Joel 3:1–5.

[6] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 7. Kapelrud aptly suggests that Joel 3:1–5, "suits well in its place to mark the advance of the prophet's thought."

[7] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 50–51.Wendland illustrates the concept of repetition of key terms as signals of closure by appealing to the symbolic use of names in Hosea. He notes specifically the repetition of לֹא עַמִּי in Hos 1:9, the reoccurrence of עַמִּי and רֻחָמָה in Hos 2:3, and the repetition of לֹא רֻחָמָה and לֹא־עַמִּי in Hos 2:25. The use of symbolic names in Hos 1–2 may help to establish the validity of viewing the multiple repetitions in Joel 3:5 as a sign of closure for this rhetorical unit.

formula in Joel 4:1 (כִּי הִנֵּה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה וּבָעֵת הַהִיא) also confirms that Joel 3:5 concludes

this particular rhetorical unit.[8]

Within this short chapter there are three sub-units to consider. An inclusio using

YHWH's declaration of his intention to pour out the divine Spirit identifies Joel 3:1–2 as

the first sub-unit. Joel 3:3–4 continues the speech of YHWH and heightens the gravity of

the situation by reflecting upon the cosmological ramifications of the outpouring of the

Spirit. Joel 3:3–4 also reintroduces the day of YHWH while reimagining its orientation

towards Zion. Joel 3:5 concludes this chapter by reintroducing the prophet as the speaker

and referring to YHWH in the third person. Joel 3:5 describes the manner in which the

implied audience ought to respond in order to survive the day of YHWH.

Rhetorical Situation

The shift away from the locust plague and its aftermath demonstrates the

continuing development in the rhetorical situation that lies behind the text's persuasive

strategies. Within the world of the text, the original exigence of Joel 1:1–2:27 fades into

the background in Joel 3:1–4:21. The locust plague and the ensuing agricultural disasters

no longer hover over the text; instead, Joel 3:1–5 employs richly textured images that

point to a coming day of YHWH and its impact on both YHWH's covenant community

and the other nations. This significant change in exigence points to a development in the

rhetorical situation. Joel 3:1–5 pushes forward the "life-cycle" of the rhetorical situation

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[8] This study will consider the specific form and function of the introductory formula of Joel 4:1 in the following chapter.

since it focuses upon different issues in response to YHWH's promised salvation from

the locust plague.[9]

The shift in exigence is rooted in the imminence of the prophetic predictions.

Whereas Joel 1:1–2:27 reflects an imminent crisis and urgent need for response to deal

with the proximity of the fearful day of YHWH (Joel 1:15; 2:1), Joel 3:1–4:21 loses that

sense of immediacy and appears to orient itself towards an unspecified time in the

future.[10] The shift in exigence is based on the prophesied resolution to the crisis found at

the end of the previous rhetorical unit. YHWH promised prosperity and protection as

signs of his presence among his people. Since Joel 2:26–27 assures YHWH's presence

and protection, Joel 3:1–4:21 examines the ramifications of YHWH's presence for the

covenant community as well as for those who have stood in opposition. The text

constructs its implied audience in Joel 3:1–5 as one with a renewed relationship with

YHWH in the wake of the call to "turn" in Joel 2:12–17. Now that YHWH has shown

mercy in bringing a restoration of prosperity and security, the text strives to guide its

implied audience to learn how YHWH's presence among them will affect their final fate.

Joel 3:1–5 constructs its implied audience somewhat differently from preceding

rhetorical units. The scope of the implied audience remains the same since the text tries to

frame itself so that it addresses the whole of the Judahite community.[11] In this rhetorical

unit, the totality of the implied audience falls under the category of כָּל־בָּשָׂר ("all flesh"),

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[9] Hauser, *Introduction*, 60–62.

[10] Barton, *Joel*, 29. This study will address the question of the temporal orientation of this passage in detail in the section on "Rhetorical Strategy" below.

[11] See the "elders" and "dwellers in the land" merismus in Joel 1:2 and the appeal to everyone including priests, elders, children, and recently married people to gather to cry out to YHWH in Joel 2:16–17.

which it then sub-divides according to age, gender, and social standing.[12] The key feature

that this construction of the implied audience emphasizes is that all of these different sub-

groups have the same access to the divine Spirit. YHWH has the capacity to pour out the

divine Spirit upon both "your sons," and "your daughters," along with "your elders,"

"your young men," and even male and female servants. The range of YHWH's gift of the

divine Spirit helps to identify the contours of an implied audience whose sub-groups have

equal access to YHWH's Spirit.

The text revisits the implied audience in Joel 3:5 when it offers the hope of

survival to those who call on the name of YHWH (כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה). This restricts

the implied audience to those who would make this call, suggesting the outpouring of the

Spirit in Joel 3:1–2 requires a declaration of exclusive loyalty to YHWH in response.[13]

Joel 3:5 further refers to an escaped group (פְּלֵיטָה), and survivors (שְׂרִידִים) whom YHWH

calls. These two terms occur in parallel in other places in the Old Testament, suggesting

that שְׂרִידִים is probably a further explanation of פְּלֵיטָה (cf. Jer 42:17; 44:14; Obad 14).[14]

The term פְּלֵיטָה is especially significant since it points to the idea of those who survive a

time of ordeal.[15] The ordeal can reflect punishment for the audiences' own sins (Isa 4:2–

3; 10:20–23; Ezek 14:22), or other difficult circumstances such as foreign invasion (Isa

37:31–32). In Joel 3:1–5, the idea of survivors seems to define the implied audience as

those who escape the threats mentioned in Joel 1:1–2:17 and find refuge in the wake of

YHWH's cosmos-rending actions. When the implied audience calls on the name of

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[12] See the discussion below in the rhetorical strategy section that deals with the intended scope of כָּל־בָּשָׂר in
Joel 3:1. Despite the universalizing resonances of this phrase, there are compelling arguments for
restricting it to the Judahite community in this particular passage.
[13] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 217; Hubbard, *Joel*, 76; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 169.
[14] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 68–69.
[15] Hasel, "פָּלַט,"563.

YHWH, it activates the promise of escape from the day of YHWH and guarantees the implied audience's continued existence.

Joel 3:5 also establishes the geographical location of the rhetorical situation. YHWH offers the possibility of rescue on Mount Zion and Jerusalem. This is the first mention of Jerusalem in Joel, but the book does previously refer to Zion (Joel 2:1, 15, 23). This mention of Zion reflects the advancement of the rhetorical situation since the text portrays it as an abode of security whereas previously the invading army encountered little difficulty in overrunning Zion (Joel 2:1–11). This use of Zion also offers further indication of the efficacy of the call to a Zion-based cultic response in Joel 2:15. The call to cry out to YHWH for deliverance results in the provision of security in Zion.[16]

Rhetorical Strategy

Joel 3:1–2: YHWH Pours Out the Divine Spirit

Joel 3:1–2 consists of a first person declaration of YHWH's intention to pour out the divine Spirit upon a broad range of recipients. This coincides with the description of YHWH's actions to provide security and material restoration in Joel 2:18–27. The focus on YHWH's actions suggests that these verses adopt an epideictic approach, emphasizing YHWH's commitment to the implied audience.[17] These verses continue to build upon YHWH's promise that the implied audience will never again be shamed (Joel 2:27) and describe further actions of YHWH on their behalf. YHWH's actions articulated in Joel

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[16] Hoppe, *Holy City*, 137.

[17] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 50. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca assert that the function of epideictic rhetoric is to increase the audience's adherence to shared values, which should strengthen their disposition to act in the way that the rhetor desires. In Joel 3:1–5, focusing on YHWH's commitment to the implied audience may increase the probability that they will act to become those who "call on the name of YHWH" in the final verse.

3:1–2 eventually invite the implied audience to consider an appropriate response, which the text provides in Joel 3:5.

As mentioned above, the formula וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן ("It will be after this") in Joel 3:1 opens this rhetorical unit. Joel 3:1 is the only example in the Old Testament of the phrase אַחֲרֵי־כֵן occurring in conjunction with the verb הָיָה. There is some debate concerning the relationship that this phrase creates between Joel 3:1–5 and Joel 2:18–27. One argument is that the phrase אַחֲרֵי־כֵן refers to a logical transition, functioning as a connective "when" or "and."[18] VanGemeren sees examples of this logical connectivity in prophetic literature in Isa 1:26; Jer 21:7; 31:33 (cf. also Judg 16:4; 1 Sam 24:6; 2 Sam 2:1; 8:1; 2 Kgs 6:24; 2 Chr 24:4).[19] In these cases the events that אַחֲרֵי־כֵן introduces may occur contemporaneously with those described in the preceding clauses. Following VanGemeren, Simkins argues that one should interpret the events of Joel 3:1–5 as happening at the same time as Joel 2:18–27.[20] The outpouring of the divine Spirit that informs the argument of this unit thus directly and immediately supplements the restoration of material blessing and renewed relationship with YHWH from Joel 2:18–27. In this way, the description of YHWH's restorative acts continues into this unit, with the outpouring of the divine Spirit directly enhancing the material restoration described in Joel 2:18–27.

[18] VanGemeren, "Spirit," 85.
[19] VanGemeren, "Spirit," 84–87. For example, in Isa 1:26 VanGemeren looks at the promised restoration of judges and counsellors which will be followed "after this" (אַחֲרֵי־כֵן), by a declaration of the people's righteousness. He suggests that the temporal sequence is secondary to the logical correlation between the people's restoration and their renewed character.
[20] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 211. Simkins bases his argument, however, on his understanding of Joel 2:18–27 as an epexegetical interpretation of Joel 2:12–17. See the discussion in the rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:18–27 for an analysis of why this is not the most appropriate understanding of the relationship between 2:12–17 and 2:18–27.

The arguments for logical connectivity are cogent, but there are also strong

reasons to understand וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן as a sequential indicator. In this understanding, the

events mentioned in Joel 3:1–5 follow the restoration of Joel 2:18–27 at a future time.[21]

The phrase אַחֲרֵי־כֵן explicitly signifies temporal sequence on numerous occasions which

lends credence to this perspective (2 Chr 20:35; Jer 16:16; 34:11).[22] Another argument

for temporal succession is the syntactic parallel between this phrase and the introduction

found in Isa 2:2 (cf. Mic 4:1). That verse reads וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים which commentators

typically take to indicate temporal progression.[23] This expression is introduced by וְהָיָה

and contains a form of אַחֲרִי, which makes it markedly similar to the phrase that

commences Joel 3:1. If וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים indicates future time, it supports the temporal

understanding of וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן in Joel 3:1–5.[24] The phrase וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי in Jer 12:15 provides

helpful evidence since it introduces a divine promise of further restoration following

judgment. These parallels indicate the plausibility of a temporal understanding of וְהָיָה

אַחֲרֵי־כֵן.

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[21] See for example Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 58–59; Ahlström, *Joel*, 133; Finley, *Joel*, 77; Allen, *Joel*, 97–98. Allen nicely summarizes the point of view of temporal succession, stating, "The bestowal of material blessing…is but the first stage. Further, deeper gifts of God's grace were in store, to be dispensed at a subsequent stage."

[22] VanGemeren, "Spirit," 84; Dillard, "Joel," 294. Finley locates numerous examples where וְהָיָה indicates "new predictions" in prophetic books and suggests that the blessings described in Joel 3:1–5 follow the restoration from the ravages of the locust plague (Isa 7:21; Jer 17:14; Ezek 38:10; Hos 1:5; Amos 8:9); Finley, *Joel*, 71. This argument, however, cannot be held too strongly since there is a counterexample even within this rhetorical unit. Joel 3:5 also begins with וְהָיָה and, while it shifts focus from YHWH to those whom YHWH's actions impact, the temporal framework remains the same as the rest of the rhetorical unit since it introduces the appropriate response to the preceding description of the day of YHWH.

[23] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 164. Blenkinshopp understands the Isaianic temporal formula to indicate some time in the future; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 190; cf. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 23–34; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 25–26. Shaw also preserves the futuristic outlook of Mic 4:1, translating the phrase, "In the days to come." Shaw, *Speeches*, 98.

[24] Concerning the issue of temporal succession in the history of reception, Dillard notes that temporal succession is clearly in view when Acts 2:17 cites Joel 3:1–5 since it introduces the prophecy with ἐν ταις ἐσχαταις ἡμεραις ("in the last days"), which differs from the LXX's μετα ταυτα ("after this"); Dillard, "Joel," 294.

The best approach is to nuance the two understandings of וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן so they are

not set in direct opposition. In this case, the outpouring of the Spirit and the heavenly

shaking that occurs in Joel 3:1–5 is "subsequent to, as well as consequent upon, the

foregoing blessings."[25] YHWH's guarantee of material restoration in Joel 2:18–27 thus

lays the foundation for spiritual renewal to occur when YHWH so chooses. Although

there remains some ambiguity, the arguments for maintaining that Joel 3:1–5 follows in

some degree of temporal succession to Joel 2:18–27 are more convincing than the

attempts to argue for primarily logical succession or explicative commentary. Spiritual

restoration is the logical counterpart to the material blessings found in Joel 2:18–27, but

אַחֲרֵי־כֵן also seems to indicate a different temporal framework.

The act that YHWH performs "after this" is to pour out the divine Spirit (אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ

אֶת־רוּחִי). The fact YHWH commences the action of this rhetorical unit is in keeping with

the theme of divine agency that comes to the forefront in Joel 2:18–27. In this rhetorical

unit, YHWH is the principal actor and the one who sets the parameters for the responses

attributed to the implied audience. This unit will make evident YHWH's authority over

both the created order and those people who dwell in it since YHWH can give people the

divine Spirit and secure deliverance for those who call on the name of YHWH, while also

dramatically affecting the activities of heavenly bodies.

The declaration that YHWH will pour out the divine Spirit in Joel 3:1 also occurs

in the final phrase of Joel 3:2. This creates an inclusio that distinguishes Joel 3:1–2 as a

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[25] De Vries, *Old Revelation*, 87. De Vries asserts that וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן is a redactional expansion, set in poetic anacrusis with the rest of Joel 3:1–5. Unfortunately, he provides no evidence to support this redactional claim. Rhetorically, this phrase is valuable in this location for providing a connection to the previous rhetorical unit, indicating that the outpouring of the divine Spirit proceeds from the promise of divine presence in Zion; cf. Sweeney, *Twelve*, 173.

sub-unit within this chapter.[26] This repetition emphasizes the tremendous extent of

YHWH's promised gift of spiritual blessing.[27] Joel 3:1–2 indicates that those who receive

YHWH's Spirit engage in prophetic activities such as prophesying (וְנִבְּאוּ), dreaming

dreams (חֲלֹמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוּן), and seeing visions (חֶזְיֹנוֹת יִרְאוּ). The text considers all of these

activities to be valid manifestations of YHWH's Spirit.[28] This is consistent with other

passages that describe dreams and visions as legitimate expressions of divine

intermediation (cf. Gen 28:12–17; 37:5–11; 40:8–23; 41:14–27; 1 Sam 28:6; Hos 12:11;

Amos 7:1–8).[29] Notably, Num 12:6–8 establishes the validity of dreams and visions as

forms through which YHWH reveals himself to prophets, even as it elevates Moses'

direct access to YHWH.

While affirming the positive portrayal of all three prophetic activities, one can

also make note of passages that negatively characterize claims of divinely-inspired

dreams (Jer 23:25–26; 27:9; 29:8; Zech 10:2).[30] This negative characterization, however,

is directed at the content of the supposed prophetic communication, rather than at the

form of revelation itself.[31] Instead, this text synonymously employs three different verbs

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[26] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 164.

[27] Thompson, "Repetition," 103; Marcus, "Doublets," 61.

[28] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 165. The classic study on the different types of interaction with the numinous in ancient Israel is that of Robert R. Wilson who looks at the nuances that Old Testament texts attach to prophesying, dreaming, seeing visions, fortune-telling and divination. Interestingly, he notes a concern to preserve prophets as the only valid intermediaries. The outpouring of the divine Spirit in Joel, however, suggests that intermediation is a gift that YHWH intends to spread throughout the community; Wilson, *Prophecy*, 22–28, 241–51. Grabbe comments on the terminology and characteristics of prophetic activity. He emphasizes the lack of clear distinctions between different titles expressing divine intermediation; Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets*, 107–18.

[29] Barton, *Joel*, 95.

[30] Coggins, *Joel*, 50–51. Coggins highlights the contrast that Jer 23 constructs between the dreamer and the one who actually possesses the word of YHWH. However, the idea of divine communication through dreams is not always condemned. When Saul inquires of YHWH, the text claims that YHWH did not respond either through dreams or through prophets (1 Sam 28:6, 15). This expresses the validity of dreams as a form of divine communication.

[31] Allen, *Joel*, 99; Overholt, *Threat*, 66–68.

that denote different manifestations of YHWH's Spirit.[32] Essentially, the range of

recipients and the variety of intermediation highlight the magnitude of YHWH's

outpouring of the divine Spirit.

The concept of YHWH pouring out his Spirit is an indicator of great divine

favour. The unmistakeable manifestations of YHWH's presence in these verses are

hopeful signs for the implied audience in the wake of the lengthy litany of difficult

circumstances that dominate Joel 1:1–2:17. Ezekiel 39:29 provides the closest prophetic

parallel, declaring that YHWH will pour out the divine Spirit on the house of Israel as a

sign that YHWH will defeat their enemies and guarantee their security.[33] Other

references to YHWH pouring out the divine Spirit look towards an idyllic future in Isa

32:15, promise blessings for Judah's descendants in Isa 44:3 and reaffirm the relationship

between YHWH and the covenant community in Zech 12:10 (cf. Prov 1:23; Isa 59:21).[34]

When YHWH pours out the Spirit, YHWH makes manifest the divine presence among its

recipients.[35] This continues the trajectory of Joel 2:18–27 where YHWH acts on behalf of

the implied audience.

Another way of demonstrating the magnitude of YHWH's blessing is to contrast

this passage with others that view the lack of intermediation as a sign of divine

displeasure. First Samuel 3:1 claims that the word of YHWH was rare and that there were

not many visions. While this verse may not refer specifically to YHWH's Spirit, the

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[32] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 166.

[33] Strazicich, *Joel's Use* of Scripture, 208. See the discussion below for analysis of the difference between Joel's claim that YHWH will pour the divine Spirit on "all flesh," and Ezekiel's claim that the recipients of the divine Spirit are the "house of Israel."

[34] The two passages in Isaiah employ different verbs for "pouring out" than Ezek 39:29; Joel 3:1, 2 and Zech 12:10 which all use שָׁפַךְ. Isaiah 32:15 uses עָרָה, while Isa 44:3 employs יָצַק. These verbs appear to be synonymous and their shared use of YHWH's Spirit as the grammatical object makes it possible to suggest that these passages are discussing a similar phenomenon.

[35] Boda, *Haggai*, 485.

association of the word of YHWH with visions suggests that it refers to forms of

prophetic intermediation like those discussed in Joel 3:1. The statement in 1 Sam 3:1

follows a prophecy against Eli's house that decries the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of

Israel's leadership (1 Sam 2:27–36). The castigation for disobedience lays the

groundwork for the disappearance of prophetic intermediation. In the same vein, one of

the punishments for Israel's disobedience that Amos articulates is a famine of hearing the

word of YHWH (Amos 8:11–12; cf. Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26; Mic 3:6–7), which reflects a

cessation of prophetic activity.[36] This creates tremendous desperation among the

community since their search will be fruitless.[37] The abundant outpouring of YHWH's

Spirit in Joel 3:1–5 stands in stark contrast to these signs of divine displeasure; whereas

the prophetically proclaimed punishment for disobedience is the removal of prophetic

intermediation, Joel declares that YHWH will pour out the divine Spirit which manifests

itself through intermediating activities.

Another important element of the rhetorical strategy of Joel 3:1–2 occurs in the

interplay and reuse of previous rhetorical units. The description of spiritual restoration

here mirrors Joel 2:18–27's extended guarantees of physical and material restoration

from the ravages of the locust plague. In Joel 2:18–27, YHWH promises to restore

prosperity as a sign of the divine presence among the Judahite community (Joel 2:26–27).

Joel 3:1–5 presents further proof of YHWH's presence in the form of a powerful

outpouring of the divine Spirit. Further, the spiritual restoration found in Joel 3:1–5

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[36] Paul, *Amos*, 265.

[37] Interestingly, there is similar imagery at work in both Israel's desperate search for the prophetic word in Amos 8:12 and the destruction of the invading locust army in Joel 2:20. Both passages employ geographical merismus in order to stress totality of the absence of either the prophetic word (Amos) or the invading army (Joel). See Paul, *Amos*, 266–67.

reflects a distinct development in the situation articulated in Joel 1:1–2:17. In those

rhetorical units the text indicates that the relationship between YHWH and the people is

in jeopardy since the sacrificial system is in shambles (Joel 1:9, 13). Further, the

prophet's cry to YHWH (Joel 1:19–20) does not lead to rescue, but rather YHWH's

response is to marshal an army for an assault on Zion (Joel 2:1–11). Essentially, Joel 3:1–

5 restores the broken spiritual relationship which corresponds to the restoration of

physical security in Joel 2:18–27.[38] Not only will YHWH satisfy the people's needs for

sustenance and security, YHWH will provide continued prophetic intermediation through

the presence of the divine Spirit.

The extent of the recipients of YHWH's Spirit in this passage is a matter of some

dispute. Joel 3:1 states that YHWH will pour out his Spirit upon "all flesh" (כָּל־בָּשָׂר).

This is typically a universalizing term in the Old Testament, referring to all people

without ethnic or geographical restrictions (Deut 5:26; Job 12:10; Isa 49:26; 66:16). In

some cases, the scope of this phrase even extends beyond humanity to reference all living

beings (Gen 6:12, 13; 7:21; Num 18:15). Consequently, at first glance it appears that the

text is declaring that YHWH will pour out the divine Spirit beyond the boundaries of

Israel or Judah.[39]

The majority of interpreters, however, claim that the concept of "all flesh" here

only refers to a democratization of YHWH's Spirit within the Judahite community.[40] This

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[38] Deist, "Parallels," 71. Deist helpfully points to Isa 55 as another passage where spiritual restoration occurs alongside physical restoration as a sign of YHWH's favour.

[39] See especially Kaiser, "Promise," 119. It is interesting to note Peter's citation of Joel 3:1–5 in the Pentecost sermon of Acts 2:14–36. The outpouring of the Spirit that preceded that sermon appears to have taken place among the Apostles and their Jewish audience at that time (cf. Acts 2:5–21), but it is not long afterwards that Peter witnesses an unequivocal gifting of the Spirit to Gentiles (cf. Acts 10:44–48). For a nuanced study of the relationship between Joel 3:1–5 and its reuse in Acts 2, see Treier, "Fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32," 13–26.

[40] Dillard, "Joel," 295; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 165; Allen, *Joel*, 98; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 67; Hubbard, *Joel*, 73.

is an argument that has to be made from the surrounding context since this would reflect

a rare occasion on which כָּל־בָּשָׂר occurs in the Old Testament with a restrictive national

sense (cf. Jer 12:12).[41] Evidence for this restrictive interpretation derives from the

occurrence of the second person pronominal suffixes on the groups who receive

YHWH's Spirit in the rest of 3:1–2; for example, "your sons" (בְּנֵיכֶם) and "your

daughters" (וּבְנוֹתֵיכֶם) receive this gift.[42] The referent of the second person pronominal

suffixes is then probably the prophet's implied audience who are the members of

YHWH's covenant community.[43]

When considering the parallel between this verse and the declaration of Ezek

39:29 that YHWH will pour out the divine Spirit on the "house of Israel," Strazicich

helpfully suggests that the purpose of the כָּל־בָּשָׂר is to emphasize that really, truly, all

members of the community will receive the gift of the Spirit.[44] This includes those

members who may not be ethnically Judahite.[45] Joel 3:5 also articulates a difference in

fate between those who call on the name of YHWH and those who do not, which

indicates that there are criteria that have to be met in order to receive this outpouring of

YHWH's Spirit.[46] This provides further evidence for a restriction of "all flesh." Thus,

even though this verse extends the range of those who can receive YHWH's Spirit, the

text appears to restrict it according to ethnic and religious boundaries.

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[41] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 209. Jeremiah 12:12 occurs in the context of YHWH pronouncing judgment against Judah. In this instance, "all flesh" seems to refer to the totality of the devastation that YHWH will bring against this community.

[42] Dillard, "Joel," 295.

[43] This study will return to the discussion of the scope of the implied audience in Joel 4, where the text directly addresses foreign nations and summons them to judgment.

[44] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 210.

[45] See below for a further explication of the idea of including non-Judahite servants in the broader context of the covenant community.

[46] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 209. Strazicich asserts "if one is to assume a universalistic interpretation of כָּל־בָּשָׂר in 3:1, then one would also assume that the nations would appear in a salvific context in 3:5."

Within these boundaries, the broad swathe of social sub-groups that receive

YHWH's Spirit display the immensity of this outpouring. Following the declaration that

YHWH's Spirit will come upon "all flesh," Joel 3:1–2 details the particulars of that

category. Joel 3:1 accomplishes this through a twofold usage of merismus. The first

indicates that the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit will occur irrespective of gender, since it

will fall upon both sons and daughters (בְּנֵיכֶם וּבְנוֹתֵיכֶם). The second merismus is

generational and it indicates that YHWH's Spirit will affect people of all ages, from

elders (זִקְנֵיכֶם) to youths (בַּחוּרֵיכֶם).[47] This verse quite vividly demonstrates the freedom of

YHWH's gift of the divine Spirit to come upon whomever YHWH chooses; there is no

preference in gender or generation (cf. Mal 3:24).

Joel 3:2 then extends the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit further by stating that it

will affect male and female servants (עַל־הָעֲבָדִים וְעַל־הַשְּׁפָחוֹת), thus including the whole

gamut of social strata, while continuing the theme of access for both genders. The

emphatic adverb וְגַם introduces this clause, highlighting the significance of including this

group among those who receive YHWH's Spirit.[48] Even though these servants could be

foreigners, they are included as "marginal members" of the בֵּית אָב kinship structure

(Deut 5:12–15; 16:11, 14).[49] This identifies them as part of the religious community

which allows them to receive the gift (Deut 5:14; 12:12; 16:11).[50] Ultimately, the purpose

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[47] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 81. This is a similar generational merismus that the text employed in the summons to cry out to YHWH in Joel 2:16. Joel 2:16 calls everyone from "elders" (זקנים) and "children" (עוללים), while Joel 3:2 uses a different term (בחוריכם) for young people. The term בַּחוּרֵיכָ probably refers to young adults in their prime, so it still stands in contrast from the mention of elders in the previous clause (cf. Deut 32:25; Ps 148:12).

[48] Waltke and O'Connor §34.3.4c–d.

[49] Perdue et al., *Families*, 175; Bendor, *Social Structure*, 230–32.

[50] Allen, *Joel*, 99. The inclusion of foreigners within the category of slaves may help to explain why the text drops the pronominal suffixes in this final clause. If the text referred to "your male servants," and "your female servants," its meaning could have been restricted to fellow Judahite slaves. Employing these terms without suffixes draws in the broadest possible range of people who could be said to be part of YHWH's community. See Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 211–12.

of Joel 3:1–2 is to explain the full scope of "all flesh" who can receive YHWH's gift. The

text vividly demonstrates through the mention of these sub-groups that everyone within

the implied audience has equal access to the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit.

This reference to the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit alludes to another description

of prophetic gifts in Israel's traditions. Joel 3:1–2 references Moses' desire for relief that

prompts YHWH to endow seventy elders with the divine Spirit in Num 11:10–30.[51]

These elders gather around the Tent of Meeting and begin to prophesy as a sign of the

presence of YHWH's Spirit (Num 11:25). Significantly, two of the chosen elders named

Eldad and Medad, who were not present in the Tent of Meeting, begin to prophesy

elsewhere in the camp which prompts Joshua to react with consternation at the potential

threat to Moses' authority. Moses' response to Joshua expresses a desire that YHWH's

Spirit would come upon all of YHWH's people so that they would prophesy since this

would reflect a substantial outpouring of God's blessing (Num 11:29).

Therefore, one element of the rhetorical strategy of Joel 3:1–2 is to reflect on

Num 11 and indicate that YHWH will answer this prayer of Moses as part of YHWH's

restorative actions.[52] Essentially, in the wake of the trials and torments experienced in the

first half of the book, Joel 3:1–2 draws attention back into the religious traditions of the

community and taps into the desire expressed by one of its seminal figures for a greater

manifestation of YHWH's Spirit. Such a manifestation would be a clear sign of YHWH's

care, concern, and presence.

In summary, the intention of Joel 3:1–2 is to indicate overwhelmingly that

YHWH offers spiritual restoration that mirrors the material restoration of Joel 2:18–27, in

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[51] Dillard, "Joel," 294.
[52] Dillard, "Joel," 294.

the wake of the text's appeal to YHWH in Joel 2:12–17. The text achieves this goal by

first issuing a generic statement about the outpouring of the Spirit, followed by an

exhaustive description of who receives this gift of YHWH. The list of sub-groups

emphasizes the range of YHWH's gift since it covers categories including gender, age,

and social standing. This attention to detail is likely an effective strategy in persuading

the implied audience that YHWH's gift pertains to them. It roots the promise of this gift

in scriptural traditions that indicate the desirability of a powerful outpouring of the Spirit.

The text does not offer the opportunity for the implied audience to respond in these

verses, but it reveals the proper response in Joel 3:5.

Joel 3:3–4: Signs of the Day of YHWH

The remainder of Joel 3:1–5 considers the impact of the outpouring of YHWH's

Spirit. Joel 3:3–4 continues to speak in the first person (וְנָתַתִּי), with YHWH declaring

what will occur in the wake of the Spirit's outpouring. The speaker is harder to identify in

Joel 3:4 since it contains a niphal verb (יֵהָפֵךְ) and refers to the day of YHWH in the third

person. It is probable, however, that the voice of YHWH continues in this verse since

Joel 3:4 seems to continue the list of cosmological phenomena that responds to YHWH's

actions in Joel 3:3. Further, the reference to the day of YHWH does not necessitate a new

speaker since it is a fixed, technical expression (cf. Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Mal 3:23).[53]

Joel 3:3–4 continues the epideictic approach of describing the authority that

YHWH possesses over the cosmos. Joel 3:3–4 discusses powerful signs of YHWH's

actions and is especially notable for explicitly re-invoking the day of YHWH in the final

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[53] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 171.

clause of 3:4. The location of this reference is significant considering the emphasis on

YHWH's action created by the dual references to "my Spirit" in 3:1–2. YHWH's actions

in this unit, even though they affect the entire cosmos, signify positive repercussions for

the community with the promised outpouring of the divine Spirit underlying YHWH's

commitment. The positive outlook that Joel 3:1–2 establishes is the preface for this

description of the day of YHWH.

This use of the day of YHWH in Joel 3:4 is striking because of the power of the

imagery that it invokes, as well as the way it echoes previous references to the day of

YHWH. Joel 3:3 states that YHWH will display "signs" (מוֹפְתִים) in heaven and on earth

which include blood, fire, and columns of cloud. The term מוֹפְתִים is significant,

suggesting that the following phenomena point towards a powerful divine intervention.[54]

YHWH is the agent who causes these signs which gives this verse a theophanic flavour

(cf. Exod 19:18; Ps 18:9).[55] The description of these acts of YHWH also draws on the

traditions of the Exodus plagues through which YHWH rescued Israel from Egypt (cf.

Exod 4:23; 7:3, 9; 11:9).[56] The plagues that YHWH unleashed against Egypt are

examples of מוֹפְתִים par excellence.[57] Alluding to the Exodus in Joel 3:1–5 further

foreshadows the concerns of Joel 4:1–20 which largely describes the removal of foreign

threat (including Egypt in Joel 4:19) and the preservation of Jerusalem.[58]

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[54] Barton, Joel, 97; Allen, Joel, 100; Crenshaw, Joel, 167.

[55] Allen, Joel, 101; Leung, "Intertextual," 179–81.

[56] See for example, Bourke, "Jour," 33; Allen, Joel, 101; Bergler, Joel als Schriftinterpret, 268–73; Strazicich, Joel's Use of Scripture, 213. Bergler connects the reference to מופתים with the Exodus plagues, noting specifically the plague of blood and the plague of darkness that Joel 3:3 seems to activate.

[57] See Wagner, "מופת," 174–81. Wagner notes that over nineteen of the thirty-six examples of this word in the Old Testament occur in contexts directly or indirectly related to the Exodus event and the surrounding plagues. Consequently, when Joel employs this word to describe the harbingers of the day of YHWH, it recalls the signs that YHWH employed to liberate Israel from Egypt.

[58] Strazicich, Joel's Use of Scripture, 213, argues that "the resignification of Yahweh's great power, exerted for the purpose of freeing the Israelites from the power of Egyptians, is now recontextualized into Yahweh freeing the Judeans from the oppression of foreign powers."

The sequence of the signs moves towards greater cosmological impact. The first

three signs are blood, fire, and pillars of smoke which seem to reflect various plagues of

the Exodus (Exod 7:14–24; 9:22–23).[59] YHWH's actions in Joel 3:3 are also drawn from

images of the day of YHWH in Joel 2:1–2a that also uses the spectre of a darkened cloud

preceding the description of the locust army overrunning the sanctuary of Zion. Further,

in both Joel 3:3–4 and 2:1–11, the coming of this day dramatically affects the heavenly

luminaries, which carries foreboding overtones. The description is slightly different since

Joel 2:10 points to the darkening of both the sun and the moon while 3:4 points to the

darkening of the sun and the moon adopting a bloody hue.[60] This recalls the Exodus

plague of darkness, which was the final plague prior to the descent of the angel of

YHWH against the Egyptians (cf. Exod 10:21).[61] The images of darkening heavenly

luminaries have a similar impact; they denote the final portent announcing the imminence

of the day of YHWH.

The parallel with the previous description of the day of YHWH continues in the

final line of Joel 3:4. It describes the day using the attributive adjectives הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא

("great and terrible") that further link this reference to the day of YHWH back to Joel

2:11 which employs the same vocabulary. Although the eventual targets of the day of

YHWH differ, this succinct summary reveals the immensity of the power and authority

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[59] Bourke, "Jour." 26–27. Bourke argues that the strategy that Joel employs is to use evidence of YHWH's deliverance from historical enemies to demonstrate YHWH's ability to deliver the community from the peril described in Joel 1:1–2:17. Interestingly. Sweeney proposes that the triad of "blood, fire, and columns of cloud" also invoke images of sacrifice at the altar. The slain animal bleeds and then is set on fire. resulting in a thick column of smoke over the altar; Sweeney, *Twelve*, 175. It is difficult, however, to argue that sacrifice is in view in the manifestation of YHWH's power in Joel 3:3–4.

[60] Stephenson argues that solar and lunar eclipses were the impetus behind this reference and he even identifies solar eclipses from 357 and 336 as potential incidents from which the prophet drew; Stephenson, "Date," 224–29. This assertion cannot conclusively be proved. however. and it is more useful to focus on the rhetorical function of drawing on images from the realm of cosmic activity.

[61] Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret.* 272; Stuart. *Hosea—Jonah.* 261.

that YHWH exerts on this day.[62] The final description firmly establishes YHWH's control over the cosmos.

In summary, the rhetorical strategy of Joel 3:3–4 builds upon the outpouring of the divine Spirit and heightens the significance of the situation. YHWH's actions invoke powerful signs of divine presence as the cosmos trembles alongside the gift of the divine Spirit.[63] The strategy of re-invoking the description of the day of YHWH found in Joel 2:10–11 effectively reminds the implied audience of the fearful nature of this day since these signs occur before (לִפְנֵי) the day of YHWH.[64] The dimming of the heavenly bodies and the signs of blood, fire, and smoke are only portents announcing the full manifestation of the day of YHWH. Consequently, the text establishes a progression from the outpouring of the Spirit to the shaking of the cosmos. The gift of the Spirit is a sign of great blessing while the portents of the day of YHWH remind the implied audience of the full scope of YHWH's power. The description of the portents of the day of YHWH should invoke a sense of urgency among the implied audience to find sanctuary. This strengthens the promise of rescue through calling on the name of YHWH in Joel 3:5.

Joel 3:5: Security in Zion

Following the description of cosmos-rending signs, Joel 3:5 articulates the essential distinction between the presentations of the day of YHWH in this rhetorical unit and Joel 2:1–11. Joel 3:5 claims that there is a way for the implied audience to escape its wrath. This verse stands slightly distinct from Joel 3:3–4 since the grammatical voice

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[62] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 171.
[63] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 217.
[64] Coggins, *Joel*, 52.

shifts from first to third person. Instead this verse offers commentary on the divine

speech of Joel 3:1–4 and offers a means of escaping its inherent power.[65] This means of

response is implicit since the text remains in the indicative mood. However, the claim

that those who call upon the name of YHWH will be saved provides the implied audience

with a reason to cry out to YHWH in the wake of the portents announcing the day of

YHWH.

The first statement of Joel 3:5 opens the window of refuge from the terrifying

cosmological phenomena. This occurs in the statement that everyone who calls on the

name of YHWH (כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה) will find salvation. Similar to Joel 3:1, the

interpretation of the "all" is debated. Since the reference to "all flesh" (כָּל־בָּשָׂר) upon

whom YHWH poured out his Spirit in Joel 3:1 probably has ethnic restrictions, it is

important to consider the extent of those who could call on the name of YHWH. The

phrase יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה helps to define the meaning of כֹּל אֲשֶׁר.[66] The concept of "calling on

the name of YHWH," typically denotes worship which would identify those who respond

in this way as adherents of YHWH (cf. Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25 Exod 33:19; 34:5; 1

Kgs 18:24; Isa 12:4; Zeph 3:9; Zech 13:9).[67] Only those who call on the name YHWH

will escape the portents of the previous verses.[68] This requirement coincides with the

[65] Prinsloo, Theology, 83.
[66] Crenshaw, Joel, 169.
[67] Genesis 4:26 is an exception since it declares that people began to call on the name of YHWH, but does not provide an exclusive covenantal context. This verse, however, does not necessarily universalize the concept of calling on the name of YHWH. In the progression of the biblical narrative, Gen 4:26 precedes the Flood and the dissolution of relationship between YHWH and humanity. YHWH then re-establishes a relationship with Abraham. After that point, calling on the name of YHWH typically reflects the relationship between YHWH and Israel/Judah. See Sailhamer, Pentateuch, 116.
[68] Jeremias attempts to distinguish between those who receive the outpouring of the divine Spirit in Joel 3:1 and those who call upon the name of YHWH in Joel 3:5, seemingly suggesting that the latter group is a subset of the former. For him, the gift of the divine Spirit in Joel 3 does not guarantee salvation any more than the community's turn to YHWH in Joel 2, claiming "Ein Automatismus der Rettung ist in Joel 3 ebensowenig wie in Joel 2 im Blick." Jeremias, "Heilserwartung des Joelbuches," 41. Eventually, he attempts to differentiate between the escaped group (פְּלֵיטָה) and the survivors (שְׂרִידִים) in Joel 3:5,

Joel 3:5 also displays a classical use of the Zion tradition in which "Zion and

Jerusalem are pre-eminently the abode of Yahweh, citadels of security and stability."[71]

Zion is the only location where there is the guarantee of refuge from the cosmos-rending

power of the day of YHWH. Again, this reveals a marked contrast from the portrayal of

the day of YHWH in Joel 2:1–11. In that passage, YHWH leads the invading army

against Zion, easily breaching its defences and announcing destruction. In this passage

Zion/Jerusalem is now the one inviolable fortress into which YHWH is calling people to

gather to escape the day of YHWH.

Continuing with the theme of those who "call on the name of YHWH," Joel 3:5

constructs an inclusio on the verb קָרָא ("to call") to emphasize the necessity of proper

response; those who "call on the name of YHWH" (יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה) at the beginning of

this verse are probably also those "whom YHWH calls" at the end of the verse (אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה

קֹרֵא).[72] This implicit injunction to be among those who "call on the name of YHWH"

most likely builds upon the prophet's earlier explicit command to "return to YHWH"

found in Joel 2:12–17.[73] For those who respond in obedience, the text now offers hope

that for them the day of YHWH is not a day of judgment against them since they will be

among the survivors whom YHWH calls.[74] Instead, the terrors of the day of YHWH will

fall upon those who have not called on the name of YHWH.

This verse also contains another link to the description of the day of YHWH in

Joel 2:1–11. It states that in Jerusalem/Zion there will be a פְּלֵיטָה ("escaped group"),

namely those who call on the name of YHWH. The noun פְּלֵיטָה also occurs in Joel 2:3,

[71] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 87.
[72] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 81.
[73] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 217.
[74] Nogalski, "Day(s)," 629.

describing the advance of the locust army. In that case, it stated that nothing could escape

in the wake of this army, whereas in this case YHWH himself declares that he will allow

some to escape. The promise of escapees should be powerful for the implied audience;

whereas Joel 2:3 permits no escape, Joel 3:5 explicitly opens the door to survival. This

opportunity should provide the implied audience with reason to heed the prophetic word.

The text gives the prospect of escape further weight in the following clause of

Joel 3:5 which refers to this group as שְׂרִידִים ("survivors"). These two words (פְּלֵיטָה;

שְׂרִידִים) occur in parallel several times in the Old Testament in negated forms to

emphasize complete defeat and destruction (Josh 8:22; Jer 42:17; 44:14).[75] The nominal

form שָׂרִיד refers to survivors, typically of a military defeat (Num 21:35; Josh 8:22; Isa

1:9; Jer 42:17; 44:14).[76] The presence of survivors in this verse echoes the promise of an

escaped group whom YHWH will protect. Again, whereas the description of the day of

YHWH in 2:1–11 held out no hope of salvation, Joel 3:5 offers a way to avoid its

onslaught for those discerning enough to cry out to YHWH.

In summary, Joel 3:5 simply states the guarantee of rescue from the day of

YHWH, but one can effectively argue that the illocutionary intent of this verse is to

persuade the implied audience that it ought to call on the name of YHWH and trust that

YHWH would honour the promises of protection rooted in Zion.[77] The shift in voice in

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[75] Joshua 8:22 describes the total defeat of Ai, while the two passages from Jeremiah claim that those who flee to Egypt will find only destruction.

[76] This stands in contrast to the Greek tradition which describes those who escape the destruction of the day of YHWH as εὐαγγελιζόμενοι, that is, "the ones receiving good news." In Hebrew this would be derived most likely from וּמבשׂרים. This is probably an erroneous reading, as Prinsloo points out by citing the Aquila and Theodotion recensions which read καὶ ἐν τοις καταλελειμμένοις, a reading which follows the Masoretic text; Prinsloo, *Theology*, 81. Interestingly, Crenshaw notes that Peter's citation of this passage in his Acts 2 sermon does not reflect the Greek tradition even though that would seem to fit his context quite well; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 172.

[77] On the illocutionary potential of prophetic oracles, see Möller, "Words," 370–71.

Joel 3:5 thus contains a further clue concerning the unit's rhetorical strategy. In the wake

of the potentially devastating consequences of the day of YHWH, the prophet proclaims

that those who call on the name of YHWH find sanctuary. The implied audience is

expected to conclude that it is incumbent upon them to be among those who "call on the

name of YHWH" so that they might avoid the portended destruction.[78] YHWH's

appearance shakes the cosmos in Joel 3:1–5, but there is an explicit guarantee of

sanctuary for those who appeal to YHWH. Therefore, the rhetorical strategy of Joel 3:5 is

rooted in the shift from first to third person speech and the opportunity for response

grounded in the promise of rescue and sanctuary in Zion for those call on the name of

YHWH.

Summary

Overall, Joel 3:1–5 moves the audience away from the concerns of the locust

plague and drought that dominated the image-world of the preceding units. Joel 3:1–5

continues the description of restoration begun in 2:18–27 by offering an abundant

spiritual renewal to go along with YHWH's promise of a return to agricultural prosperity.

The abundance of the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit reveals the rich nature of the

blessing that YHWH brings in the divine response to the appeals of Joel 2:12–17.

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[78] Some have used this as evidence for a certain sectarian division in the historical audience whom Joel was addressing. For example, Ahlström and Plöger argue that "calling on the name of YHWH" implies that there must be a correct way to do so, a way that perhaps stood in contrast with the established cult of the time; Ahlström, *Joel*, 54–55; Plöger, *Theocracy*, 125. Redditt suggests that the democratization of YHWH's Spirit in this section reflects the book's growing disillusionment with the priestly leadership and suggests a longing for more immediate evidence of YHWH's presence; Redditt, "Peripheral," 240–41. In contrast, Wolff understands this passage to reflect a warning against cultic restoration and the supremacy of Torah that would diminish the authority of the prophetic spirit that declared that YHWH would act; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 67. No explicit support, however, for these interpretations exists within the rest of the text. Consequently, a more specific identification of those who "call on the name of YHWH" requires an appeal to extra-textual evidence to determine a time and place for the composition of Joel, which is a task that has yet to lead to conclusive results.

Further, this unit articulates a significant development in the concept of the day of

YHWH from its previous uses in Joel 1:15 and 2:1–11. Most notably, Joel 3:1–5 shifts

the primary target of the wrath inherent in the day of YHWH. In Joel 1:15 and 2:1–11 the

warnings of the day of YHWH indicate a time when YHWH acts and threatens to bring

destruction upon Judah and Jerusalem; a fate against which the prophet directs them to

cry out in hope of deliverance.

Joel 3:1–5 offers refuge in Zion to those who call upon the name of YHWH,

identifying themselves as adherents of YHWH. This creates an implicit understanding

that the proper response to the outpouring of the divine Spirit is to call on the name of

YHWH. The text juxtaposes the immensity of YHWH's blessing with YHWH's authority

over all creation. The portents of the day of YHWH persuade the implied audience to

receive the gift of YHWH's Spirit and respond so that they can find sanctuary in Zion.[79]

The identification of refuge from the day of YHWH effectively introduces the rest of the

book since Joel 4:1–21 focuses on the fate of other nations while promising protection for

those who worship YHWH in Jerusalem.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The consideration of the rhetorical effectiveness in this particular unit involves

again reflecting upon its relationship to the appeals found in Joel 2:12–17. That particular

passage takes the announcement of the impending day of YHWH as a signal to urge the

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[79] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 84–85. Prinsloo refers to the occurrence of the day of YHWH in Joel 3 as "ambivalent," since the dual prongs of destruction and salvation are evident. The promise of restoration for the implied audience, however, emphasizes the positive potential of the day of YHWH. The day of YHWH plays a similar role in Joel 4 where it announces judgment against the nations while guaranteeing security for YHWH's covenant community.

people to cry out for deliverance. Joel 3:1–5 continues the trajectory begun in Joel 2:18–27 and operates under the presumption that the implied audience responded to the prophetic appeal to cry out to YHWH. As a result, YHWH's zeal and compassion govern YHWH's actions in both Joel 2:18–27 and 3:1–5. YHWH's actions on their behalf should persuade the implied audience to heed the implicit appeal to call out to him so that they can receive the status of "those who call on the name of YHWH." The guarantee of material restoration in Joel 2:18–27 effectively provides the foundation for the promises of spiritual restoration which should persuade the implied audience that they should respond to the deity who offers deliverance.

Joel 3:1–5 further persuades the implied audience to heed the text's message by reinterpreting the day of YHWH. Following the progression of the book, Joel moves the implied audience to see the devastation created by the locusts as a sign of YHWH's approaching day, calls them to turn to YHWH in the hope that "perhaps" he would turn and have compassion, and now gives evidence that this "perhaps" can be answered in the affirmative. Joel essentially employs the day of YHWH first to persuade the implied audience of the impossibility of resisting YHWH when he chooses to act. Joel does not intend, however, that this powerlessness should lead to paralysis since the text commands the implied audience to cry out to YHWH. Now that YHWH is acting from zeal and compassion, the text again employs the day of YHWH. On this occasion, however, the text explicitly demonstrates the efficacy of responding as it directs by placing the promise of deliverance alongside the announcement of the day of YHWH.

Overall, Joel 3:1–5 maintains the terrifying nature of the day of YHWH through the harrowing description of cosmological portents. The effects of these portents are

different, however, since they occur in a context where the implied audience now has promises of the outpouring of the Spirit and sanctuary rooted in Zion. By activating these positive outcomes, the text effectively communicates to the implied audience that although the day of YHWH is coming, they no longer need to fear its ramifications if they respond appropriately.

Another way to consider the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 3:1–5 is to look beyond the immediate implied audience of the text. Specifically, the way in which Joel 3:1–5 delves into the theme of the outpouring of the divine Spirit is worthy of consideration. Joel 3:1–5 takes the trajectory at which Num 11:10–30 hints and expands it so that the fervent wish of Moses for all YHWH's people to receive the divine Spirit becomes a prophetic promise of divine blessing in the wake of the desperate circumstances articulated in Joel 1:1–2:17. For a universal audience, this passage is powerful in proclaiming the desire of YHWH to pour out the divine Spirit across many different boundaries; neither age, nor gender, nor social category is a barrier to accessing the divine Spirit.[80] Although the discussion above notes that the scope of those included under the category of "all flesh," probably is restricted to those in the Judahite community in the immediate context, Joel 3:1–5 invites the universal audience to consider YHWH's intention to pour out the divine Spirit on a wide range of people, permitting a universal audience to consider themselves among those whom YHWH gives the divine Spirit. This elevates the persuasive potential of Joel 3:1–5 and permits it to impact audiences that continue to read this text.

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[80] Garrett effectively captures the power of the range of groups included in this gifting of the divine Spirit, stating that "in an era in which men (not women), the old (not the young), and the landowners (not slaves) ruled society, Joel explicitly rejected all such distinctions as criteria for receiving the Holy Spirit," Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 367.

Conclusion

Joel 3:1–5 continues the trajectory of restoration that commences in Joel 2:18–27. The rhetorical situation advances beyond the spectre of the locust plague and orients itself towards a future time of YHWH's powerful intervention. The image of the overwhelming outpouring of the divine Spirit portrays the lavish extent of YHWH's guarantee of spiritual restoration that mirrors the description of material restoration in Joel 2:18–27. Joel 3:1–5 effectively bridges distinctions of age, gender, and social standing to indicate that YHWH's gift of the divine Spirit is available to every member of the implied audience. The gift of the divine Spirit precedes portents of the day of YHWH which it reconfigures by reusing similar images of darkness and fearfulness while promising hope for rescue. The promise of refuge and the gift of the Spirit should persuade the implied audience to respond by calling upon the name of YHWH since the text now proclaims that YHWH is acting on their behalf.

Further, the lavish outpouring of the divine Spirit invites all audiences to consider themselves among those upon whom YHWH can call. It explores a scriptural tradition that eagerly desires an outpouring of YHWH's Spirit and provides a prophetic promise that it will occur. Finally, Joel 3:1–5 prepares the way for further divine activity in Joel 4:1–21 which expands on the pouring out of the divine Spirit and the rending of the cosmos to issue judgments against foreign nations and guarantees of security for those who call on the name of YHWH. There is deliverance in Zion for those who call upon the name of YHWH, but Joel 4:1–21 explores the fate of the nations who do not find this sanctuary.

Chapter Eight: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 4:1–21

Introduction

The final chapter of Joel builds upon the outpouring of the divine Spirit and the

cosmological imagery that Joel 3:1–5 employs to describe the day of YHWH. YHWH's

actions are again the focus of Joel 4:1–21 and they set up a contrast where YHWH acts

salvifically towards the Judahite community while bringing judgment against foreign

nations. The text alternates between portraying these nations as a collective entity and

highlighting the offenses of specific nations. Again, various rhetorical strategies work

together in order to vividly portray the fate of the Judahite community and its enemies.

These strategies persuasively demonstrate YHWH's commitment to the Judahite

community for whom it promises paradisiacal prosperity, while effectively removing the

threat of outside nations. This again reminds the Judahite community of the necessity to

remain committed to YHWH while YHWH acts on its behalf.

Rhetorical Unit

Joel 4:1–21 follows the "great and dreadful" day of YHWH and the lavish

outpouring of the divine Spirit in Joel 3:1–5. It articulates what will happen in response to

YHWH's promise of intervention. Following an introductory כִּי הִנֵּה, the phrase בַּיָּמִים

הָהֵמָּה וּבָעֵת הַהִיא ("in those days and at that time") marks the aperture of this unit. This

exact phrase occurs elsewhere only at Jer 33:15; 50:4, 20 but this introduction resonates

with the reference in Joel 3:1 to a day and time when portents occur that point towards

YHWH manifesting divine authority (cf. Zeph 3:20).[1] The passages in Jeremiah in which

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[1] Dillard, "Joel," 300; De Vries, "Futurism," 261; Prinsloo, *Theology*, 92. For De Vries, the introductory formula in Joel 4:1 points toward "the world's penultimate day," with powerful portents that presage the

this phrase is found point towards future salvation for Judah and Israel either through

YHWH raising up a Davidic scion (Jer 33:15) or authorizing the destruction of Babylon

(Jer 50:4–20). The addition of כִּי הִנֵּה reinforces the thematic shift that renders this a new

rhetorical unit. It marks a change in the point of subject that moves from the divine

assurance of safety in Zion to the fate of YHWH's antagonists.[2] The fate of YHWH's

people is mentioned again in Joel 4:18–21 where the text uses it to provide the mirror-

image for its final statement concerning the fate of the foreign nations.

Within this final rhetorical unit there are four subunits to consider. Joel 4:1–3

introduces the final unit and promises that YHWH will summon "the nations" (הַגּוֹיִם) to

attend a judgment of YHWH. It declares both judgment on these nations and restoration

for the Judahite community, which means that this subunit succinctly foreshadows the

major concerns of the subsequent verses. The nature of Joel 4:1–3 as a survey of the

succeeding subunits demonstrates the appropriateness of considering Joel 4:1–21 as a

single rhetorical unit since what follows reflects either YHWH's commitment to "restore

the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem" (Joel 4:1) or YHWH's intention to judge the nations

(Joel 4:2–3).

Joel 4:4–8 begins to add further detail by identifying some of these nations and

issuing specific judgments for their crimes against Judah and Jerusalem. Joel 4:9–17

directly summons the nations as a collective entity to gather and face divine judgment.

Joel 4:9–17 also projects the result of the nations' doomed challenge to YHWH's

authority. Finally, Joel 4:18–21 looks beyond the confrontation between YHWH and the

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final great and terrible day of YHWH that reaches its pinnacle in Joel 3:4. De Vries points to the presence of כִּי introducing Joel 4:1 to suggest that Joel 4 is an exposition of the announced day of YHWH: De Vries, *Old Revelation*, 70.

[2] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 173.

nations and interweaves promises of almost paradisiacal blessing for Judah and Jerusalem with continued assertions of the fate of YHWH's enemies.[3] These verses cohere around repeated images drawn from the semantic domain of liquid, which starkly contrasts the images of drought and desiccation of Joel 1.[4] Joel 4:18–21 brings closure to this final rhetorical unit by describing in vivid detail the full nature of what it means for YHWH to "restore the fortunes" of Judah and Jerusalem.

Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation of Joel 4 seemingly expands the range of those whom the text addresses to encompass foreign nations. Whereas Joel 1–3 mostly focuses internally on the situation of YHWH's covenant people whom the prophet calls to respond appropriately in the wake of the locust plague, Joel 4 dramatically shifts the situation so that YHWH issues directives addressed to antagonistic nations.[5] Joel 4:1–3 commences the process by announcing YHWH's intention to bring the nations into judgment for their crimes against "my people and my inheritance Israel." Joel 4:4–8 then directly addresses Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia while Joel 4:9–17 issues imperatives to unnamed nations, summoning them to attend YHWH's judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Again, while there is no evidence that this prophetic proclamation was ever spoken among these foreign nations, on the level of the "world of the text" there is a shift in the identity of the

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[3] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 181.

[4] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 301. There is some debate regarding whether Joel 4:17 concludes the subunit that begins at Joel 4:9 or whether it introduces the final subunit. Wendland's identification of imagery deriving from miraculous fruitfulness and liquidity provides a persuasive reason for beginning a new subunit at Joel 4:18. See below for further discussion of the rhetorical function of Joel 4:17 as it interacts with its surrounding context.

[5] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 173. Crenshaw suggests that כי הנה at the outset of Joel 4:1 has a disjunctive function that emphasizes the shift in the text's perspective.

addressees.[6] The nations, named and unnamed, are rhetorical foils against which the text

can juxtapose its vision of ultimate destiny for Judah and Jerusalem.

The inclusion of other nations as addressees of divine imperatives is an interesting

development in the shape of the text's implied audience. The text specifically interacts

with these nations throughout Joel 4, providing one side of a hypothetical dialogue with

Tyre, Sidon and Philistia in Joel 4:4–8 while further addressing unnamed nations through

imperatives in Joel 4:9–17. The purpose of addressing these nations, however, is visible

in the final promises of restoration and blessing for the community that experiences

YHWH's presence in Zion. Joel 4:17 powerfully portrays an address from YHWH to the

Judahite community through his self-identification as YHWH your God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם),

while Joel 4:18–21 details the aftermath of YHWH's declaration to dwell in Zion.

Consequently, even when the text addresses the foreign nations, there is an implied

Judahite audience in view who hears YHWH's commitment to it expressed through his

interactions with the nations.

Essentially, the intention of Joel 4:1–21 is to explore the ways in which YHWH

will "restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem." The implied audience whom the text

calls to mourn and cry out to YHWH in previous rhetorical units now awaits the final

resolution of its exigences through YHWH's interactions with foreign nations.[7] Just as

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[6] Interestingly, Raabe considers the possibility of prophetic oracles against foreign nations travelling outside of the boundaries of Israel or Judah. He notes specifically Jer 27 which may include envoys from foreign powers and Isa 21:11–12 which may reflect an inquiry from Seir. Further, Raabe suggests the possibility of prophetic osmosis where word of Israelite prophetic speech informally spread and reached non-Israelite ears (cf. 2 Kgs 6:8–14; 2 Kgs 18–19); Raabe, "Why Prophetic Oracles," 252. There is no evidence, however, that the prophetic judgments in Joel 4 were announced beyond the borders of the Judahite community. This leaves the interpreter to consider the rhetorical strategy behind intertwining judgment of foreign nations with promises of salvation in Joel 4.

[7] Hester, "Speaker," 79. Hester notes that when the interests of the speaker and the audience intersect in this manner, it becomes possible for the audience to modify the exigence because of the speaker's communication. Joel 4:1–21 presents a slightly different case since the text does not open up any doors for the implied audience to respond since YHWH's actions dominate the entire chapter.

the use of the unvoiced opinion of "the nations" in Joel 2:17 functions rhetorically as a

prophetic strategy for urging divine action, so here the inclusion of foreign nations as the

addressees of divine commands has a rhetorical function aimed at presenting YHWH as

the deity that preserves the Judahite community and demonstrates unmistakeable

sovereignty over all nations.

The discussion over the nature of the implied audience in Joel 4:1–21 resonates

with the progression of the exigences that drives the rhetorical strategies of this book.

Previous rhetorical units within Joel deal with threats directed against the Judahite

community through a combination of imagery relating to locust infestations, droughts,

and military invasion, culminating with the revelation that the day of YHWH is going to

be unleashed against YHWH's own community (Joel 1:1–2:11). After calling for a return

to YHWH (Joel 2:12–17), the exigences of the following rhetorical units reveal the ways

in which YHWH chooses to act on behalf of the Judahite community through both

physical and spiritual restoration (Joel 2:18–27; 3:1–5). Joel 4 focuses on the prospect of

external threat to YHWH's claim over the community, articulating in significant detail

that YHWH will triumph over all nations who threaten the Judahite community.

The text constructs the situation of the implied audience in a manner that activates

the need for YHWH's intervention. In spite of the preceding promises of YHWH's

presence, Joel 4:2–3 and 5–6 suggest that the nations have sold the Judahites into slavery

and looted the land. In the wake of these events, the text portrays the implied audience as

weak and unable to resist the outside nations who seem to be militarily strong.

Consequently, YHWH's claim of ownership over the land and its inhabitants offers hope

for the amelioration of the rhetorical situation, since YHWH claims the authority to judge

the other nations. Joel 4:1–21 dramatically reverses the situation of the foreign nations

who go from ravaging Judah to being unable to stand against the unleashed authority of

YHWH. Joel 4:1–21 thus resolves the external exigence that threatens the implied

Judahite audience. This is the necessary counterpart to the concerns of previous rhetorical

units. Now that the relationship between YHWH and the implied audience is restored, the

text can focus on other threats.

Shifting towards external exigence and divine agency also helps shift the nature of

the constraints that govern its rhetorical situation. In previous passages, constraints on the

rhetorical situation include the necessity for the text to gain a hearing among the different

facets of the implied audience identified in Joel 1:1–14, as well as the necessity for the

audience to respond appropriately in Joel 2:12–17 in order to allow the text to transition

from threat to deliverance. In Joel 4:1–21 the fact that YHWH is the primary agent means

that the text can declare what is going to happen while minimizing the role of any other

actors, especially those whom the text constructs as hostile to YHWH.[8] The text can

declare that what YHWH commands will occur because of the authority attributed to

YHWH.

Rhetorical Strategy

The primary feature of Joel 4:1–21 is how it extends the scope of YHWH's

sovereignty, speaking powerfully about YHWH's coming judgment against foreign

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[8] Taking a broader diachronic perspective, LaRocca-Pitts argues for a progression towards divine agency in the prophetic construction of the day of YHWH. YHWH's acts become the focus and the responses of other actors fade into insignificance; LaRocca-Pitts, "The Day of Yahweh," 333. This trajectory certainly appears to describe aptly what occurs within the framework of Joel 1–4 since the announcements of the day of YHWH in Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11 lead to a call to response in Joel 2:12–17.

nations as a means of bringing restoration to Judah and Jerusalem. This shows a marked

transition from preceding rhetorical units where the text only briefly employs the voice of

the nations in Joel 2:6 and 2:17 as a rhetorical ploy either to emphasize the power of the

divinely-led invading horde, or to shift the onus onto YHWH to turn and bring restoration

in the midst of catastrophe.[9] Joel 4:1–21 is oriented towards a judicial genre, declaring

the offenses of the nations (Joel 4:2–3, 5–6) and promising to enact judgment (Joel 4:7–8,

9–16, 19). This judicial speech, however, needs to be considered in light of the

declaration of YHWH's intentions to "restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem" in

Joel 4:1. The detailed discussion of the rhetorical strategies will reveal that this judicial

language also provides persuasive reasons for the implied audience to have confidence in

their God since YHWH removes external threats while promising restorative action.

Joel 4:1–3: Introduction of Restoration Through Judgment of Foreign Nations

Joel 4:1–3 builds from the hinge of 2:18 where YHWH transitions from destroyer

to protector and provider for the Judahite community. The text establishes this shift

clearly in Joel 4:1b by declaring that YHWH will "restore the fortunes" (אָשׁוּב אֶת־שְׁבוּת)

of Judah and Jerusalem at this time. Variations of the phrase שׁוּב שְׁבוּת occur twenty-

seven times in the Old Testament, and although its precise origins are disputed, in its

literary contexts it usually points towards a reversal of YHWH's judgment and

restoration for the Judahite community (cf. Jer 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11).[10] The

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[9] Cf. the description of the nations trembling in Joel 2:6 as the invading horde passes by and the accusation that the Judahite community will be a laughingstock among the nations if YHWH does not intervene in Joel 2:17.

[10] Preuschen and Baumann attribute the noun שׁבות to the root שָׁבָה ("to make captive") while Dietrich argues that it is derived from שׁוב ("to turn/return"); Preuschen, "Die Bedeutung von שׁוב שׁבות," 1–74; Baumann, "שׁוב שׁבות," 17–44; Dietrich, "שׁוב שׁבות," 27–28. Borger highlights the difficulty of determining the etymology of שׁבות by noting the presence of *ketib/qere* issues that render it incredibly difficult to

occurrence of this phrase in Joel 4:1 is congruent with the understanding of reversal since this chapter eliminates the threat of invasion from enemies in the earlier chapters (Joel 1:6–7; 2:1–11) and promises inescapable divine judgment on those who plunder Judah.[11]

Joel 4:2 then articulates that as an integral part of the restoration process, YHWH will claim sovereignty over the rest of humanity. YHWH is the actor in this verse, exercising divine agency in order to gather the nations and bring them into judgment.[12] The phrase כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם ("all nations") in this verse emphasizes the universality of this judgment, while the nations' anonymity permits the activation of this text in the context of any threat against Jerusalem.[13] The location of judgment in this passage demonstrates a rhetorical flourish. YHWH declares that he will bring the nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט) and there he will judge them (וְנִשְׁפַּטְתִּי). The name of the valley and the action that YHWH promises to perform both derive from the root שָׁפַט. Thus, the text's selection of the name of this valley is probably a pun on the activity of judging that YHWH promises to perform.

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differentiate between the two proposed roots; Borger, "שׁוֹב/שׁבוּת." 315–16. In the case of Joel 4:1, if שׁבוּת makes reference specifically to exile, then it may be possible to argue that the text has in mind the Babylonian captivity, which would lend credence to arguments for understanding the book as post-exilic. Simkins, however, makes a convincing argument that the phrase in question has in view the events described in Joel 4:4–8, where YHWH reverses the depredations of the nations against Judah. In that case, when YHWH "restores the fortunes" of Judah and Jerusalem it indicates the cessation of these depredations. Further, the imagery surrounding שׁוֹב שׁבוּת may indicate that the prophet is describing a larger reversal of fortune, rather than a more limited promise of return from exile; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 225. Price aptly suggests that "the image has stretched the idiom far beyond the exile and return framework," Price, "Lexicographical Study," 122; cf. Dillard, "Joel," 300.
[11] Bracke, "šûb šᵉbût," 241.
[12] De Vries, "Futurism," 262. De Vries finds contradictions between the declaration in Joel 4:1–2 that YHWH will judge the nations and the "incipient universalism" of Joel 3:1. As argued above, however, the case for universalism in Joel 3:1 is weakened by the apparent restriction of the phrase "all flesh" to the Judahite community in this instance. Consequently, there is no necessary contradiction between the promises of restoration through the outpouring of YHWH's Spirit and divine judgment of foreign nations.
[13] Sweeney, "Place and Function," 586.

While many have searched for a physical location, typically either the Valley of

Berechah where Jehoshaphat enjoyed a great victory against a coalition of Moab,

Ammon and Edom (2 Chr 20:26)[14] or the Kidron Valley,[15] the most viable suggestion is

that such searches are inappropriate since the significance of the valley is symbolic rather

than topographical.[16] The connection to the Valley of Berechah in particular is probably

allusive rather than historical. 2 Chr 20:15 provides a prophetic message to King

Jehoshaphat and the rest of Judah, telling them not to fear a forthcoming battle against

numerically superior opposition because it is YHWH's battle, not theirs (לֹא לָכֶם הַמִּלְחָמָה

כִּי לֵאלֹהִים). In the same way, the restoration in Joel 4:1–3 rests on YHWH; divine actions

alone will restore Judah's fortunes.[17]

Further, this mention of the Valley of Jehoshaphat resonates with broader

prophetic traditions that also place YHWH's judgment in a valley. These traditions are

evident in passages like Isa 22:1–5; Ezek 38–39; and Zech 14 which all place YHWH's

judgment in valley settings that are high on symbolic significance.[18] Specifically, there

may be a parallel between the valley of Jehoshaphat and the judgment on Gog that

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[14] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 177. Second Chronicles 20:20–26 describes how King Jehoshaphat told the Judahites to believe in YHWH and YHWH's prophets and led them in songs of praise as they engaged their enemies. It is interesting to note that he defeats a coalition of Judah's foes when the promise of the Valley of Jehoshaphat is that all foreign nations will face divine judgment and destruction. Sweeney also correctly notes that the mention of the Valley of Jehoshaphat does not define the historical setting of Joel; Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation," 53. Instead, the Valley of Jehoshaphat serves a rhetorical purpose that further discussion will elucidate.

[15] Merx, *Die Prophetie*, 197–99, holds to the traditional interpretation that identifies this valley as the Kidron.

[16] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 175; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 226; Allen, *Joel*, 108–09. Since the concern of this project is with the rhetorical function of the book of Joel, it is most fruitful to follow this line of reasoning and concentrate on the symbolic resonances of calling for divine judgment in this particular valley.

[17] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 225.

[18] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 144–48. Kapelrud examines these passages and draws attention to what he describes as their mythological nature. He notes, however, that in all of these cases, this valley would seem to stand in proximity to Jerusalem.

culminates in the Valley of Hamon-Gog in Ezek 38–39.[19] Both passages use the same

verb for divine judgment (וְנִשְׁפַּטְתִּי in Ezek 38:22; Joel 4:2) and the description of Gog's

destruction in that verse includes references to blood and fire that recall the unfolding of

the day of YHWH in Joel 3:3–4.[20] Ezekiel identifies Gog with the northern foe (Ezek

38:15, cf. Joel 2:20), which is a prophetic metaphor with multivalent referents.[21]

Consequently, Joel is most likely appropriating the symbolic significance rather than the

geographical location of the valley where YHWH enacts judgment.

Also supporting the symbolic interpretation of the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the

connection between YHWH's judgment in the valley and the day of YHWH. All four

valley judgment texts (Isa 22:1–5; Ezek 38–39; Joel 4; Zech 14) make at least oblique

reference to the day of YHWH through various phrases associated with that day.[22] The

introduction of the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the parallel "Valley of Decision" in Joel

4:12 effectively link Joel 4:1–3 with the day of YHWH tradition which receives explicit

mention in 4:14.[23] On this occasion the judgment that occurs on the day of YHWH falls

upon the nations summoned to judgment in the appropriately named valley, which marks

a significant transition from the first half of this book where the day of YHWH is a day of

woe for the implied audience.

The latter half of Joel 4:2 and the entirety of Joel 4:3 articulate the nations'

offenses, providing the foundation for the judicial tone of this chapter. Joel 3:1–5 and

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[19] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 226. See also the "Valley of Vision" in Isa 22:1 (גִּיא חִזָּיוֹן) and the valley in Zech 14:4 that forms when YHWH splits the Mount of Olives when the deity fights for Jerusalem.
[20] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 226.
[21] See the previous discussion of the northern foe in the rhetorical strategy section of Joel 2:18–27.
[22] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 226–27. Isaiah 22:5 refers to a "day of panic, confusion and subjugation for YHWH God of Hosts" (יוֹם מְהוּמָה וּמְבוּסָה וּמְבוּכָה לַאדֹנָי יהוה צְבָאוֹת), while Ezek 39:11 looks to the destruction of God, "on that day" (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) and Zech 14:1 speaks of a "day coming to YHWH" (יוֹם־בָּא לַיהוה).
[23] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 227.

4:1–2a indicate that YHWH's powerful arrival has a devastating effect on those not

fortunate enough to be among the survivors (שְׂרִדִים) whom he calls. Until this point,

however, the text has offered no rationale for the terrifying manifestation of YHWH's

power. Now, the latter half of Joel 4:2 continues with a word-play on שָׁפַט, employing a

verb from that root to indicate that YHWH is stepping in to render judgment (וְנִשְׁפַּטְתִּי).

The text gives this judgment a personal flavour, with YHWH justifying these actions

because of "my people and my inheritance" (עַמִּי וְנַחֲלָתִי), whom these nations scattered.[24]

As a further offense they also divided the land that YHWH claimed (אַרְצִי), setting these

nations squarely in opposition to YHWH.

The trio of first person suffixes in YHWH's announcement of judgment is

significant since it shows YHWH's commitment to the Judahite community which has

been the implied audience throughout this text. Notably, the two impassioned pleas in

Joel 2:17 respectively employ "your people" (עַמֶּךָ) and "your inheritance" (נַחֲלָתְךָ) to

motivate YHWH to act, while 2:18 attributes the programmatic restoration to YHWH's

zeal and pity "for his people" (לְעַמּוֹ), and "for his land" (לְאַרְצוֹ).[25] Thus, Joel 4:2b builds

and strengthens YHWH's claim of ownership over the covenant community and the land

by using the voice of YHWH to seal the claim. These suffixes also have the further effect

of continuing to answer the doubts raised in the pleas of Joel 2:17; at this point, YHWH

is clearly on the side of the Judahite community, whose fortunes YHWH will restore

through the actions detailed throughout Joel 4:1–21.

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[24] Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 41. Ogden comments on the use of נַחֲלָתִי, suggesting that it refers to the land that YHWH has given to Judah, and by extension, those living in it. He notes the use of this concept in lament psalms as part of the pleas for YHWH to intervene salvifically (Pss 28:9; 74:2; 79:1).
[25] Further examples of "my/his people" occur at Joel 2:19; 2:26–27; 4:3 and 4:16, while 1:6 also refers to YHWH's ownership of the land (אַרְצִי).

After establishing YHWH's claim over the land and its people, Joel 4:2b employs

an אֲשֶׁר clause to commence the actual process of judgment. The text states that these

nations have scattered YHWH's people, claimed YHWH's land for themselves, and

engaged in slave trading. The text treats the first two offenses succinctly but it gives

maximum impact to the final charge of enslavement, making three separate statements in

Joel 4:3. The first statement claims that these invaders cast lots (יַדּוּ), using a verb that

occurs only on two other occasions in the Old Testament (Obad 11; Nah 3:10). This verb

conjures up imagery of dividing plunder after a military victory, a degrading fate to befall

human beings.[26]

The context of Obad 11 is especially appropriate since it references the actions of

Edom in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem. Joel 4:3 makes mention of the same crime as

Obad 11, but it does so in a more general context, accusing unnamed nations of engaging

in this practice.[27] The text then heightens the offense in the final two statements of Joel

4:3 by indicating that these foreigners use Judahite children as a means of barter. The text

employs merismus in describing the plight of all the children by stating that the captors

exchange the boys for the services of prostitutes and the girls for wine.[28] This trivializes

the quality of human life by making people into a means of exchange. These offenses

root YHWH's forthcoming judgment in the guilt of those nations who have oppressed his

people.

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[26] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 176. Amos notably employs this theme in his oracle against Israel, condemning it for selling the innocent for silver, and the poor in exchange for shoes (Amos 2:6).

[27] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 227; Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret*, 305–06; Sweeney, *Twelve*, 179.

[28] Dillard, "Joel," 301. Dillard argues that the preposition in בַּיּוֹנָה is properly understood as *beth* of price or a *beth* that introduces the object acquired. Other examples include Ps 44:13; Amos 2:6. See also Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 71; Waltke and O'Connor §11.2.5d. This stands in contrast to the LXX reading ἔδωκαν τὰ παιδάρια πόρναις which suggests that the boys were sold into prostitution.

Overall, this brief subunit introduces the theme of divine judgment against the enemies of YHWH's covenant people that dominates the remainder of the book. Essentially, Joel 4:1–3 is a "short *résumé* of the contents of the whole oracle."[29] It refers back to preceding units by mentioning YHWH's restorative acts for Judah and Jerusalem and it reasserts YHWH's claim to the community by calling them "my inheritance," and "my people Israel." For the most part, however, this unit looks towards a time of judgment for foreign nations. This particular unit begins to detail the offenses of the foreign nations that will lead to their punishment, even though it does not depict the specifics of the punishment.

Joel 4:4–8: Judgment Against Specific Nations

This subunit breaks away from YHWH's statement of intent to bring the nations as a whole into judgment. The emphatic adverb וְגַם introduces instead a special instance of divine judgment against three specific enemy nations, namely Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia.[30] The genre reflected in this subunit is judicial, focusing on the crimes of these specific nations while also detailing their punishment.[31] The effect of using judicial speech in this subunit is interesting when one considers the nature of the text's audiences. Joel 4:4–8 is constructed as divine speech directed at Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia, detailing YHWH's grievances against them. While YHWH announces judgment, it is also helpful to consider the implied Judahite audience who hears YHWH's declarations. For this audience, YHWH's dialogue with the nations reinforces YHWH's commitment to act on

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[29] Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 7.
[30] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 178.
[31] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 20. Kennedy lists defence and prosecution as the positive and negative forms of judicial rhetorical. Joel 4:4–8 appears to fit into the prosecution category rather neatly.

their behalf that has been active since Joel 2:18. Thus, the judicial rhetoric of Joel 4:4–8 also strengthens the case for the implied audience to have confidence in YHWH.

Many have argued that Joel 4:4–8 reflects a later redactional insertion since it appears to be more prosaic in style than other subunits in Joel 4 and because it narrows the scope from a universal condemnation of nations to focus on three of Israel and Judah's "minor" foes.[32] Wolff detects a shift in vocabulary in these verses where Joel 4:6 and 4:8 refer to the "children of Judah" (בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה) and the "children of Jerusalem" (בְּנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם).[33] He sets these phrases in contrast to Joel 4:2–3 in which YHWH expresses an explicit claim in the first person through phrases such as "my people" (עַמִּי) or "my inheritance" (נַחֲלָתִי). Further, Wolff suggests that the chain of rhetorical questions in Joel 4:4 and the increase in subordinate clauses in these verses indicate that this is a secondary piece, since these are foreign to the rest of the book.[34] This has significant ramifications for interpreting the rhetorical flow of this chapter since on the basis of such arguments some even omit this passage when developing the argument of the book, opining that it is "clearly intrusive and secondary," and thus unworthy of consideration in the main argument.[35]

The identification of Joel 4:4–8 as secondary, however, is disputable. Even if one accepts that Joel 4:4–8 is written in a more prosaic style, this does not necessarily indicate its secondary stature. Further, in the case of a rhetorical reading of the text for the implied audience that it constructs, it is difficult to justify omitting a passage from

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[32] Barton, *Joel*, 100; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 74, 77–8; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 185.
[33] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 74–75.
[34] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 75. Of course, rhetorical questions do occur elsewhere in Joel, although they concern the character and action of YHWH; cf. Joel 2:11, 14, 17.
[35] Nash, "Palestinian," 226.

consideration. Ahlström shows continuity between Joel 4:4–8 and the surrounding

subunits by suggesting that the mention of slave trading in Joel 4:2–3 provides the point

of inspiration for Joel 4:4–8 to engage that motif in more detail.[36] This leads to a reversal

in which YHWH decrees that the Judahites will sell the slave traders themselves into

captivity. After reaching this conclusion the text is then ready to resume a more oracular

form for the remainder of the chapter.

Other unifying features include the occurrence of the keyword מָכַר ("to sell")

across the entirety of Joel 4:1–8 (Joel 4:3, 6, 8).[37] Further, there may be elements of a

prophetic lawsuit in Joel 4:1–8 that resonate through this entire passage (cf. Isa 3:13–15;

Ps 50:2–23; Hos 2:4–17; 4:1–3; Mic 6:1–5).[38] These elements include summoning the

"accused" in Joel 4:1–2a, reading the accusations in 4:2b–3, asking rhetorical questions

typical of lawsuit interrogations in 4:4, specifying the charges in 4:5–6, and announcing

the verdict in 4:7–8.[39] Ultimately, the issue of Joel 4:4–8's "originality" will probably

never be resolved, but at the very least there is warrant to conclude that this subunit adds

a significant dimension to the description of YHWH's judgment. Effectively, it aims at

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[36] Ahlström, *Joel*, 134–35.

[37] Dillard, "Joel," 303. Conversely, Wolff does note the repetition of מכר but suggests instead that it occurs in order to link this redactional piece with 4:1–3; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 74–75.

[38] On the form and function of prophetic lawsuits, see Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor*, 74–83; Limburg, "Lawsuit of God," 296–99; Huffmon, "Covenant Lawsuit," 285–95. Laney identifies two modes of prophetic lawsuits. The first details a complaint brought by an offended party against the offender, while in the second, a third party brings the accusation on behalf of the aggrieved party; Laney, "Role of the Prophets," 313–25. This latter form may resonate with what is occurring in Joel 4, where YHWH brings an accusation against the guilty nations as part of the process of restoring Judah and Jerusalem. More recently, the validity of prophetic lawsuit as a prophetic form has been called into question; cf. De Roche, "Yahweh's Rîb," 563–74; Daniels, "'Prophetic Lawsuit,'" 339–60. While resolving questions of oracle form is beyond the purview of this study, the presence of unifying literary features demonstrates coherence in reading Joel 4:4–8 as an integral part of the text's rhetorical strategy.

[39] Dillard, "Joel," 300–01.

"concretizing and specifying the vague, general assertions of the previous pericope section [sic]."[40]

The rhetorical purpose of this subunit is to provide a logical exposition of the claims put forward in Joel 4:1–3. Joel 4:1–3 begins from a very broad perspective, surveying the situation in order to describe in general terms the fate of those "nations" who defy YHWH and face divine judgment. Now, in Joel 4:4–8, the text adopts a more focused perspective and highlights the errors of specific nations and the punishment that YHWH will bring to bear. Interestingly, a similar juxtaposition of broad and narrow points of view occurs later on in this chapter, when Joel 4:18–21 responds to YHWH's defeat of the nations as a whole by highlighting the specific effects on Egypt and Edom. For Joel 4:4–8, the primary focus is to take the general charges of raiding and slave trading from 4:2–3 and identify those responsible for these despicable activities.[41]

The nations accused in this section are Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia. Philistia achieved notoriety in the Old Testament as the great enemy of Israel during the periods of the latter judges and early monarchy (cf. Judg 13–16; 1 Sam 4). Tyre and Sidon are portrayed as allies of David and Solomon (cf. 2 Sam 5; 1 Kgs 5), but then prophets such as Amos and Ezekiel announce doom oracles against them for their sins against YHWH (cf. Ezek 26–29; Amos 1:9–10). Interestingly, Amos' oracles against nations place the oracles against Philistia and the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon next to each other. Amos also condemns both regions for slave trading, accusing them of selling Israelite captives to Edom (Amos 1:6–10). The resonance between the Joelian and

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[40] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 110.
[41] Dillard, "Joel," 303.

Amosian mentions of these nations perhaps indicates a shared tradition of grievances

against this particular coalition of enemy nations.[42]

Naming these specific nations is rhetorically powerful since it again emphasizes

that YHWH is acting restoratively for the Judahite community. Joel 4:4–8 demonstrates

YHWH's authority and intention to remove enemies and guarantee security, which are

welcome statements in the wake of the portended destruction in Joel 1:1–2:17. One of the

suggested functions of oracles against foreign nations is to offer hope to a despairing

audience that YHWH would rescue them.[43] This function is active in Joel 4:4–8 since

YHWH promises to act against Judah's enemies and eliminate their threat. Although

Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia are not mentioned in Joel 1:1–2:17, they still serve the

rhetorical purpose of demonstrating YHWH's intention to rescue the Judahite

community.

The precise manner in which Joel 4:4 presents these accusations is worthy of

further consideration. Joel 4:4 makes Tyre, Sidon, and the regions of Philistia the targets

of two successive rhetorical questions that YHWH asks.[44] The first question is general in

nature and asks rather obscurely "what are you to me?" (מָה־אַתֶּם לִי). The implied answer

of this question is that they are of little or no account in the eyes of YHWH. The second

question brings the meaning into closer view. It asks הַגְמוּל אַתֶּם מְשַׁלְּמִים עָלָי ("are you

paying back a recompense against me?"). The idea behind this question is to inquire

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[42] Another perspective comes from Sweeney who argues that Joel's propensity to rework material from Obadiah (which condemns Edom) led him to Amos' condemnations of nations who sold captives to Edom. See Sweeney, *Twelve*, 178.

[43] Raabe, "Why Prophetic Oracles?" 249. Other functions of these oracles that Raabe lists include: i) warnings against foreign alliances, ii) warnings against desiring the nations' gods, iii) necessary background for indictments directed against Israel and Judah.

[44] Allen, *Joel*, 111. Allen uses these rhetorical questions to suggest that YHWH is adopting the role of plaintiff in a lawsuit, before acting as judge and executing the divinely ordained punishment.

whether Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia believe that perhaps they have a legitimate case

against YHWH and are attacking Judah out of a sense of aggrieved justice.

The first word of the second rhetorical question is גְּמוּל ("recompense"), which is

key to understanding the rhetorical purpose of Joel 4:4 since it occurs three times within

this verse, first in this rhetorical question and then twice more in YHWH's answer. This

repetition suggests that YHWH's judgment against these nations reflects their guilt.[45]

YHWH's use of הַגְּמוּל subverts the potential argument of the nations that they have a

legitimate grievance; YHWH's response makes it evident that these nations will reap

their just rewards instead.

The crimes that these nations commit extend beyond their forays into the slave

trade. The first half of Joel 4:5 indicates that they have aggrieved YHWH by taking

treasures of silver and gold to adorn their own buildings (לְהֵיכְלֵיכֶם).[46] The repeated use of

the first person pronominal suffix in this verse emphasizes YHWH's ownership of these

items (כַּסְפִּי וּזְהָבִי) while other prophetic literature makes YHWH's claim explicit over

these precious metals (Hag 2:8).[47] The claim in this verse extends beyond the treasures

found in the temple which the Babylonians captured. In this case the silver and gold

probably refer to the plunder and spoil of raiding since there is no suggestion that a

Philistine-Phoenician alliance ever looted the Jerusalem temple.[48] The second half of Joel

4:5 is a parallel that uses the relatively rare word מַחְמַד as a synonym for כֶּסֶף and זָהָב (cf.

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[45] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 179.

[46] The noun הֵיכָל can refer to both temples (1 Sam 1:9; 2 Kgs 18:16) and palaces (1 Kgs 21:1; 2 Kgs 20:18; Ps 45:9; Dan 1:4). This passage does not provide any explicit context for specifying one location over another. Crenshaw suggests that "palaces" makes more sense since we might expect a reference to foreign gods should a religious use be in view; Crenshaw, Joel, 181. In any event, the basic idea that these nations are guilty of plundering that which is YHWH's for their own display is evident.

[47] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 181.

[48] Barton, *Joel*, 102.

1 Kgs 20:6; 2 Chr 36:19; Isa 64:10; Ezek 24:21). This is a more general term that refers

to precious or valued items. Again this word possesses the first person singular suffix,

emphasizing YHWH's ownership of these items.

Joel 4:6 brings the slave trade fully into view and accuses the guilty nations of

taking the children of Judah and Jerusalem into captivity and selling them to a group

called the בְּנֵי הַיְּוָנִים, whom most commentators usually identify as Ionians or Greeks.[49]

Interestingly, Ezek 27:13 also mentions this people-group in an oracle against Tyre and

describes them as exchanging slaves for Tyre's merchandise, which echoes the concerns

of Joel 4:6 (cf. Zech 9:1–13).[50] This verse fronts the grammatical objects (וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵי

יְרוּשָׁלַם), emphasizing the captured peoples' identity as children of Jerusalem and Judah.

A subordinate clause introduced by לְמַעַן follows, stating that these nations purport to

send their captives away from their land. This verse also contains a dual occurrence of

third person plural suffixes on הַרְחִיקָם ("sending them afar") and גְבוּלָם ("their borders")

which refer to the Judahite community.[51] The statement that the captors will send the

"children of Judah" outside of their land sets up the response of YHWH that follows.

YHWH's restoration is first to return them home, then to mete out judgment against their

former captors.

Joel 4:7–8 announces the verdict on these nations for their crimes against YHWH

and his people. Just as Joel 4:4–6 identifies the offenses of the nations as crimes against

YHWH, so these final two verses declare that none other than YHWH will enact the

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[49] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 182; Barton, *Joel*, 101. References to Greeks are infrequent in the Old Testament but they are visible in several other prophetic passages (cf. Isa 66:19; Dan 8:21; 10:20; 11:2; Zech 9:13).

[50] Zechariah 9:1–13 also shows a progression from Tyre and Sidon to the Philistine cities in its portrayal of the march of the divine warrior. This passage also mentions בני הַיְּוָנִים, with the indication that YHWH is going to stir up the Judahites to fight against them.

[51] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 182. Demoting the Judahite community to the status of grammatical objects may suggest an emphasis in their change in status from owning property to becoming property.

appropriate punishment.[52] YHWH first promises to bring the Judahite community back to

their homeland before describing divine retribution against those responsible. The

keyword גְּמוּל ("recompense") occurs here for the fourth and final time in Joel 4:7, this

time with the second person masculine plural pronoun suffixed to it (גְּמֻלְכֶם). This again

emphasizes that it is YHWH's גְּמוּל against these nations that carries the day, not the גְּמוּל

that these specific nations may claim to have against YHWH at the beginning of Joel 4:4.

Joel 4:4–8 thus dramatically employs the concept of *lex talionis* where the punishment

for selling YHWH's people into slavery is for YHWH to sell the offending nations into

slavery. These nations receive a judgment identical to their offense against YHWH and

the Judahite community which provides, "one of the clearest examples of poetic justice in

the prophets."[53]

The use of geographical locations in Joel 4:7–8 deepens the picture of poetic

justice. The response to the raiding and slaving activities of the "seaboard coalition" of

Philistia, Tyre and Sidon who sell the Judahites into slavery across the sea to the

northwest is the promise that the Judahites will sell them into slavery to the Sabeans who

control the trade routes to the southeast. Consequently, those who sell the Judahites into

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[52] Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 43–44. Ogden rightly notes that YHWH is the primary actor in this dialogue with the nations; YHWH alone is the one who will correct injustice. The Judahite community whom these nations have wronged are called implicitly to subordinate their own potential desires for retribution to the divine promise of retribution.

[53] Miller, *Sin and Judgment*, 76, 122–32. Miller places Joel 4:4–8 in context with other passages that emphasize the correspondence between the offense and the divinely prescribed punishment (cf. Isa 3:9b–11; Jer 50:16; Hos 8:7; Obad 15–16). He considers correspondence between sin and punishment in conjunction with punishment as a consequence of the stated sin, noting that the two criteria for determining punishment often tend to blur together. Lichtenstein details examples of poetic justice principally in wisdom and psalms literature (Pss 7:16; 35:8; 57:7; Prov 28:10; Ecc 10:8), but also considers biblical narrative, notably, Haman's hanging on his own gallows (Esth 7:10) Lichtenstein uses the same terminology as Miller, stating that "divine retribution often exhibits a measure for measure correspondence between a crime and its punishment," Lichtenstein, "Poetry of Poetic Justice," 255–65. This accurately reflects the intention of Joel 4:4–8. Bovati stresses the potential for positive outcome for the innocent party when divinely ordained retribution occurs, as in Joel 4:4–8; Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*, 376–80.

slavery will go into slavery in as alien of a region as possible (Gen 10:7; 1 Chr 1:9; Ps

72:10; Isa 43:3).[54] The Sabeans also probably represent the furthest boundary that the

text's implied audience could likely imagine, thus indicating the complete devastation

and dislocation that YHWH promises to bring on Judah's enemies.[55] The description of

the Sabeans as a far-off country (גּוֹי רָחוֹק) lends support to the idea that the text evokes

the greatest possible sense of dislocation for YHWH's enemies.

This subunit concludes with the declaration that YHWH has spoken (כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר).

This is the second of only two oracular formulae that Joel employs (cf. Joel 2:12). This

formula authenticates divine address and typically concludes a speech from YHWH (cf. 1

Kgs 14:11; Isa 1:2; 22:25; 24:3; 25:8; Jer 13:16; Obad 18).[56] The presence of this formula

adds further weight to the judgments pronounced against these "guilty" nations by stating

incontrovertibly that YHWH has declared their fate. This formula differs from the

remainder of Joel 4:4–8 by shifting from a first person to third person depiction of

YHWH. In the previous verses, the text portrays YHWH as the speaker, engaged in a

dialogue and promising retribution to these nations concerning their treatment of the

Judahite community. Now, at the climax of the discussion, the perspective shifts to a

prophetic declaration that YHWH has spoken. This shift effectively emphasizes the

finality of YHWH's judgment.

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[54] Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 29; Müller, "Seba," 1064. There is also a text critical issue here where the LXX reads εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν ("into captivity"). Dillard suggests that the retroversion for this reading would be לִשְׁבִי or לִשְׁבוּת. Context probably favours the Masoretic reading since naming a specific nation at this point would complete the parallel with Joel 4:6 which mentions the nation to whom the Judahites were sold; Dillard, "Joel," 304.

[55] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 180.

[56] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 184. Interestingly, this formula is used both to introduce and conclude prophetic oracles, even within the same prophetic book. It occurs in Isa 1:2 to bolster the prophet's initial attempt to gain an audience, while also occurring in Isa 22:25 to bring an oracle of judgment to an emphatic conclusion.

Overall, Joel 4:4–8 provides an exposition of the declarations expressed in 4:1–3. These verses highlight the offenses of three specific nations and indicate what YHWH will do in response. YHWH's claim to be able to judge these nations and the artful fashion in which the text constructs the punishment should provide the implied audience with reason for hope. As the implied audience hears the dialogue between YHWH and the nations, it receives assurance that YHWH is acting on its behalf.

Joel 4:9–17: Judgment Against the Nations in General

Joel 4:9–17 continues to describe YHWH's actions and their repercussions for the nations who set themselves in opposition. Joel 4:9–17 looks back to Joel 4:1–3 since it widens the perspective from the specific focus of Joel 4:4–8 on Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia. Joel 4:9–17 resumes the process of judging the "nations" in general. This subunit commences with a lengthy series of imperatives, directed at the nations commanding them to come up against YHWH and test their strength. In this way Joel 4:9–17 is the direct counterpart to the indirect summons offered in Joel 4:1–3. In Joel 4:1–3 the text adopts the voice of YHWH and declares YHWH's intention to enact judgment, but does not specifically begin the process. Joel 4:9–17 actualizes the declarations of 4:1–3 by explicitly summoning the nations and unleashing the day of YHWH.

The process of bringing judgment upon the nations commences in Joel 4:9 with a string of four imperative phrases. The identity of the one issuing these imperatives is not readily apparent. Joel 4:4–8 concludes with the declaration that YHWH has spoken, perhaps laying the foundation for a change of implied speaker in the following verse.[57]

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[57] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 26.

Sweeney argues that the prophet is the implied speaker but intersperses first person

statements from YHWH to add further weight to the claims of the text (cf. 4:12, 17,

21a).[58] The appeal for YHWH to bring down the heavenly host in Joel 4:11 may support

this position. On the other hand, Prinsloo suggests that YHWH resumes the role as

speaker based on a first person verb in 4:12 (אָשֵׁב).[59] This confusion renders it difficult to

distinguish the implied speaker in all cases. The text, however, portrays the prophet as a

divine herald, issuing imperatives under the authority of YHWH that will be carried out.

Consequently, the specific identity of the implied speaker in this section is not critical to

understanding the text's persuasive strategies.

The first three imperative phrases consist of only two or three words, creating a

sharp, staccato rhythm that emphasizes the urgency to respond to these commands.[60] This

fits well with the intensity of the subject matter and the gravity of the conflict which they

presage. The first command is to proclaim (קִרְאוּ) what follows among the nations. The

direct object of the command to proclaim is זאת which in this case anticipates what

follows, rather than looking back over previous statements.[61] This first command also

identifies the recipients of the following commands; they target the collection of

unnamed "nations." In Joel 4:2, the text portrays YHWH as declaring the divine intention

to gather the nations in order to judge them. The first imperative of Joel 4:9 begins to

actualize the process of judgment.

[58] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 181. Sweeney considers Joel 4:9–21 as one discrete unit of which the prophet is the implied speaker. His division of the text requires reading over what appears to be an apparent introductory formula in Joel 4:18 (וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא).
[59] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 97.
[60] Dillard, "Joel," 306.
[61] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 187.

On the way to issuing final judgment, however, the text takes an interesting rhetorical twist. While it preserves the judicial sense of this chapter by declaring YHWH's intention to judge the nations and announcing the day of YHWH, it presents an intermediate step that calls the nations to a last-ditch attempt to resist their inevitable fate. The imperatives that follow the initial command for prophetic proclamation in Joel 4:9 command the nations to prepare for war, ostensibly offering these nations the opportunity to fight back against YHWH. In a prophetic "call to war" there are typically three stages: i) statements about the call to arms and the army's advance; ii) statements concerning the preparation of weapons; and iii) statements about the war itself (cf. Jer 6:4–6; 46:3–4; 50:14–15, 16, 21, 26–27, 29; Hos 5:8; Mic 4:13; Obad 1).[62] As the following analysis demonstrates, Joel 4:9–12 contains phrases that admirably fit the first two categories, but the third is notably absent.

The reason for the absence of statements concerning the conflict itself resides in the text's understanding of the futility of opposing YHWH. The result of the nations' assembly and march against YHWH is inevitable and does not warrant further description that might suggest that they could successfully resist their fate. Despite YHWH's assured victory, however, the imperative phrases commanding the nations to assemble against YHWH create a rhetoric of delay reminiscent of Joel 1:2–3. The delay that Joel 4:9–12 creates before the text unleashes divine judgment in 4:13 heightens the nations' implied sense of hubris since they respond to YHWH's summons by preparing to take part in a battle where the result is foreordained. The efforts of the nations to determine their own

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[62] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 231; cf. Bach, *Die Aufforderungen zur Flucht*, 62–72.

fate are insignificant when compared to the authority of YHWH to act and even govern

the actions of the nations.

The second imperative phrase in Joel 4:9 commences the "call to arms" and draws

upon the prophetic summons to battle which is one part of the imagery derived from the

realm of holy war.[63] The command is for the nations to sanctify a battle (קַדְּשׁוּ מִלְחָמָה).

This same imperative (קַדְּשׁוּ) occurs in Joel 1:14 and 2:15–16 which commands the

covenant community to sanctify a fast. The connection between Joel 4:9 and Joel 2:15–16

is especially notable since both passages contain the dual imperatives קִרְאוּ ("call!") and

קַדְּשׁוּ ("sanctify!"). The two imperatives appear in opposite order in Joel 4:9, which

[63] There is a vast array of literature on the concept of holy war within the Old Testament. Von Rad is credited with the seminal study on the motif where he delineates the elements of holy war as: i) mustering through trumpet blast; ii) gathering in the camp to be consecrated as the people of YHWH; iii) offering sacrifices and receiving a divine oracle of victory; iv) YHWH leading the way and engaging the enemy; v) Israel remembering not to fear but to trust YHWH; vi) war cry and divine terror overtaking the enemy; vii) devoting the spoils to YHWH and viii) the warriors returning home to their tents. Consequently, von Rad conceives "holy war as an eminently cultic undertaking—that is, prescribed and sanctioned by fixed, traditional, sacred rites and observances," von Rad, *Holy War*, 41–51. Other contributions include Miller who argues for resonance between the mythic elements of YHWH's battles found in poetic literature (Exod 15; Judg 5) and the historically oriented accounts of YHWH defeating Israel's enemies. Miller also helpfully describes three theological dimensions that holy war literature engages: i) salvation, which is where YHWH delivers Israel from its enemies; ii) judgment, which is where YHWH fights against Israel as the price for disobedience; iii) kingship, which is where YHWH supports claims of wide-ranging divine dominion through defeating Israel's foes; Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 161–62, 173–75; cf. Cross, "Divine Warrior," 11–30; Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 31–88. Sherlock traces the theme of holy war through both testaments and considers its appearance in Joel as evidence of tension juxtaposed between ideas of universal salvation and universal cataclysm; Sherlock, *God Who Fights*, 201–21. Kang engages in a comparative analysis with other ancient Near Eastern cultures that finds parallels between the exaltation of YHWH as the divine warrior with other deities and suggests that the divine warrior literature seems to appear at the time of a nation's ascendancy; Kang, *Divine War*, 223–24. Lind roots the idea of holy way in the ancient poem of Exod 15 where YHWH alone saves Israel. Israel's role was to believe and await deliverance. He argues that this perspective belongs to the earliest strata of the Old Testament and is not a later theological interpolation. Lind also finds the same process at work in Judg 5 where the Israelite militia does not adopt a cooperative role until after YHWH delivers the decisive blow; Lind, *Monotheism*, 189–90; Lind, *Yahweh is a Warrior*, 46–54, 169–74. This resonates with the events of Joel 4 where the prophet summons the nations to battle against YHWH, then summons YHWH's host in response (see the discussion of 4:11b). In Joel 4, the Judahite community does not participate in the "battle" that achieves restoration; YHWH alone summons the nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat where they will face their inescapable fate.

resonates with the opposing viewpoints that the two passages take concerning YHWH.[64]

The purpose of sanctifying a fast for YHWH's community in Joel 2:15–16 is to entreat

YHWH to respond redemptively in the midst of desperate circumstances. In contrast, the

nations are called to sanctify a battle in Joel 4:9, demonstrating their opposition to

YHWH. This command presupposes a holy war setting in which YHWH fights and a

priest sanctifies an army (not necessarily Israelite) to act as YHWH's agents (cf. Deut

20:1–20; Isa 13:2–3; Jer 6:4; 22:7; 51:27–28; Hos 5:8; Mic 4:13; Obad 1).[65] In this

context, however, YHWH issues the command to sanctify this battle to the opposing

forces; they are to come and meet YHWH in a conflict where they will be defeated.

The remaining two imperative phrases of Joel 4:9 continue to describe the call to

arms. The first imperative phrase is a two word command to stir up the warriors (הָעִירוּ

הַגִּבּוֹרִים). The imperative הָעִירוּ indicates that the warriors will work themselves into a

state of excitement and battle lust in preparation for the conflict.[66] The final imperative

phrase is lengthier and begins with two jussives rather than an imperative. The stark

nature of the jussive commands for the warriors to draw near and go up (יִגְּשׁוּ יַעֲלוּ)

without even an interlinking waw suggests a rapidly-issued series of commands as the

time for battle looms.[67] The subject of these jussives suggests a picture of hurried and

harried mobilization. The subject is "all men of battle" (כֹּל אַנְשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה), which parallels

the הַגִּבּוֹרִים from the previous phrase. It further stresses the commitment required since

everyone capable of wielding a weapon is called to advance against YHWH.

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[64] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 26; Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 232. Wendland correctly identifies a strong sense of irony in the imagery of nations being consecrated for a futile fight against YHWH.

[65] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 181.

[66] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 187. This is one of the few occasions in which the verb עור is used transitively (cf. Jer 51:11; Hag 1:14), calling on YHWH's heralds to stir the nations to warlike activity.

[67] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 188.

Joel 4:10 continues to describe this subunit's call to total war while also providing a fascinating example of the prophet's rhetorical technique. It continues the series of imperatives calling the nations to fully assume a warlike posture. In the first line of this verse, the prophet commands the nations to "beat your plowshares into swords, your pruning hooks into spears," which effectively commands YHWH's enemies to mobilize completely and to turn even agricultural implements into weapons of war.[68] The following phrase, "let the weak say 'I am strong,'" conjures up images of non-warriors being drafted into military service, so that the nations coming to confront YHWH have their highest possible complement of soldiers and weaponry.[69] This final phrase contains one of only four uses of the first person singular pronoun אֲנִי in Joel. Interestingly, YHWH is the pronoun's antecedent in the other three cases (twice in Joel 2:27 and once in 4:17). The weakling's use of a pronoun otherwise reserved for YHWH within the book of Joel intensifies the irony of the nations' challenge to YHWH in Joel 4:9–17.[70]

One of the most significant features of Joel 4:10 is that it explicitly invokes and reverses a prophecy found in both Isaiah and Micah. Isaiah 2:2–4 and Mic 4:1–4 both envision an idyllic time when weapons of war will become agricultural implements. Its occurrence in two different prophetic books suggests that it was a well-known prophecy and there is the potential to achieve a significant rhetorical impact by inverting it.[71] A preponderance of shared vocabulary makes apparent the connection between these three

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[68] Dillard, "Joel," 306; Mariottini, "Joel 3:10," 127–9.

[69] Mariottini, "Joel 3:10," 129–30. The idea of turning farm implements into weaponry suggests a context of climactic battle where there is no longer any need for agricultural tools. All that matters is to assemble as powerful a military force as humanly possible.

[70] Crenshaw, Joel, 189.

[71] Sweeney, Twelve, 182. Commentators are nearly universal in claiming that Joel is reworking the Isaianic material. Allen views it as an example of how Joel echoes older Scripture, sometimes to reverse it; Allen, Joel, 115. Wendland cites this among other examples of Joel's use of Scripture to argue for a post-exilic date for Joel's prophecy; Wendland, Discourse Analysis, 247.

passages. The same verb כָּתַת ("beat") governs the actions of all three passages and all of

the passages employ the same words for the agricultural implements (אֵת for

"plowshares," מַזְמֵרָה for "pruning hooks") and for swords (חֶרֶב).[72] The words for the

other weapon differ (רְמָחִים in Joel and חֲנִית in Isaiah/Micah) but these words are

synonymous, both indicating spears.[73] This degree of lexical and syntactic recursion

certainly suggests that Joel is deliberately invoking and inverting the prophecy found in

Isaiah and Micah.

The rhetorical effect of such an inversion is a question worthy of consideration.

Wendland intriguingly refers to Joel 4:10 as an example of *defamiliarization*, which he

defines as an intertextual recursion that reverses the connotation or expectation of the

original passage.[74] It is an ironic parody of the expected prophetic word, presented with

the same form but invoking the opposite meaning. Whereas Isaiah and Micah envision an

idyllic future where the nations submit to YHWH's authority and have no need of

weaponry, Joel's inversion indicates instead that YHWH will have to break the power of

the nations militarily. Joel 4:10 also inverts the idea of a pilgrimage in which foreign

nations come to Zion in order to submit to YHWH; whereas the Isaianic promise of peace

takes place as foreign nations come to "the mountain of YHWH" in order to be instructed

(Isa 2:3), Joel's summons to the nations calls them to go to the Valley of Jehoshaphat to

receive final judgment (cf. Zech 8:21–23).[75]

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[72] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 188.

[73] Coggins. "Innerbiblical," 78. Coggins also suggests that perhaps this change of vocabulary is intended to be a conscious marker of the reversal of meaning in Joel 4:10; Coggins. *Joel*, 56–57. While this cannot be proved conclusively, the shift in vocabulary does at least call attention to the differences between these passages.

[74] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 251.

[75] Strazicich. *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 233; Zapff. "Perspective on the Nations," 308–10.

The rhetorical effect of these calls to full-fledged armed resistance in Joel 4:10 is to make a mockery of the nations that trust in their military strength to withstand YHWH.[76] The repetition of the commands to the nations to gather their military strength is ultimately ironic given its eventual futility. Joel 4:10 thus asserts the supremacy of YHWH to the utmost degree since Joel inverts a prophecy of future peace and uses this inversion to command the nations to "do their worst," even though it will have no impact on their eventual fate. The summons to total war contained in this verse is in effect a summons to final judgment since the nations will not be able to stand against YHWH's unleashed power.[77]

Joel 4:11 continues the string of imperative clauses, but the interpretation of this verse is the subject of significant debate. Joel 4:11a clearly is congruent with Joel 4:9–10 since this half-verse continues to issue commands to the nations who challenge YHWH. There are two imperatives at the beginning of Joel 4:11. While the second (וּבֹאוּ, "come") is straightforward, the first (עוּשׁוּ) is difficult since it is a *hapax legomenon*. Scholars have put forward multiple proposals to resolve this issue including different emendations and attempting to follow readings from various versions, but none has gained significant traction.[78] Its proximity to וּבֹאוּ suggests that it is a parallel command but even that much is conjecture.

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[76] Wolff, "Plowshares," 134. "The phrase 'plowshares into swords' makes a blunt mockery of the world powers, who think that by completely arming themselves with much effort they will have power and superiority over the people of God."

[77] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 112.

[78] BHS proposes either עוּרוּ ("rouse yourselves") or חוּשׁוּ ("hurry") although there is no versional support. Crenshaw tentatively supports the latter proposal "on the basis of context and the remote possibility of an aural mistake by a scribe" (ח for ע), while Simkins considers it irresolvable and leaves it untranslated; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 189; cf. Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 229. The versions do not offer any greater clarity. The LXX instead reads συναθροίζεσθε which means "to gather," from which Wolff conjectures a *Vorlage* of נקבּצוּ; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 72. However, this would be a rare retroversion for συναθροίζειν which typically translates the Niphal of קבץ. The Syr ('tknšw) and TgJ (יתכנשון) follow the lead of the LXX. The

The addressee of the imperatives in Joel 4:11 is the collection of nations whom

Joel 4:9–17 calls to war against YHWH. The text here emphasizes the broad scope of this

collection since all nations (כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם) from all around (מִסָּבִיב) are the recipients of the

commands in this half-verse. The scope of the appeal resonates and reinterprets the call

for the Judahite community to come before YHWH in Joel 2:15–17. In that case, the text

commands the entire community to gather before YHWH by using the merismus of the

very young and the very old and the image of the bride and bridegroom leaving their

chamber as statements of the commitment required. Joel 4:9–11 now appropriates the

command for a full gathering through its call for the nations to fully mobilize by

reinterpreting Isaianic prophecy and appealing to the "weaklings" to arm themselves to

march against YHWH.[79] Whereas the call for the entire Judahite community to gather

before YHWH ultimately leads to their salvation, this call for the nations to mobilize

themselves fully only sets the stage for their imminent destruction.

The remaining clause in Joel 4:11a (וְנִקְבְּצוּ שָׁמָּה) is also the subject of some

confusion. First, identifying וְנִקְבְּצוּ שָׁמָּה as a clause requires the interpreter to ignore the

Masoretic accentuation which places the *athnach* under the verb וְנִקְבָּצוּ. This would

indicate that שָׁמָּה is the first word of Joel 4:11b.[80] In contrast, the LXX reads συνάχθητε

ἐκεῖ, suggesting that וְנִקְבְּצוּ שָׁמָּה is a distinct clause.[81] This issue defies conclusive

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Vulgate reads *erumpite* ("to break forth") which may either mean that it is reading from a different *Vorlage* or trying to make sense of the MT as it stands.

[79] Deist, "Parallels," 72. Deist draws a broader connection between Joel 2:1–17 and 4:9–17, arguing that the framework of total war informs both passages. This is not entirely accurate since the thrust of the military imagery in Joel 2:1–11 is that the approaching invader is unstoppable. The point of the "mobilization" of the entire Judahite community in Joel 2:15–17 is to call on YHWH to intercede on their behalf; they do not mobilize to engage in military activities, instead the text calls for them to commit fully to imploring YHWH to fight their battle.

[80] See Sweeney, *Twelve*, 182, for an example of an interpreter who follows the Masoretic punctuation.

[81] Dillard, "Joel," 306.

resolution but reading וְנִקְבְּצוּ שָׁמָּה is preferable since it provides an object for the verb and

sets apart the plea to YHWH (הַנְחַת יְהוָה גִּבּוֹרֶיךָ) that comprises Joel 4:11b. Since Joel

4:11a commences with imperative forms, it is seems reasonable to suggest that Joel 4:11b

would mirror that structure.

Secondly, the verb וְנִקְבְּצוּ is in the affix form where context would suggest an

imperative to fit with the imperatives that began Joel 4:11.[82] Wolff and Simkins follow

the lead of the LXX (συνάχθητε) and replace וְנִקְבְּצוּ with the imperative וְהִקָּבְצוּ in order

to preserve syntactical continuity, while Allen claims that it could be an obscure form of

the imperative.[83] Crenshaw refers to this verb as a niphal jussive without explaining how

this form could represent a jussive. He does, however, capture the essential purpose of

this clause noting that it "indicates the goal and result of the previous two imperatives."[84]

Consequently, it may be preferable to read this as a result clause, indicating that the

nations will heed the commands to assemble indicated in the first two imperatives. They

will gather there (שָׁמָּה) after assembling their full force as indicated in Joel 4:10 and meet

their fate. Ultimately, the purpose of Joel 4:11a is to move the scene towards the time and

place of YHWH's final judgment. YHWH instructs the nations move towards the place

of judgment.

Joel 4:11b is also difficult to interpret since it breaks away from the string of

imperatives commanding the nations to assemble and prepare for battle. Instead, Joel

4:11b offers up a vocative plea, "bring down, O YHWH, your warriors" (הַנְחַת יְהוָה

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[82] Coggins, *Joel*, 59; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 189.

[83] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 72; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 229; Allen, *Joel*, 107. Allen bases this proposal on GKC §51o which cites this verb as a possible example of stress-shifting in the niphal conjugation. It claims that this would result in the "rejection" of the initial ה that would signal the imperative tense. This section of GKC, however, only tentatively puts that claim forward suggesting that there may be problems with determining the correct text.

[84] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 189.

גְּבּוֹרֶיךָ). This apparent lack of continuity with the surrounding text puzzles many

interpreters who seek alternative explanations. The LXX reading of ὁ πραΰς ἔστω

μαχητής ("let the meek become a warrior") echoes the sentiments expressed in the

preceding verse.[85] This possibility, however, is unlikely since πραΰς translates עָנִי in its

other occurrences in the LXX, meaning that in this instance it was probably a guess at

how to handle a difficult text.[86] Wolff and Simkins prefer a reading based on the Syriac

and Targum which would reflect a *Vorlage* of ויחת יהוה גבוריך, where the verb ויחת is a

hiphil jussive form of חתת ("to shatter").[87] As a result, this final phrase expresses the

prophet's desire for YHWH to defeat the nations' warriors.

One defence of the Masoretic text is to suggest that amidst this flurry of summons

to the nations it is not unreasonable for the prophet to also call for YHWH's own army to

assemble in opposition since the text is constructing a judgment scene (cf. Isa 13:1–5; Jer

50:14–16, 21).[88] Dillard helpfully cites Zech 3:5 as an example of a brief prayer from the

prophet interrupting a prophetic discourse. While the Syriac/Targumic reading may seem

to fit better into the context, the Masoretic reading is still comprehensible.

Rhetorically, this prophetic interjection offers a poignant counterpoint to the

preceding imperatives of Joel 4:9–11a. The text places in the mouth of the prophet an

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[85] Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 265.

[86] Hatch and Redpath, *Concordance*, 1201.

[87] Wolff, *Joel*, 73; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 229.

[88] Dillard, "Joel," 306–7. In a diachronic study of what he terms the "war oracle," Christensen views the prophetic use of a metaphorical summons to battle as a development of an ancient form in which a charismatic figure would summon the nation to engage in warfare to preserve its existence (cf. Exod 17:9; Num 21:34, 31:3–4; Josh 3:5; 1 Sam 11:7). Essentially, "the war oracle as tactical element in military strategy was transformed into the literary mode of a prophetic judgment speech against both military foes and the nations of Israel," Christensen, *Transformation of the War Oracle*, 47, 282–83. Christensen's study does not include Joel 4, although he mentions this passage as one worth considering for its development of this prophetic form. It is sufficient, however, to note here that the interjection of Joel 4:11b that summons the divine host bears some correspondence to the prophetic use of the idea of a battle summons.

"emotive, exclamatory plea to God for immediate judicial and punitive action."[89] While

Joel 4:9–11a commands the nations to assemble and gird for battle, the interjection in

Joel 4:11b offers a sharp reminder that this mobilization will meet powerful resistance in

the form of YHWH and the heavenly forces who intervene salvifically on behalf of the

Judahite community.[90] The interplay of addressees is fascinating. The nations, to whom

the text directs the summons in Joel 4:9–11a, now hear a prophetic plea for YHWH to

intervene that seals their fate. The implied Judahite audience hears this as an oracle of

salvation since they know that the summons to the nations will encounter a response from

YHWH. Thus, even when the text is in the midst of summoning the nations, it gives

indications to the implied audience that they ought to trust in YHWH.

The appeal in Joel 4:11b also expresses symmetry with the following verse in its

calls for the divine warriors to descend to meet the nations. Subsequently, Joel 4:12 calls

the nations to ascend (וְיַעֲלוּ) to face YHWH and the heavenly host.[91] The nations go up

only to encounter YHWH and the heavenly host descending to meet them. Essentially,

Joel 4:11b heightens the tension by inverting the text's point of view and giving the

reader a view of the other side of the story; the nations assemble in full force, but this

verse also prefigures the divine response.

Joel 4:12 concludes the divine summons to judgment by summarizing the

different features of Joel 4:9–11. Joel 4:12 again encourages action by foregrounding the

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[89] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 26.

[90] The word used for the divine army is גִּבּוֹרֶיךָ ("your warriors") which is frequently used to describe human warriors (cf. Josh 10:2; 1 Kgs 1:8, 10; Job 16:14; Ps 33:16; Hos 10:13; Nah 2:4; Zeph 1:14). However, Miller notes that this term also is applicable to heavenly warriors (cf. Ps 103:20; Judg 5:23); Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 138. Miller also posits that the idea of YHWH's heavenly warriors is conflated with the concept of the divine council for whom prophets served as heralds or messengers: Miller, "Divine Council," 100–07. The identification of this force as גִּבּוֹרֶיךָ may also separate it from identification of the locusts as YHWH's army in Joel 2:10 (חֵילוֹ).

[91] Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 138.

two jussive verbs commanding the nations to gather and go up (יֵעוֹרוּ וְיַעֲלוּ). The location

to which this verse summons the nations is the same as Joel 4:2; thus, it employs the

same pun on the name of the valley and the activity that occurs there. The Valley of

Jehoshaphat (יְהוֹשָׁפָט) is the place where YHWH will sit in order to judge (לִשְׁפֹּט) these

nations. The occurrence of this title here clarifies any issues in identifying the referent of

שָׁמָּה from the preceding verse; it points to this climactic valley.[92] Joel 4:12 also connects

to the preceding summons by reusing and reinterpreting the phrase describing the scope

of the summoned nations from the previous verse (כָל־הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב).

Beyond summarizing preceding features, Joel 4:12 actualizes the nations'

judgment by YHWH. Rhetorically, the invitation for the nations to gather and go up in

the first half of Joel 4:12 is a dare; it encourages these unnamed nations to ascend to the

place of inescapable judgment detailed in the second half of the verse.[93] There is also an

ironic element to Joel 4:12 since the nations realize that while they are summoned to

battle in Joel 4:9, they instead encounter foreordained divine judgment where YHWH

adopts the victor's role and declares the fate of the vanquished.[94] Finally, Joel 4:12

concludes the summons found in Joel 4:9–12. These verses together command the

nations to gather in an aptly named valley with their full might so that YHWH might

confront them and announce the divine decision.

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[92] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 99.

[93] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 190.

[94] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 300. In contrast, Good draws together the realms of warfare and judgment in prophetic imagery and considers the summons to the nations as a medium through which YHWH acts as judge: Good, "Just War," 385–400. Consequently, for him there is less irony at work since YHWH's authority to judge derives from the divine ability to defeat the nations. Good is correct to draw attention to the close linkage between YHWH's role as warrior and YHWH's role of judge over the nations, but the lack of mention of an actual battle in Joel 4:9–12 is still surprising in the wake of the detail given for the process of mobilization.

Joel 4:13 introduces the results of the summons to the nations.[95] Again, the

nations have little agency in this verse; they respond to the summons only to be subjected

to inescapable divine judgment. The nations' lack of agency is evident in the

preponderance of imperatives from YHWH that govern this verse, directed at the

heavenly host whom the prophet summons to answer the nations' mobilization in Joel

4:11 (cf. Zech 14:5).[96] The imperatives that commence Joel 4:13 build from YHWH's

declaration of the previous verse and make it evident that YHWH is the driving force

behind the nations' fate. Keller aptly states, "Cette grandiose scène du jugement est

réalisée par un seul acteur, YHWH. Tous les autres personnages—les foules des nations,

les serviteurs de YHWH—ne sont que des comparses."[97] Joel 4:13 reveals that the

nations' assembly is an act of futility; there is no place allotted for them to strive against

YHWH's judgment since this verse moves from summons to the declaration of final

judgment.

The imagery of this verse comes from the agricultural realm and it presents two

vivid pictures of YHWH's judgment. The first is that of a field ready for harvesting, with

YHWH issuing the command to send in the sickle (שִׁלְחוּ מַגָּל) to harvest the ripe crop.

The second image is a command to trample grapes since the wine-press (גַּת) is full.

Again, imperatives govern Joel 4:13 with the command to begin the harvest matched with

dual imperatives בֹּאוּ רְדוּ ("come! trample!") to begin the process of trampling grapes.

The use of imperatives again reinforces YHWH's authority since these divine commands

commence the process of judgment.

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[95] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 181.
[96] Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 31; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 191.
[97] Keller, *Osee*, 151.

The common link between the two agricultural images is that the appropriate time

has arrived since one harvests a field or tramples grapes when the crop has reached

maturity.[98] The text makes this apparent through its threefold use of כִּי in Joel 4:13, which

introduces three declarations that the time is appropriate for the actions that YHWH

commands.[99] Further, both the image of the grain field and the image of grapes resonate

with other passages that employ metaphors of ripeness to indicate judgment (cf. Isa 17:5;

Jer 24:2; 48:32; Hos 2:9; Amos 8:1–2). In particular, Isa 63:1–6 vividly depicts YHWH

as the Divine Warrior stained with the blood of the enemies whom he tramples like

grapes in a winepress. In the case of Joel 4:13, YHWH declares that the time has arrived

to judge the nations; it is time to reap the divine harvest.

Joel 4:13 also details the magnitude of the harvest. The final clause of this verse

begins with the phrase הֵשִׁיקוּ הַיְקָבִים ("the vats overflow") which conjures up an image of

such abundance that the process of trampling overflows the allotted containers.

Interestingly, this same phrase also occurs in Joel 2:24 where it helps to describe the

enormity of YHWH's restorative actions for the Judahite community. The image of

overflowing vats takes on a different metaphorical sense in Joel 4:13, with the fullness of

the vats reflecting the ripeness of the time for judgment.[100] In Joel 4:13 the image also

adopts negative connotations, where the filling of vats reflects the imminence of the

outpouring of YHWH's wrath because of the nations' immense guilt. While Joel 2:18–27

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[98] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 182. Sweeney states that the first image, "presupposes the imagery of standing grain that is cut down at harvest time to portray the fall of enemy soldiers," while the second image, "presupposes the imagery of grapes being tread at harvest time, which symbolizes the blood shed by the fallen enemy warriors."

[99] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 27. The first כִּי introduces the declaration that the harvest in ripe, the second כִּי introduces the declaration that the winepress is full, while the final כִּי introduces the declaration the nations' wickedness is of a quantity that requires divine judgment.

[100] Marcus, "Nonrecurring Doublets," 63.

declares YHWH's intention for full and overflowing divine restoration, Joel 4:13 declares

that the time is ripe for divine judgment on those who afflicted the Judahite community.

Joel 4:14 continues to describe the results of the summons. Two separate

instances of repetition characterize this short verse beginning with its first two words,

הֲמוֹנִים הֲמוֹנִים ("multitudes, multitudes"). This word is employed often in martial contexts,

suggesting that the "multitudes" are preparing for battle (cf. Judg 4:7; 1 Kgs 20:13; Dan

11:10). Repeating this noun indicates a superlative quality, suggesting in this case that the

nations who answer YHWH's summons are beyond count (cf. Isa 13:4; 17:12; Ezek

39:11).[101] The statement that there are innumerable foes may allude to earlier references

to the locust hordes that the text describes as uncountable (Joel 1:6).[102] The difference,

however, is that YHWH's power and authority are now active on behalf of the Judahite

community, which renders irrelevant the vast quantity of foes.

The singular form of the noun הָמוֹן is found at Isa 13:4, another "day of YHWH"

passage that describes YHWH's power over the nations to which Joel has previously

made reference (cf. Joel 1:15 and Isa 13:6).[103] The Isaianic reference draws from a

different part of the semantic range of הָמוֹן, referring to the noise that an assembly of

peoples would create.[104] The passages, however, share a common orientation concerning

the certainty of YHWH's triumph over the gathered nations. Both texts powerfully

demonstrate that no collection of nations can challenge YHWH's authority. Further, the

conflation of the senses of grouping and noise may also indicate that the repetition of

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[101] GKC §123e.

[102] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 27.

[103] Coggins, *Joel*, 60.

[104] Isaiah 13:4a reads קוֹל הָמוֹן בֶּהָרִים דמות עַם־רָב ("a sound of tumult upon the mountains, a likeness of many people").

הַמוֹנִים הַמוֹנִים has an onomatopoetic effect. The sound of the repeated word essentially echoes the chaos and confusion found in the babbling voices of a large crowd.[105]

The second example of repetition in Joel 4:14 provides the location to which YHWH summons this collection of foes. The aforementioned multitudes assemble in the "Valley of Decision" (בְּעֵמֶק הֶחָרוּץ) to await their fate.[106] Joel 4:14b then declares that the day of YHWH is near in the "Valley of Decision." This repetition expresses the certainty of YHWH's final verdict, with its full unveiling set for the approaching day of YHWH.[107] The name assigned to the valley in Joel 4:14 changes from 4:2 and 4:12 which refer to it as the "Valley of Jehoshaphat." The two titles, however, appear to be synonymous with the text stressing the idea of judging in Joel 4:2, 12 and providing the final verdict here in 4:14. Further, the text may be engaging in double entendre through the change of name. There is a suggestion that this verse plays off of a double meaning of חָרוּץ which is also glossed as an instrument of cutting or a "threshing sledge" (cf. Job 41:22; Isa 28:27; Amos 1:3).[108] Thus, in concert with the imagery of Joel 4:13 that concerns harvesting agricultural produce, the עֵמֶק הֶחָרוּץ may evoke a further image of threshing to describe YHWH's judgment.

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[105] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 192; Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 27. Wendland acknowledges, however, the difficulty of gauging onomatopoeia without knowing the sound-sense correspondences present in the original language; Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 229. Schart notes that Joel 4:14 is the only occasion where הָמוֹן occurs in a plural form and suggests that the reduplication of the otherwise unattested הַמוֹנִים has a superlative function. The sound of the nations gathered together is extraordinary, but ultimately it has no bearing on their fate since YHWH controls the events in this valley; Schart, "Deathly Silence," para 30–34.

[106] This is the only place in the Old Testament which uses חָרוּץ as a noun. Coggins, however, suggests that it draws from the same semantic range as the verb חָרַץ which helps to suggest an understanding of "decision" in this verse (cf. 1 Kgs 20:40; Isa 10:22–23); Coggins, *Joel*, 60.

[107] Thompson, "Repetition," 103; Marcus, "Doublets," 61.

[108] Ahlström, *Joel*, 81; cf. Merx, *Die Prophetie*, 74. Strazicich points to the text's potential use of other multivalent terms, including the "Valley of Jehoshaphat" in Joel 4:2, 12, to suggest that the ambiguity of meaning is probably intentional in this case; Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 237. Another less plausible suggestion is that the name is derived from חָרִיץ, which is a type of cheese. This has led to this valley being associated with Josephus' Valley of Tyropoeon (derived from a Greek word meaning "cheese makers, cheese mongers") which runs through Jerusalem. See Dillard, "Joel," 300, 309.

Joel 4:14 is also significant for reintroducing the day of YHWH into the rhetoric

of the text. Interestingly, this is the third occasion on which the text describes the day of

YHWH as קָרוֹב or "near" (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1). In the first two instances, the text warned

the Judahite community about the coming of YHWH's day, probably as a rhetorical

strategy to push them to adopt the prophetic program of response (cf. Joel 2:12–17). On

this occasion, the nearness of YHWH's day signals divine deliverance since the

"multitudes" who have gathered are the ones against whom YHWH acts. The repeated

description of the nearness of the day of YHWH is a deliberate echo of the previous

passages.[109] This echo demonstrates how radically the situation changes throughout this

prophetic book. In Joel 1:15 and 2:1, the announcement of the proximity of the day of

YHWH is a cause for great alarm among the Judahite community, whereas in Joel 4:14,

the proximity of the day of YHWH signals salvation for those who call on the name of

YHWH (Joel 3:5) while promising final judgment to the foreign nations when YHWH

renders the verdict in the "Valley of Decision."[110]

Following the reintroduction of the day of YHWH in Joel 4:14, Joel 4:15–16

begins to describe its effects.[111] Again, divine agency drives these verses since the

trembling of the heavenly bodies and YHWH's establishment of divine authority in Zion

is reminiscent of themes derived from the march of the Divine Warrior (cf. Isa 13:10;

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[109] Schwesig argues for an even more detailed connection between the day of YHWH passages, identifying elements of reversal of Joel 2:1–11 in Joel 4:1–3, 9–17 as the day of YHWH transitions from destruction to salvation for the Judahite audience; Schwesig, *Die Rolle der Tag-JHWHs-Dichtungen*, 174–79. These include the sanctity of Zion, the advance of armies and voice of YHWH. His identification of a parallel construction requires excising Joel 4:4–8 which, as discussed above, does play an important role in constructing the meaning of this chapter.

[110] Bourke, "Jour," 22.

[111] Bourke, "Jour," 22. The transition from the proximity of the day of YHWH to descriptions of its impact is consistent with Bourke's assertion that the two most striking characteristics of the day of YHWH in Joel are its "proximité et grandeur."

Judg 5:20; Hab 3:11).[112] In the process of invoking these cosmological themes, Joel

4:15–16 is also notable for its interaction with Joel 1–2. Joel 4:15 quotes 2:10b with its

description of the darkening of the heavenly luminaries. Joel 4:15 and 2:10b also share

close proximity to a reference to the day of YHWH (cf. Joel 2:11, 4:14). The parallels

continue into Joel 4:16 which begins with a roar from YHWH, echoing how YHWH

shouts in front of his army in 2:11.[113] Further, Joel 4:16 and 2:10 both describe a

convulsing that encompasses both heaven and earth, pointing to the immense power of

the one who causes the shaking.[114]

Interestingly, the text changes the order of activities in the two passages. In Joel

2:10–11, the progression is: i) trembling of earth and heavens; ii) darkening of heavenly

luminaries; and iii) YHWH's loud shout. In Joel 4:15–16, the order is: i) darkening of the

luminaries; ii) YHWH's roar, and iii) shaking of the heavens and the earth.[115] The reuse

and reconfiguration of this imagery helps to highlight Joel's progression in depicting the

day of YHWH. In Joel 2:10–11 the focus is internal; the image of frightening

cosmological events is the capstone to a description of the terror that the day of YHWH

would bring upon Zion. It moves from the earth to the heavens, culminating in YHWH's

voice breaking in to announce the day of YHWH. In Joel 4:15–16 the focus is external,

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[112] Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 118. Simkins claims that, "These are the convulsions of nature which are typically associated with the divine warrior's cosmogonic battle," Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 235. When the heavenly luminaries shake, YHWH asserts supremacy over the nations who challenge YHWH and over the created order that can only convulse in response.

[113] The two phrases differ in the verb tense that they employ. Joel 2:11 employs the suffix conjugation (נָתַן קוֹלוֹ) while Joel 4:16 employs the prefix conjugation (יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ). However, this distinction does not outweigh the similarity of the imagery.

[114] In both Joel 2:10 and 4:16, the verb describing the convulsions of the heavens and the earth is רָעַשׁ. Kessler suggests that when this verb occurs with an impersonal subject/object, such as the heavens and the earth, the verb takes on a hyperbolic meaning. The intention is to stress the awesome power of the one who causes what should be fixed objects to shake in this fashion; Kessler, "Shaking of the Nations," 161.

[115] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 194.

following a description of YHWH enacting his day against unspecified "multitudes."[116]

Accordingly, the divine roar in Joel 4:16 originates from within Jerusalem as a signal of

protection since YHWH dwells there as defender instead of coming against Zion, leading

the locust horde.

The latter half of Joel 4:16 solidifies that this day of YHWH is actually a signal of

YHWH's desire to protect the Judahite community. It states that YHWH will be a refuge

(מַחֲסֶה) and a stronghold (מָעוֹז) for his people. This fits with the progression of Divine

Warrior imagery in which after victory, the deity returns to a sacral location in order to

establish kingship.[117] YHWH's presence in Zion after the darkening of the heavenly

luminaries indicates divine triumph over the nations' challenge and the promise of future

presence and protection for those who dwell under divine protection. This half-verse

consists of two parallel verbless clauses which both have YHWH as their subject, which

emphasizes that YHWH is the one who acts to bring salvation and security. This half-

verse may also invoke liturgical language to describe the sufficiency of YHWH's

protection (cf. Pss 14:6; 46:2; 61:4; 71:7. cf. Isa 17:10; 25:4; Jer 16:19).[118] Thus, even as

the heavenly bodies darken and convulse, YHWH's people find safety and security

rooted in the divine presence.[119]

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[116] Prinsloo, Theology, 100. Matthews emphasizes the sense of reversal between Joel 2:10–11 and 4:14–16, where the change in terms describing cosmological events presages the change in target against which YHWH directs the heavenly army; Matthews, "Power to Endure," 39.

[117] Greenspoon, "Origin," 272. Greenspoon examines Divine Warrior texts from both the Old Testament and other ancient Near Eastern cultures and proposes the following rubric for the march of the Divine Warrior. The Divine warrior marches to battle which results in the natural world convulsing and languishing. After the Divine Warrior's triumph, the deity returns to take up kingship (usually among other deities on a holy mountain) and nature responds with fertility and joy.

[118] Crenshaw, Joel, 194.

[119] Coggins, Joel, 60.

Joel 4:16 also shifts the scene from the "Valley of Decision" (בְּעֵמֶק הֶחָרוּץ)

described in 4:15 to Zion which is the setting for the remainder of the chapter.[120]

Essentially, the preceding verses in this chapter fulfill the promise to "restore the

fortunes" of Judah and Jerusalem in Joel 4:1 by concentrating on the fate of those who

oppose YHWH. Now the focus shifts as the text details what the restoration of fortunes

might entail for those fortunate enough to be in Zion under the aegis of YHWH. Joel 4:16

effectively reaffirms that Zion regains its expected status of inviolability since YHWH's

presence is firmly rooted within it (Pss 46:2–4; 48:5–9; 76:4–10).[121] Whereas Joel 2:10–

11 threatens the existence of Zion because of the presence of YHWH among the

attackers, YHWH's divine roar reasserts Zion's status as place of protection thanks to the

presence of the deity.

One further rhetorical feature of Joel 4:16 is its connection to other prophetic

literature. The first clause of Joel 4:16 is וַיהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאָג וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ ("YHWH roars

from Zion, and from Jerusalem he utters his voice"), which notably occurs in exactly the

same form in Amos 1:2.[122] This raises the question of the relationship between the

passages (cf. Jer 25:30). Nogalski suggests that the divine roar is a redactional piece in

Joel that anchors Joel 4 to the judgment material of 2:1–11, and anticipates the oracles

against nations that begin the book of Amos.[123] At the very least, the citation from Amos

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[120] Barton sees this geographical distinction as evidence that this is a separate oracle, unconnected with the preceding verses: Barton, *Joel*, 106. However, this devalues the text's poetic imagination; instead, these are complementary visual images explaining YHWH's actions at this time. See Crenshaw, *Joel*, 192–3.

[121] Renz asserts that, "the assumption that Zion is an especially protected place is the inevitable conclusion from the premise that God is present in the city," Renz, "Use of the Zion Tradition," 84.

[122] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 28. Wendland takes note of the first clause in Joel 4:16 (וַיהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאָג), noting how it positions Zion before the verb describing YHWH's action. He calls this "locative constituent focus," and it helps to shift the geographical locale of this subunit from the climactic valley to YHWH's dwelling in Zion.

[123] Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 37.

provides another example of Joel's willingness to reshape prophetic material to serve its purposes. There is some similarity between the two passages since Amos uses this utterance to introduce a collection of oracles against nations, which resonates with YHWH's actions of judging the foreign nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.[124] Both passages picture YHWH as the one who roars, which appeals to the authority of YHWH as a judge as well as the image of a lion announcing its powerful presence.[125]

Joel and Amos, however, use the image of YHWH's roar for different purposes. Amos creates a geographical merismus (shepherds' pastures/top of Carmel) to state that YHWH's roar powerfully affects the whole land, whereas Joel employs a merismus involving the heavens and the earth. The effect of the divine roars also is different in Joel and Amos. Amos springs a rhetorical trap that eventually announces judgment against both Judah and Israel while Joel uses YHWH's roar to promise deliverance for Judah from its oppressors. The declaration that YHWH is a refuge and a stronghold in Joel 4:16b emphasizes the protective nature of the divine roar in Joel. The juxtaposition of images is visible since Amos' focus is on divine punishment for specific crimes that culminate with Israel and Judah's offenses against YHWH, while the association of YHWH's roar with the day of YHWH as a day of judgment against the attacking nations in Joel points towards restoration.[126] This fits well with the overarching purpose of Joel 4

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[124] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 103. Prinsloo notes that YHWH coming in judgment after he "roars from Zion" is the common link between Jer 25:30; Amos 1:2 and Joel 4:16.

[125] Ogden, *Promise of Hope*, 46. Ogden looks to psalms of lament to find further juxtapositions of both aspects, where the fear-inducing judge is also the protector of the weak and vulnerable (Pss 31:2, 4; 43:2; 61:3).

[126] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 239.

which describes YHWH acting restoratively by announcing judgment against foreign

nations.[127]

Joel 4:17 responds to these pronouncements of YHWH's activity with a divine

self-identification formula that reads וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם ("then you will know that

I am YHWH your God"). This verse returns to first person speech, which provides a

powerful assurance of YHWH's presence. Previous verses state that YHWH shakes the

heavens and roars, while Joel 4:17 details YHWH's promise. This exact phrase occurs in

Exod 6:7 and 16:12, where YHWH declares that Israel will know that YHWH is their

God because YHWH will rescue them from Egypt and care for them in the wilderness. A

similar phrase is found in Joel 2:27 where the text states that YHWH's restorative acts in

the wake of the locust infestation will cause the community to know that YHWH is in

their midst.[128] Taken together, "the formulas of knowing God serve to resolve with

glorious certainty the cautious question 'Who knows?' concerning God in 2:14."[129] The

hope expressed in Joel 2:14 is rooted in the acknowledgment of YHWH's gracious and

compassionate character. The divine self-identification formulae in Joel 2:27 and 4:17 are

powerful confirmations of that portrayal.

The succeeding statements in Joel 4:17 are also significant in light of what has

previously transpired. The next clause of Joel 4:17 builds on the divine self-identification

formula and declares that YHWH dwells in Zion on the mountain of his holiness (שֹׁכֵן

בְּצִיּוֹן הַר־קָדְשִׁי). This declaration resonates with Joel 4:16 which establishes Zion as the

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[127] Nogalski, "Intertextuality," 107. Nogalski claims that the Joelian version of the divine roar broadens it into "a universal portrayal of judgement, the purpose of which is to encourage Yahweh's people."

[128] Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 28. The reuse of the divine recognition formula, "forges an important thematic link between the deliverance (2:27) and vindication of God's people vis a vis their erstwhile enemies."

[129] Allen, "Prophetic Antecedents," 21.

location from which YHWH roars. Further, it continues to reverse the threat articulated in

Joel 2:1 where the text mentions Zion and YHWH's holy mountain but commands the

people to sound an alarm before describing a divinely-sanctioned assault that breaches

the walls. Joel 2:10–11 ultimately reveals that the cause for this alarm is YHWH coming

as conqueror against what should have been the sanctuary guaranteed by the divine

presence.

Joel 4:17, however, articulates that YHWH's renewed presence provides

protection from further calamity since "where Yahweh resides, one need not fear locust

plagues, drought, fire, or armies."[130] The text replaces the locust army from Joel 2:1–11

that climbed over the walls and even invaded the homes with the declaration that

"strangers" (וְזָרִים) will not pass through Jerusalem any longer.[131] Whereas Joel 2:1

commences a rhetorical unit with the holiness of Zion before detailing its violation, Joel

4:17 concludes a rhetorical subunit that guarantees Zion's continued holiness thanks to

the presence of YHWH in its midst. This use of recursion is rhetorically powerful in

directing the implied audience to recall the prophet's previous words while promising a

complete change in fate.

Joel 4:17 continues to use recursion when it echoes Joel 3:5. Joel 3:5 finishes its

unit by promising that those who call on the name of YHWH will find salvation on

Mount Zion and in Jerusalem in the wake of the earth-rending signs that presage the day

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[130] Crenshaw, "Freeing the Imagination," 143–44. Crenshaw looks at this verse and the equivalent final declaration of YHWH's presence in Zion in Joel 4:21 as the keys to understanding the conclusion of this prophetic book. All of the calamities and soul searching within the book are resolved by the prophetic promise that YHWH resides among the community, in Zion.

[131] Snijders understands the term זָרִים to refer to, "strangers who do harm to the people and destroy them," while pointing, "to the distance between zarîm and the holy." Snijders also understands the promised sanctity of the divine presence as a reversal of the slave-trading activities referenced earlier in Joel 4:4–8; Snijders, "The Meaning of זר," 1–154, especially 39–40.

of YHWH. Essentially, the promise of security for Jerusalem in Joel 4:17 at the end of the subunit that summons the nations to judgment makes explicit the event from which YHWH will save those whom YHWH calls in Joel 3:5.[132] This further detail should persuade the implied audience that calling out to YHWH is the necessary response since YHWH promises security through his presence in Jerusalem.

Finally, Joel 4:17 concludes this subunit describing YHWH's defeat of the nations and ultimate residence in Zion. Again, recursion signals the conclusion of this subunit with the repetition of the keywords "Zion" and "Jerusalem" in both 4:16 and 4:17. Zion is the "synecdochic equivalent of 'Jerusalem' which in turn acts as a metonymic designation for...the faithful and holy people of God."[133] In this case, the presence of references to Zion and Jerusalem seems to mark the end of this particular thought unit that climaxes with the promise of divine protection guaranteed by YHWH's presence in Zion.

Essentially, the rhetorical strategy of Joel 4:9–17 is to portray a summons to the nations calling them to battle against YHWH in a symbolically-named valley where YHWH unleashes judgment, shakes the foundations of the cosmos and guarantees the security of the Judahite community by establishing divine reign in Zion. Throughout the summons and its aftermath, these verses make it clear to the implied audience that YHWH's judgment will prevail. These verses reverse the scenario of Joel 4:1–3 where the nations scatter YHWH's people and take possession of their land. These assurances of YHWH's victory should persuade the implied audience that maintaining their faith and trust in YHWH is the correct course.

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[132] Strazicich, "Joel's Use of Scripture," 207.
[133] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 282.

Joel 4:18–21: Restoration Resulting from Judgment

The final subunit of Joel builds off the established description of the nations' fate

and shifts the focus back to the Judahite community. The judicial genre remains in

evidence especially in the pronouncements against Egypt and Edom. The positive

repercussions for Judah and Jerusalem flow out of YHWH's judgment made manifest in

the day of YHWH.[134] Joel 4:18 starts with the temporal formula "And it will be on that

day" (וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא) which recalls similar formulae in Joel 3:1 and 4:1 that introduce

occasions for decisive divine action.[135] The use of this formula in Joel 4:18 recalls the

pattern of Zech 14, which commences with a temporal formula invoking the day of

YHWH (יוֹם־בָּא לַיהוָה), while using בַיּוֹם הַהוּא (Zech 14:4, 6, 8, 13, 20) to mark various

events that it foretells. Essentially, the temporal formula in Joel 4:18 recalls the formula

of Joel 4:1 and reorients the implied audience's perspective back to the time when

YHWH will intervene restoratively.

The similar opening phrases of Joel 3:1, 4:1 and 4:18 also interlink with explicit

references to the day of YHWH in Joel 3:4 and 4:16. These phrases focus on promises of

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[134] Keller, *Ôsee*, 152; Prinsloo, *Joel*, 116. Keller and Prinsloo argue that these verses follow an "ABA" pattern in which "A" represents salvation for Judah (cf. 4:18, 20–21) and "B" reflects doom for the nations, identified in this particular verse as Egypt and Edom (cf. 4:19). This scheme, however, involves splitting hairs too finely since the text ties these concepts closely together. The text undoubtedly directly connects the doom of Egypt and Edom to Judah's previous unfortunate state that YHWH's mighty acts will restore. Further, discussion of Joel 4:21 will reveal that this verse tightly interweaves the judgment of enemies and the blessing of YHWH's people.

[135] Dillard, "Joel," 312. See De Vries' full study on this phrase where he understands this phrase to mark "a new turning point in man's journey through history in conversation with God," De Vries, *Yesterday*, 279–323. De Vries' study is unapologetically diachronic and derives a significant portion of its understanding of textual composition from redactional schemes that are not fully convincing. He claims that "surely it was a late editor" who added the וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא phrase to Joel 4:18 on the grounds that it differs from "original" Joelian temporal phrases in Joel 3:1 and 4:1. This raises the question of whether or not it would be possible for a prophet to creatively employ different temporal phrases for certain rhetorical purposes. Regardless of the conflict between diachronic and synchronic sensibilities, De Vries' claim that בַיּוֹם הַהוּא references intend to present opportunities for divine or human decisive action provides a useful perspective on the rhetorical purpose of this temporal phrase.

restoration for the Judahite community while the overt references to the day of YHWH

evoke images of judgment and terror on the nations.[136] The connection to Joel 4:1 is

especially notable since 4:18–21 essentially fulfills the promise of 4:1 to "restore the

fortunes" of Judah and Jerusalem. Whereas Joel 4:1–17 focuses on removing the threat of

the foreign nations while also guaranteeing YHWH's presence in Zion, 4:18–21

elaborately details the outpouring of blessing for Judah and Jerusalem.

After the introductory phrase, the remainder of Joel 4:18 presents various images

of YHWH's promised restoration. The details are hyperbolic, moving far beyond the

reversal of what was lacking that governs Joel 2:18–27. Instead, these verses offer

pictures of almost miraculous fruitfulness (cf. Isa 65:17–25; Zech 14:6–11). Several

images related to liquid combine to build this picture which stands in stark contrast to the

scenes of arid desolation that mark YHWH's absence in Joel 1. The images of restoration

begin with the claim that the mountains will drip sweet wine (יִטְּפוּ הֶהָרִים עָסִיס), which

echoes the sentiments expressed in Amos 9:13.[137] This promise reverses one of the

reasons for lament since Joel 1:5 called upon the wine-drinkers to mourn the loss of this

vintage. The next phrase parallels the promise of renewed wine, declaring that milk will

flow from the hills, which recalls the ancient promise of Canaan as the "land of milk and

honey" (Exod 3:8; Lev 20:24).[138] This image indicates that the cattle will have an

unceasing supply of grass so that they will be able to produce milk constantly, which

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[136] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 275–76.

[137] Nogalski, "Day(s)," 630. This phrase in Joel 4:18 is not an exact citation since the form of the verb is different. Joel 4:18 employs a *qal* prefix form (יִטְּפוּ) while Amos 9:13 uses a hiphil suffix + *waw* relative form (וְהִטִּיפוּ). It is noteworthy that in verses in close proximity (Joel 4:16, 18), the text draws in both the beginning and the end of the book of Amos. See Ben Zvi and Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin*, 12.

[138] Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 243.

speaks to a reversal of Joel 1:18 which lamented the destruction of fodder for the animals.[139]

The idea of these liquids flowing and dripping from the mountains is a hyperbole that points to a time of tremendous bounty and blessing.[140] These images of abundant liquid continue in the next clause with the declaration that all the stream-channels of Judah (אֲפִיקֵי יְהוּדָה) will flow with water. The use of watercourses alongside the previous images focusing on the mountains and the hills creates a geographical merismus where the high and low points of the land work together to demonstrate YHWH's blessing.[141] The use of אָפִיק also points to a reversal of Joel 1:20 in which the stream-channels dry up because of the drought that follows the locust infestation. The overflowing presence of water and other liquid in Joel 4:18 is an incredibly vivid promise of prosperity and blessing in the context of a land whose supply of water is always tenuous.

The final image of Joel 4:18 continues to draw from the realm of liquid but gives it a hyperbolic sense. It makes a further leap from the natural world, depicting a life-giving stream (וּמַעְיָן) flowing out of the house of YHWH. The idea of water springing forth from either Jerusalem or the temple itself also occurs in Ps 46:5; Ezek 47:1–12 and Zech 14:8.[142] Ezekiel 47 is probably the most similar to Joel 4:17 since both primarily point towards restored fecundity for the land with Ezek 47:12 even pointing to the growth

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[139] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 199; Nash, "Palestinian," 200.

[140] Prinsloo, *Theology*, 118.

[141] Schökel, *Manual*, 84.

[142] Ho Fai Tai, "The End of the Book of the Twelve," 344–45. Ho Fai Tai focuses on the relationship between Joel 4:18 and Zech 14:8, noting the presence of shared vocabulary (מַיִם, יָצָא) and suggesting that Ezek 47:1–12 influences both passages. He also draws attention to differences including the claims in Zech 14:8 that water will flow both to the east and the west (contra Joel 4:18 where it flows to the east), and that the water flows out of Jerusalem itself, rather than the house of YHWH. He suggests that Zech 14:8 is a conscious modification of the Joelian text, conflating the idea of Jerusalem with the sanctity of the temple.

of trees alongside this river's banks.[143] The totality of the restoration further "strikes

paradisiacal chords," employing the same verbs (שָׁקָה ;יָצָא) as Gen 2:10 which describes

the river flowing out of Eden.[144] Joel 4:18, along with its Ezekielian counterpart, thus

demonstrates a trajectory of conflating Edenic imagery with that of the temple. This

combination reflects hope for future harmony and blessing since the location of YHWH's

dwelling is also the life-giving centre of all creation.[145] This provides a stark contrast to

the beginning of Joel with its images of a locust-ravaged landscape and the cessation of

sacrifices in the temple. Whereas the devastation of Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20 reflects

YHWH's silence and absence, the fructifying streams of Joel 4:18 reflect YHWH's

promise of divine presence in Zion and the restoration of the temple.

Joel 4:18 concludes by stating that the temple-sourced stream will water the Wadi

Shittim (נַחַל הַשִּׁטִּים). This location is otherwise unattested, leading to various

speculations concerning its geographical location.[146] The most plausible suggestion is

that the Wadi Shittim is a symbolic name, similar to the Valley of Jehoshaphat mentioned

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[143] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 200. Zechariah 14 also differs in that it envisions two rivers, one flowing eastward while the other flows westward.

[144] Ahlström, *Joel*, 41; cf. Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 243. Hoppe draws further attention to the image of life-giving water originating in Jerusalem by noting the presence of the Gihon spring among the list of the four rivers sourcing the Garden of Eden in Gen 2:13; Hoppe, *Holy City*, 27–29. The Gihon was the actual source of water for Jerusalem, but clearly reaches superlative stature in the Genesis narrative. Leppäkari provides a useful synopsis of the concept of the paradisiacal nature of Zion; Leppäkari, *Apocalyptic Representations*, 83–86.

[145] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 370–71; Hoppe, *Holy City*, 27–29.

[146] Crenshaw, Dillard and Allen argue that the most likely location is some extension of the Kidron Valley between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 200; Dillard, "Joel," 312; Allen, *Joel*, 124. In contrast, Milik identifies it as the Wadi Qaddûm between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem; Milik, "Notes," 553–55. However, none of these identifications have definitive proof. There are other references to "Shittim" in Num 25:1; 33:49; Josh 2:1; 3:1, however, none of these refer to it as a wadi. Further, this Shittim is on the plains of Moab, across the Jordan River, rendering it highly unlikely that a stream flowing out of Jerusalem could reach this location. Ahlström, however, notes that Shittim in Josh 3:1 is the place from which Israel crosses the Jordan to enter the Promise Land and inaugurate a new era of divine blessing, suggesting that the text is invoking this memory to inaugurate salvific activity of YHWH in Joel 4:18; Ahlström, *Joel*, 92–93 cf. Merx, *Die Prophetie*, 76–77. Sweeney suggests that Joel could be pointing to a complete transformation of the region surrounding the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley, thus rendering plausible the Moabite location of Shittim; Sweeney, *Twelve*, 184. This again, however, is speculative.

previously in this chapter.[147] In that way, even without identifying an actual location, it is possible to point to the rhetorical impact of using this name. The noun שִׁטִּים refers to acacia trees which grow in arid environments, thus the idea that the stream flowing from YHWH's house could reach even this region probably symbolizes the rejuvenating power of this water.[148] In conjunction with the rest of Joel 4:18, the mention of the Wadi Shittim points towards an idealized future where YHWH's provenance will eliminate any wants from the land; YHWH's promised presence in Zion leads to a guarantee of matchless prosperity, emphasized by the presence of continually flowing water.

The text then transitions in Joel 4:19–20 by juxtaposing themes of judgment and blessing. In Joel 4:19, the prophet promises powerful judgment against Egypt and Edom because of their offenses against Judah and Jerusalem.[149] Multiple constituent fronting marks the description of the fate of these nations, with Egypt and Edom appearing as the first word in their respective clauses, followed by nouns describing their status. The judgment on Edom echoes and enhances the judgment on Egypt since the text first declares that Egypt will become a desolation (לִשְׁמָמָה), while Edom then becomes a desert of desolation (לְמִדְבַּר שְׁמָמָה).[150] This is again powerfully assuring for the implied Judahite audience since it vividly contrasts the fate of the nations with the promised

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[147] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 239. Luria comments further, "In vain have Bible scholars sought to identify this valley of Shittim; this is not an actual but only a symbolic valley," Luria, "And a Fountain Shall Spring Forth," 49.

[148] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 200. Some of the cultic items for the Tabernacle were made from acacia wood (cf. Exod 25:10; 25:23–24; 26:15; 27:1; 30:1), however Joel does not appear to import this nuance.

[149] The reasons for the selection of Egypt and Edom as the enemies to mention in this verse are unclear. This chapter has primarily made general reference to unnamed nations again whom YHWH will act (cf. Joel 4:2, 11, 12), although Joel 4:4–8 did break in to specifically mention Tyre, Sidon and Philistia. There is a certain geographical symmetry created with the inclusion of Egypt and Edom; enemies from the south (Egypt) and east (Edom) balance out those from the north (Tyre and Sidon) and west (Philistia).

[150] Crenshaw attributes the additional marker of desolation on Edom to the two countries' respective access to consistent water sources, claiming that "Edom, never so fortunate as Egypt with regard to water, will find itself even harder pressed to discover enough of it for survival," Crenshaw, *Joel*, 200.

future for YHWH's own people who see even their arid regions become bountiful and productive. Meanwhile, the enemies of YHWH suffer a fate similar to that described in Joel 2:3 with their own prosperous regions becoming desert-like in the wake of YHWH's actions.[151]

The second half of Joel 4:19 provides the rationale for this harsh punishment on Egypt and Edom, claiming that this is the result of their cruel treatment of the Judahites. There is a potential allusion to the condemnation of Edom in Obad 10 in the use the חָמָס ("violence") in Joel 4:19.[152] Obadiah condemns Edom for doing this to "your brother Jacob" (אָחִיךָ יַעֲקֹב), making the crime especially heinous since it is committed against close kin. Joel further details the violence as the pouring out of innocent blood. The reference to pouring out (שָׁפְכוּ) is interesting since the text's previous reference to pouring out referred to the gifting of YHWH's Spirit in Joel 3:1–2.[153] Instead of unmitigated blessing, however, the text charges these enemy nations with pouring out innocent blood (דָּם־נָקִיא), thus justifying their imminent destruction. This verse adopts a persuasive strategy found throughout Joel 4:1–21, which is to assure the implied audience that YHWH will eliminate external threats to their prosperity and security.

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[151] This measure-for-measure devastation of the landscape again reflects the symmetry of the book of Joel. The devastation of Judah in the wake of the locust army's advance is mirrored by the promise that YHWH will mete out devastation against enemy nations; cf. Marcus, "Nonrecurring," 63–64.

[152] The potential allusion to Obadiah in Joel 4:19–21 is an oddity when compared to Joel's use of scripture throughout the rest of the book. Sweeney correctly notes that Joel has a tendency to eliminate the specific referents of the alluded texts, so that they can be constructed typologically to deal with any enemy that might arise; Sweeney, "Priesthood," 169–70. This is notable in Joel 4 with the reference to a Valley of Jehoshaphat without mention of the foes that Jehoshaphat defeated there (cf. 2 Chr 20). Joel 3:5 further removes the context of judgment against Edom in its connection to Obad 17.

[153] Dillard, "Joel," 312–13. Simkins highlights the mention of דָּם־נָקִיא as something that builds into his interpretation of Joel 2:12–17; perhaps offering further evidence that there is no underlying sin behind the devastation of the locust plague; Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 240. See the extended discussion of the issue of Judah's potential guilt in analysis of rhetorical strategy in Joel 2:12–17.

Joel 4:20 commences with an adversative *waw* that sets up Zion and Jerusalem as the counterparts to Egypt and Edom. Whereas YHWH's wrath against these hostile nations leads to them becoming uninhabitable, divine blessings guarantee eternal dwelling in the city. The two clauses are set up as in parallel with the verse fronting Judah and Jerusalem in their respective clauses which is equivalent to Joel 4:19's treatment of Egypt and Edom. The text thus emphasizes the different locations before moving into a description of their different fates. In both clauses in Joel 4:20, the next element is a temporal description pointing towards eternal duration. The final element in the first clause is the verb "dwell" (תֵּשֵׁב), which the second clause elides.[154] Both clauses of Joel 4:20 reinforce that because of YHWH's continued presence, Jerusalem will be inhabited continually.

Joel 4:20 also alludes to Isa 13:20 and its description of the aftermath of the day of YHWH directed against Babylon. The two passages share the verb יָשַׁב, and the temporal construction from generation to generation (דּוֹר וָדוֹר). The shared vocabulary stands in contrast to the opposing consequences of YHWH's actions; whereas in Joel 4:20, YHWH's actions guarantee eternal dwelling in Jerusalem, in Isa 13:20, YHWH's actions guarantee that Babylon will not be inhabited in the wake of its divine destruction.[155] The inhabitation of Judah and Jerusalem in Joel 4:20 thus contrasts with the desolation of Egypt and Edom in Joel 4:19 and the prophesied fate of Babylon in the wake of the day of YHWH in Isa 13:20. Joel 4:20 powerfully guarantees YHWH's

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[154] This verb is in the feminine singular form, which Crenshaw finds usual, claiming that Judah typically takes the masculine form of verbs. He speculates that the nearby presence of Jerusalem, which always takes a feminine verb, influenced the selection here; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 202.

[155] Sweeney, *Twelve*, 185; Strazicich, *Joel's Use of Scripture*, 246. Strazicich asserts that the shared vocabulary "makes this allusion understandable."

restorative power by contrasting the fate of Jerusalem with those nations who defy

YHWH.

The book then concludes in Joel 4:21 with a verse that has provoked serious

debate. Joel 4:21a is notoriously difficult to interpret which has occasioned several

different proposals. The Masoretic text reads וְנִקֵּיתִי דָּמָם לֹא־נִקֵּיתִי, which translates as "I

will hold innocent their blood I have not held innocent."[156] At first glance these clauses

seem self-contradictory and also rather terse since there is no conjunction or preposition

between them.[157] The declaration of innocence in the first verb makes it evident that the

antecedent of the pronominal suffix on דָּמָם is Judah/ Jerusalem, but the second clause in

the Masoretic text seems to contradict Joel 4:19 which chastised Edom and Egypt for

pouring our Judah's innocent blood. It is difficult to see how the דָם־נָקִיא of Joel 4:19

could also be considered by YHWH as לֹא־נִקֵּיתִי in Joel 4:21.

One suggestion is that the first clause וְנִקֵּיתִי דָּמָם is an unmarked rhetorical

question which is possible when following a conjunction (cf. Job 2:10; 10:9; 10:11;

11:11; 17:4b; 23:17; 30:24; 38:8; 40:24, 25; Jer 25:29)[158] Jeremiah 25:29 in particular

resonates with Joel 4:21 since it also is governed by the root נָקָה, although it is a Niphal

rather than a Piel (וְאַתֶּם הִנָּקֵה תִנָּקוּ לֹא תִנָּקוּ). This solution is possible, but it would be

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[156] Barton, *Joel*, 109. According to this reading, YHWH will now overlook the sins of Judah that he used to punish. Ahlström suggests that in this instance, the root נָקָה could be related to the Akkadian *nequ* ("to pour out"); Ahlström, *Joel*, 95. According to this reading, the suffix on דָּמָם would refer to Egypt and Edom and point to their ultimate punishment. However, this would be the sole case in the OT where נָקָה had this meaning, rendering it suppositional at best.

[157] Dillard, "Joel," 313.

[158] GKC §150a proposes that ו is the conjunction that introduces unmarked questions most frequently. Allen, *Joel*, 117, and Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 265, adopt this line of reasoning. On the characteristics of unmarked rhetorical questions, see de Regt, "Discourse Implications," 53–54.

rather surprising for a rhetorical question concerning the fate of foreign nations to intrude

here after the explicit statement of judgment rendered in Joel 4:19.[159]

An appeal to other textual witnesses may shed some light on the issue. The LXX

reading of the first clause is potentially either ἐκδικήσω on the basis of the Alexandrinus

uncial, or ἐκζητήσω according to Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.[160] It is probable, however,

that both Greek verbs have וְנִקֵּיתִי ("I will avenge") as their underlying Hebrew text

which means that the choice of Greek verbs is between synonyms and not a difference in

the Hebrew source-text.[161] Many commentators prefer the LXX reading since it seems to

make clear the meaning of Joel 4:21a, declaring that YHWH will avenge the blood of the

Judahite community.[162] From a text-critical perspective, it is plausible that the מ in וְנִקֵּיתִי

dropped out of the Masoretic text due to the confusion with the dual מs in the following

word. This strengthens the plausibility of the LXX.

The LXX's rendering of the second verb (לֹא־נִקֵּיתִי) is οὐ μὴ ἀθῳώσω ("I will not

leave unavenged"). This suggests that the LXX is reading the affix form of the Masoretic

text as a prefix form (לֹא־אֲנַקֶּה).[163] The LXX reading is more plausible since it fits better

syntactically following the waw relative + affix conjugation verb that occurred in the first

part of the verse. Following this reading means that instead of contradiction, Joel 4:21a

contains two statements that reinforce each other. YHWH will mete out punishment to

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[159] Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*, 237.

[160] Ziegler, *Duodecim*, 239.

[161] Crenshaw, *Joel*, 202–03.

[162] See, for example, Crenshaw, *Joel*, 203; Barton, *Joel*, 109; Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 397.

[163] The א prefix beginning the second verb would thus disappear in the Masoretic text through haplography with the preceding לֹא. As a result of this, the Masoretic scribes would have then confused the ה of the prefix form with the ה of the affix form and also inserted two *yods* into the word. However, it could also be a case of dittography where the LXX *Vorlage* copied in the second *aleph* and then omitted the two *yods* and confused the ה with a ה. Since it is possible to make the argument for textual corruption in both directions, the broader context of the verse helps to provide criteria for distinguishing between these readings.

those who have harmed his people. This appears to be the best solution to the textual

issues of this half-verse. Essentially, Joel 4:21a conveys unalloyed blessing for Judah,

which fits seamlessly with the declaration of YHWH's presence that follows.[164] Its

rhetorical purpose is to conclude the stream of thought related to the punishment of the

nations and the final fate of the Judahite community; the nations' attack on YHWH's

people results in their final and complete overthrow, guaranteeing the security of Judah

and Jerusalem.

The final phrase of Joel 4:21 is an emphatic capstone to the message of the book

that declares that YHWH dwells in Zion (וַיהוָה שֹׁכֵן בְּצִיּוֹן). This coincides beautifully with

the promise in the previous verses for rich blessing and the eternal inhabitation of Zion

and Jerusalem. Essentially, YHWH's presence guarantees the security of the city (cf.

Ezek 48:35). Joel 4:21 also marks the ultimate reversal of the questions surrounding

YHWH's presence and attitude towards the implied audience posed throughout the

remainder of the book. Specifically, this climactic statement engages Joel 2:1–11 which

calls for the sounding of an alarm because YHWH leads an army against Zion. It also

provides the final resounding answer to the rhetorical question "where is their God?" that

is the capstone of Joel 2:17.[165] This final clause declares that "their God" dwells in their

midst, guaranteeing their security and prosperity in the aftermath of defeating those who

have the temerity to question YHWH's fidelity and commitment to the Judahite

community.

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[164] Barton, *Joel*, 110.
[165] Wendland, *Discourse Analysis*, 320.

Summary

Joel 4:1–21 broadens the scope of the book and looks out beyond the borders of

Judah and Jerusalem. Joel 1–3 concentrates primarily upon the relationship between

YHWH and the Judahite community, describing difficult circumstances, directing them

to cry out to YHWH and promising a divine response. Joel 4:1–21 now brings outside

nations into view in the prophet's discussion of YHWH's restorative activities. The

statement in Joel 4:1 that YHWH is going to "restore the fortunes of Judah and

Jerusalem" (אָשׁוּב אֶת־שְׁבוּת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלָם) provides the context for the discussion of the

nations; their downfall is part of YHWH's restorative plan. The text's perspective

oscillates between the nations in general and specific nations who are condemned for

particular offenses, all the while demonstrating YHWH's authority over them.

Ultimately the text uses these nations as a foil to set apart the greatness of YHWH

and his care and concern for his people. This is evident throughout the chapter as YHWH

enters into judgment against the nations concerning the Judahite community in Joel 4:1–

3, promises *lex talionis* justice against Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia in 4:4–8, summons the

nations to their ultimate defeat in 4:9–17, and promises final destruction for Egypt and

Edom in 4:18–21. The text portrays the nations as helpless before the unleashed might of

YHWH, picturing an attempt by the nations to assemble their strongest possible force

only to go down to certain defeat (Joel 4:14). The rhetoric of delay in 4:9–17 heightens

the tension in front of the declaration of the day of YHWH which is now as a day of

salvation for Judah against its enemies. The text concludes with a description of ultimate

restoration that follows the day of YHWH. The abundance of water and the restoration of

prosperity approach the miraculous, but the presence of YHWH in the temple in Zion

guarantees final deliverance for the Judahite community. The promises of prosperity intermix with the declarations of judgment, offering a dual-pronged approach that indicates the scope of YHWH's commitment to the implied audience. This provides further support to the prophet's program of response in Joel 2:12–17. Joel 4:1–21 indicates that crying out to YHWH can bring restoration from all manner of devastation.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

Categorizing rhetorical effectiveness is challenging in Joel 4:1–21 since the prophet does not command the Judahite community who is the implied audience to undertake any concrete actions to alleviate their situation. As has been the case since the narrative snippet in Joel 2:18–19a, the primary actor in Joel 4:1–21 is YHWH, who commands these disparate nations to gather to face divine judgment. YHWH provides powerful restorative acts throughout this chapter without requiring any further acts from the Judahite community. These acts should help the implied audience to know that YHWH is their God but the text does not provide a statement of this acknowledgment (cf. Joel 2:27). Even the imperatives that the prophet places in the mouth of YHWH do not lend any real agency to other actors. These imperatives are directed either to YHWH's servants who wordlessly obey or to the collection of nations whose activities against YHWH are ultimately futile.

With the aforementioned challenges in mind, perhaps one way to consider the rhetorical effectiveness of Joel 4 is to examine how it completes the idea of full restoration for the Judahite community. The significant amount of attention that Joel 4:1–21 devotes to foreign nations, both named and unnamed, presents YHWH as a deity who

removes external threats whereas the previous chapters focus more on the situation

internal to the Judahite community. Joel 1:1–2:17 articulates the gravity of the situation

facing the community and Joel 2:18–3:5 provides promises of material and spiritual

deliverance, but there are still external threats to consider. The "nations" make a brief

appearance in Joel 2:17 as a prophetic imaginative construct where the text portrays them

as mocking Judah's distress. YHWH, however, does not explicitly deal with their threat

in detail until this chapter.[166] This chapter thus balances the prophet's promises to the

people; not only will YHWH turn and bring back material blessing and the promise of his

presence, YHWH will also act powerfully and guarantee this community's security from

its enemies. This effectively completes the movement of this book from the cataclysmic

dystopia of the locust invasion to a near utopia marked by YHWH's presence, peace, and

prosperity.

The predominance of divine activity in Joel 4:1–21 also has rhetorical effects

worth considering. This chapter roots YHWH's salvific activity in divine dwelling in

Zion, where the deity provides refuge for the implied audience. One significant element

of the Zion tradition is the idea that rescue comes to those who depend on YHWH alone,

and not human strength (cf. Pss 9:10–13; 20:2–3; Isa 30:1–4; 31:1–3).[167] Joel 4:1–21

requires the implied audience to rely solely upon YHWH since this rhetorical unit opens

up no opportunity for the implied audience to act to ameliorate the situation on its own.

The other actors in this chapter are the nations whose agency only sets them in opposition

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[166] Joel 2:20 details YHWH's destruction of the locust army that previous rhetorical units characterized as an instrument of YHWH's judgment, referring to it as "the northerner," which suggests a foreign foe. The discussion, however, is abrupt since it quickly returns to YHWH's promises of agricultural renewal in Joel 2:21–27. The text holds the details of deliverance from foreign foes in abeyance until Joel 4.

[167] Ollenburger, Zion, 69–70. Ollenburger helpfully claims that, "the security to be found in Zion calls forth a particular response, designated as trust."

to YHWH and assures their destruction. Thus, this prophetic message effectively directs the implied audience towards full dependence on YHWH since the optimal response is to trust that YHWH will accomplish what this chapter promises.

Moving beyond the effectiveness of this unit for its immediate entextualized rhetorical situation, Joel 4:1–21 speaks powerfully concerning the authority that YHWH claims over all human powers, regardless of their allegiance. Essentially, in this chapter, YHWH claims authority over the entirety of the "universal audience," since the text does not grant them any autonomy to avoid responding to YHWH's summons to judgment.[168] The claim of authority over the nations is a common prophetic trope, visible in passages such as oracles against nations (Isa 13–23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32; Amos 1:3–2:3; Obad 1–21; Nah 1:1–3:19; Zeph 2:4–15; Zech 9:1–8),[169] and other declarations of YHWH's supremacy (Amos 9:7; Jonah 3:4–5). This effectively asserts YHWH's supremacy since according to Joel 4:1–21, YHWH can summon and pronounce judgment against all nations, including those who would serve other deities.

The final element of rhetorical effectiveness that this passage constructs is found in its presentation of positive hope for those who follow YHWH. The realization of utopian imagery augurs towards an idyllic vision of the future in which those who claim allegiance to YHWH find their toil reaping great rewards. Adopting Patrick and Scult's model of a hermeneutics of affirmation, the hope provided in Joel 4:1–21 is an impetus calling the audience to greater commitment and fidelity to YHWH. Taking this approach helps to "integrate the interpreter into the mainstream of the text's readership, which also

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[168] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 30–36.

[169] Raabe, "Why Prophetic Oracles," 236–57. Raabe calculates that 13.6% of the corpus of the Latter Prophets contains oracles against nations. Raabe also mentions Joel 4 as a passage that does not fit the specific genre of "oracles against nations," but still proclaims doom for foreign nations.

most likely read the text as discourse which genuinely aspired to speak the truth."[170] As

one reads the rhetoric of Joel and allows oneself to be persuaded by and through it, the

interpreter can further identify with the implied audience of the text, understanding the

trials and turmoil that the text portrays as part of the divine call to faithfulness and

commitment. Joel 4:1–21 offers encouragement that such faithfulness bears ultimate

fruit; that YHWH promises to "restore the fortunes," of those whom YHWH calls.

Conclusion

Joel 4:1–21 concludes this prophetic book by bringing closure to the exigence of

an external threat against the Judahite community. This chapter creatively constructs

foreign nations as the recipients of divine commands that indicate their subordination to

YHWH. YHWH's promise to "restore the fortunes" of Judah and Jerusalem governs the

flow of this chapter, with the text detailing how YHWH's defeat of foreign foes will

guarantee Judah and Jerusalem's restoration. Joel 4:1–21 again depicts the acts of

YHWH in both specific and general terms, discussing how YHWH will pay back those

who attacked the Judahite community and summon the nations as a whole to judgment.

This judgment is rooted in YHWH's authority which the text expresses through YHWH's

roar and rending of the cosmos on the day of YHWH. This leads to a paradisiacal

restoration that reverses all the calamities of Joel 1:1–2:11. Further, the promised

presence of YHWH in Zion secures this restoration. Joel 4:1–21 effectively calls upon the

implied audience to trust in the actions of YHWH, while demonstrating YHWH's

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[170] Patrick, "Rhetoric and Ideology," 66.

sovereignty over all nations. The promise of ultimate restoration also calls all audiences

to trust in YHWH who is revealed through his presence among his people.

Conclusion

Summary of Results

The goal of this work was to demonstrate the usefulness of rhetorical-critical methods for the study of prophetic books. By investigating the rhetorical strategies through which the text constructs its arguments, this study considers the persuasive nature of Joel. It demonstrates that Joel is a unified work of prophetic literature that moves from scenes of devastation to promises of restoration through its persuasive evocation of divine and human responses in order to articulate the necessity of calling and relying upon YHWH in all circumstances. This study is rooted in the broader context of Joel studies, reflecting on the longstanding debate over Joel's date of composition and literary unity. It lends support to theories of the textual cohesion of Joel's literary composition. It also emphasizes the usefulness of reading Joel as a discrete literary unit in the context of the Book of the Twelve. While it appears that Joel interacts with the rest of the Book of the Twelve and contributes significantly to the shape of that corpus, it is valuable to consider Joel as a literary unit. It also interacts with texts outside of the Book of the Twelve which permits the development of intertextual approaches. This study leverages some of the results of those approaches in order to articulate the persuasive effects of this prophetic book.

The refinement and development of Kennedy and Möller's rhetorical-critical methodology is also important to this study. The practitioners of this model, notably Kennedy, Möller, and Shaw, use similar approaches to delineate rhetorical units and consider the rhetorical strategies revealed through the text's literary devices and structural arrangements. The ways in which one ought to approach the rhetorical situation

and rhetorical effectiveness, however, are much more inconclusive. This study breaks

with Bitzer's seminal definition of the rhetorical situation and proposes that it is

appropriate to locate it within the world that the text constructs. This text-immanent move

is a response to the challenges of getting behind the text of Joel, where there is little

consensus concerning its time of composition. This study attempts to push rhetorical

effectiveness in the direction of the implied audience constructed within the text itself

and other reading and hearing audiences. This is necessary since one cannot state

conclusively how the actual audience of Joel's prophecies reacted, beyond the fact that

this text was preserved and included in a collection of sacred scripture.[1] This study

grounds the discussion of rhetorical effectiveness in the hermeneutics of affirmation of

Patrick and Scult, reading the text in such a way that the interpreter can experience the

text's persuasive authority.

The Elements of Persuasion Within Joel

The majority of this study considers the book of Joel through the model of

rhetorical criticism detailed above. It commences with an analysis of Joel 1:1–14 that

locates the rhetorical situation of the text as a response to the exigence of a locust

infestation and drought. The prophet constructs the implied audience by first using a

merismus of "elders" and "dwellers of the land," then employing a sequence of

imperatives that summon sub-groups in the broader community to assemble under cultic

leadership and cry out to YHWH. These cries invoke the day of YHWH before detailing

the suffering of the land and its human and animal inhabitants. The effectiveness of Joel

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[1] Fox, "Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision," 4. Fox notes that prophets were effective rhetoricians on some level since they gained followers who preserved and retransmitted their words.

1:1–14 lies in its fusion of the catastrophes with the agency of YHWH, calling on the implied audience to see the hand of YHWH in what it experiences.

The following chapter considers the prophetic appeal to YHWH to act in the midst of desperate circumstances in Joel 1:15–20. It offers the first layer of response to the command to cry out to YHWH that concludes Joel 1:14. Joel 1:15–20 is also significant in the broader rhetorical flow of the book since it introduces the day of YHWH and directs it against the implied audience created in Joel 1:1–14. This is the point of departure for Joel's use of the day of YHWH motif, which shifts from announcing devastation to promising protection and restoration. Joel 1:15–20 also effectively identifies the prophet with the implied audience. The prophet then offers a personal appeal to YHWH alongside the laments that he undertakes with the community (cf. Joel 1:16). When it connects the prophet to the implied audience, Joel 1:15–20 also assures the validity of crying out to YHWH in the midst of desperate circumstances, offering it as part of the process of prophetic intermediation.

Joel 2:1–11 continues the description of the catastrophes facing the community. An inclusio involving the day of YHWH demarcates the boundaries of this rhetorical unit. This reuse of the day of YHWH adds more detail to the succinct mention that it is "near" in Joel 1:15. Joel 2:1–11 again indicates its imminence while adding imagery that emphasizes its cosmological significance, visible through the trembling and darkening of the heavenly bodies. Joel 2:1–11 develops the portrayal of the implied audience, directing the scene towards Zion. The exigence shifts slightly since the text takes the locusts from Joel 1:1–14 and provides them with the characteristics of a well-disciplined, awe-

inspiring army.[2] The rhetorical strategies of this unit effectively emphasize the invulnerability of the invader, detailing how it despoils the land in its march and overcomes all obstacles in its approach to Zion. Joel 2:6 demonstrates a powerful use of perspective when the text briefly provides a glimpse of the victims, who can only writhe in anguish. This creates the context for the description of the assault against Zion in which the invading horde easily overruns the city.

The rhetorical strategy of Joel 2:1–11 culminates in the final two verses which reveal that YHWH, the one who should dwell in Zion, is actually at the head of the army that overruns Zion. This is undoubtedly the nadir of the book. It is also a shocking response to the previous rhetorical units since it reveals that neither the call for the implied audience to cry out to YHWH (Joel 1:14), nor the prophet's personal appeal offered on behalf of the community have alleviated the threat (Joel 1:19–20). The shock that it creates is undeniably effective in capturing the attention of the implied audience. Identifying YHWH as the invaders' leader effectively guides the progression of the prophetic passage; the implied audience would want to learn if there is any hope to turn aside the power of YHWH. Joel 2:1–11 further creates a disquieting picture of YHWH that requires further resolution in the portrayal of the divine character and actions in the following rhetorical units.

Joel 2:12–17 is an essential rhetorical unit in the progression of the persuasive argumentation of this book. It commences with a call to return to YHWH and concludes with a detailed description of what form this return should take, culminating in a powerful rhetorical question that challenges YHWH's commitment to the implied

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[2] On the blend of image-worlds, see Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 34.

audience. The exigences described in previous rhetorical units set the stage for the

prophetic program of response, since the fate of the implied audience hangs in the

balance. The strategy of response is rooted in the call for the people to return to YHWH

both through external actions and through heartfelt commitment. The prophet constructs

the ways in which the implied audience ought to return, including providing the location

where they should assemble and the words of their cry.

The attention to detail indicates that Joel 2:12–17 moves beyond the calls to cry

out to YHWH in Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20. Instead of general commands to assemble, fast

and cry out (Joel 1:13–14), or appeals that reflect on the grave situation (Joel 1:19–20),

Joel 2:12–17 provides a detailed description of the implied audience's ideal response and

adopts a strategy of calling upon YHWH to act in order to preserve YHWH's divine

reputation in the wake of the community's return. This detailed program of response is

ideally situated following the nadir of Joel 2:11, heightening its persuasive potential. The

interplay of responses that the text tries to evoke in Joel 2:12–17 is visible in the creative

wordplay on the verb שׁוּב that shifts the onus for action from the implied audience to

YHWH.

The urgency of the call to return to YHWH emphasizes the question of the

community's implied guilt and sin. The lack of an explicit statement of errors is rare in

prophetic literature and attempts to identify a specific offense through accusations of

idolatry or lack of regard for the prophetic word are highly speculative. The language of

shame and disgrace informs the prophet's proposed cry to YHWH in Joel 2:17 since it

calls for YHWH to act so that the nations will not view the community as an object of

scorn because YHWH did not rescue them. However, the intertextual interaction of Joel

2:12–17 with Solomon's prayer in 1 Kgs 8:35–48 and the divine character credo of Exod

34:6–7, including its reuse in Jonah 4:2, may suggest an imputation of implied sin from

which the community needs to turn.[3]

The most fascinating element in the discussion of rhetorical effectiveness occurs

in the conceptual gap between Joel 2:17 and 2:18, where the text transitions from the

prophet's articulation of how the community should cry out to YHWH to declarations of

YHWH's intention to restore. The conceptual gap can be an effective rhetorical technique

since it requires its audiences to engage the world of the text and provide the necessary

transition to the following rhetorical unit. Each rhetorical unit helps to prepare the way

for what follows, but there is usually some level of indeterminacy in the transition. If the

gap between units is more pronounced, then audiences must be more active to bridge it in

order to preserve the text's coherence.[4]

A gap is evident in between Joel 2:17 where the text is still commanding the

implied audience to gather and cry out to YHWH, and Joel 2:18 where YHWH's zeal and

pity are piqued and YHWH promises a restorative response. In the space between these

two verses, it would appear that the text requires its reading and hearing audiences to

enter into the fray and posit that the implied audience heeded the prophetic call to return

to YHWH. Joel 2:12–14 calls for the Judahite community to return to YHWH because of

who YHWH claims to be, indicating that this may lead YHWH to turn back to it. Joel

2:18 then abruptly begins to describe YHWH's restorative actions, which would seem to

be most plausible in a context where the community first returned to YHWH as directed.

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[3] Boda, *Severe Mercy*, 306–07. See Boda's listing of the various reuses of Exod 34:6–7 that all appear to occur in contexts of the sin.

[4] Iser, "Indeterminacy," 39.

On the other side of the conceptual gap, Joel 2:18–27 begins the process of detailing YHWH's restorative actions to the catastrophes enumerated throughout Joel 1:1–2:17. Its connection to previous rhetorical units helps to demonstrate the essential unity of Joel's rhetoric. Joel 2:18–27 commences with a narrative introduction that details YHWH's commitment to act and concludes with the epiphoric claim that YHWH will no longer permit the implied audience to fall into disgrace and shame. Joel 2:18–27 advances the life-cycle of the rhetorical situation to emphasize divine response and it also shifts from the call for the implied audience to respond in Joel 2:12–17 to a detailed listing of YHWH's actions. The rhetorical strategy of this unit is rooted in the reversal of the calamities described in previous passages. YHWH destroys the locusts that ravage the landscape in Joel 1:1–14 and returns agricultural bounty to the land and its inhabitants that it threatened with starvation in Joel 1:1–14 and 1:15–20. It also promises protection and security in Zion, reversing the image of Zion's fall in Joel 2:1–11.

Joel 2:18–27 also dramatically shifts the responses of the implied audience. Whereas in the previous rhetorical unit the text calls on them to assemble and cry out to YHWH, in this passage the text calls them to rejoice while YHWH acts on their behalf. This also effectively re-establishes the nature of YHWH as portrayed in the character credo in Joel 2:13; YHWH's graciousness and compassion are on full display. This also effectively sets the tone for the remainder of the book, which delves into the full nature of YHWH's commitment to the covenant community and how YHWH intends to act on their behalf.

Joel 3:1–5 continues the process of restoration through the agency of YHWH's action. It commences with a phrase that casts this unit into a different temporal

orientation and considers what YHWH will do following the actions detailed in Joel

2:18–27. It concludes with wordplay on the concept of calling where those who call on

the name of YHWH inform those whom YHWH calls. Joel 3:1–5 unifies the implied

audience through its declaration that the gift of YHWH's Spirit is one that bridges all

gaps of age, gender, or social situation. This is reflective of the creation of the implied

audience in Joel 1:2 and 14 which use the merismus of "elders" and "dweller of the land"

to emphasize the inclusiveness of this audience. It also commences the process of

reversing the imagery related to the day of YHWH from Joel 1:15 and 2:1–11. Joel 3:1–5

connects to previous mentions of the day of YHWH since it still promises the rending of

the cosmos and the darkening of heavenly luminaries (cf. Joel 2:10). Joel 3:1–5, however,

also provides the potential for escape for those whom YHWH chooses to protect. This

effectively recalls the prophetic appeal to the implied audience to turn in Joel 2:12–17,

suggesting that such a response can provide rescue from the day of YHWH.

In the final chapter of the book, Joel 4:1–21 concludes the process of announcing

restoration by focusing on the removal of external threats to the implied audience's future

existence. This chapter commences with the declared intention of YHWH to restore the

fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem and concludes with the announcement that YHWH

dwells in Zion, which guarantees YHWH's restorative presence. The promise of the

divine presence answers the rhetorical question from Joel 2:17, where the text constructs

the nations as those mocking the implied audience because of YHWH's silence. This

chapter also represents an advancement of the life-cycle of the rhetorical situation by

dealing with the exigence of external nations, which is a natural progression from the

previous units which address the need to reverse material and spiritual threats against the Judahite community itself.

The rhetorical strategies of Joel 4:1–21 are rooted in YHWH's authority over all nations. The text announces judgment for the crimes that these nations commit in Joel 4:1–3 and provides specific examples through the display of *lex talionis* justice in Joel 4:4–8 that artfully constructs a punishment worthy of the crime. Joel 4:1–21 employs symbolic geographical locations to tie into the tradition of divine judgment in a valley. In this case, the names attributed to the valley indicate the inevitability of divine judgment. This chapter then dramatically highlights the nations' hubris by providing a call to battle that is ultimately futile. This chapter explicitly engages and reverses other prophetic declarations when it commands the nations to gather the greatest fighting force they can muster. This challenge ends in defeat when YHWH unleashes the day of YHWH. This use of the day of YHWH also completes its reversal since it uses similar imagery from Joel 2:10–11 concerning the darkening of heavenly luminaries, the shaking of the cosmos and YHWH's roar. The same images that announce doom and destruction for the implied audience in Joel 2:10–11 now indicate salvation and security in Zion.

Joel 4:1–21 concludes with promises of paradisiacal bounty and final judgment on specific foreign nations. YHWH's presence in Zion places the capstone on the promises of restoration; from Zion YHWH will enact blessing for the implied audience and judgment for their enemies. This completes the journey of the prophetic book from dystopia to utopia for the implied audience thanks to YHWH's restorative actions. This progression of this chapter provides the implied audience with reasons to continue to rely on YHWH who is now visibly acting on their behalf. Joel 4:1–21 also effectively

emphasizes YHWH's authority over all nations. Their challenge is futile and this chapter reveals that the deity who dwells in Zion claims sovereignty over the nations of the earth.

The Persuasive Potential of Joel

After looking at the rhetorical situations and strategies of the individual subunits, it is also helpful to draw back and consider the persuasive potential of Joel as a whole literary unit. In tracing its flow, one can see how Joel juxtaposes divine and human responses in order to emphasize the authority of YHWH and the necessity for the human audience to acknowledge and submit to it. Joel first moves its readers through multiple exigences (locusts, drought, invasion, mockery of the nations) that threaten the destruction of the implied audience that it constructs. Throughout its portrayal of the exigences, the text repeatedly focuses the response of the implied audience, commanding it to cry out to YHWH and maintain communion with YHWH by gathering under priestly leadership to lament. This culminates in the prophet's program of response presented in Joel 2:12–17. There is no indication that the implied audience can deal with any of the exigences without the intervention of YHWH, but the calls to assemble and appeal to YHWH (Joel 1:13–14, 19–20; 2:12–13, 15–17) engage the implied audience in the fray.

Beginning at Joel 2:18 the text focuses on YHWH as the active agent who answers the question "who knows?" from Joel 2:14. YHWH responds to the prophet's presentation of the implied audience's cry by becoming jealous and compassionate. The text never specifically links YHWH's response to the implied audience's cry, thus preserving YHWH's freedom to act as YHWH chooses, but it is probable that the text intends to indicate that turning to YHWH "with all your heart" is the appropriate strategy

to adopt amidst all of the exigences it portrays. YHWH's responses then explicitly resolve the crises described in Joel 1:1–2:17, including a reversal of the day of YHWH. While Joel maintains similar imagery concerning its proximity and power, the text shifts focus so that the day of YHWH promises salvation rather than desolation. In Joel 2:18–4:21, YHWH also removes the invading locust army, restores the landscape, provides the gift of the divine Spirit, and asserts authority over all nations while promising divine dwelling in Zion.

While YHWH acts in this manner, the text mutes the responses of the implied audience in Joel 2:18–4:21. It does, however, call upon the audience to rejoice in the wake of YHWH's actions (Joel 2:23). Otherwise, the appropriate responses to YHWH's actions seem to be implicit, with the text guiding the implicit audience to conclude that they should call on the name of YHWH to be saved (Joel 3:5) and acknowledge that YHWH is their God when YHWH removes the threat of the foreign nations (Joel 4:16–17). YHWH's restorative responses persuasively indicate that crying out to YHWH and acknowledging that YHWH is God is the correct reaction.

Overall, the rhetorical power of Joel lies in the interweaving of the divine and human responses to the exigences it presents. The text deftly captures the reader's attention with the scope of its crises, plunging downwards into despair when it appears that the day of YHWH is inescapably imminent against the implied audience. Joel, however, then presents a window of hope through its appeal for the implied audience to respond by crying out to YHWH and its description of YHWH's character. It then effectively supports its characterization of YHWH through YHWH's salvific response. Consequently, Joel persuasively presents the necessity to appeal to YHWH in the midst

of crisis. The implied audience cannot enact its own restoration, but returning to YHWH fully and crying out to the God who is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love and relents from sending calamity" may activate YHWH's zeal and pity. Joel does not presume to know the mind of YHWH and does not declare that such an appeal must be effective. Joel, however, does persuasively indicate that if YHWH chooses to respond, YHWH has the authority and the ability to turn dystopia into utopia. As a result, when crises arise, the proper response is to acknowledge the gravity of the situation and cry out to YHWH, entreating YHWH to act so that YHWH can provide those who cry out from depths of despair with the hope of restoration secured through the promise of YHWH's presence.

Suggestions for Further Study

After engaging in a project of this magnitude it is also helpful to lift one's gaze and consider the new horizons that this study may reveal. One of the most significant opportunities for further study would be to test the adaptability of this particular model of rhetorical criticism in different settings. Shaw's examination of Micah and Möller's study of Amos 1–4 establish the foundation for this model in prophetic literature, but there remains a significant body of literature that is open to similar study. The painstaking attention to detail involved in this model may restrict its feasibility to shorter prophetic books. It may be possible, however, to delineate a certain bloc of text in Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel for a similar rhetorical-critical study. Such studies would need to engage the broader milieu of the book, but could elucidate the persuasive strategies and effects of specific passages.

The category of rhetorical effectiveness is also in need of further reflection and refinement. Specifically, the question of audience(s) requires significant thought. While acknowledging that the interpreter has limited access to the original audience of the prophetic message, there is space to consider how best to construct the implied audience of the text. This study emphasizes the use of imperatives directed at specific sub-groups and the presence of vocatives to suggest the composition of the implied audience in Joel, but it would be worth considering if there are other grammatical or syntactical signals that identify this audience. Further, the exploration of the text's effectiveness on Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's idea of the universal audience requires significant development. This step could permit the interpreter to consider how the text speaks beyond its own situation, but one would need to develop criteria to shape the inquiry. This study occasionally consults the literary theories of Eco and Iser, but a deeper analysis of how texts and their reading audiences interact could prove fruitful.

Finally, there is also room to consider the orientation of the interpreter in the discussion of rhetorical effectiveness. While this study consciously orients itself towards Patrick and Scult's hermeneutic of affirmation, it would also be interesting to examine the effectiveness of a text's persuasive intent from a more skeptical point of view.[5] This would bring the world in front of the text deeply into a rhetorical analysis which could provide a fresh perspective on what it means to respond to the persuasive intentions of prophetic literature.

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[5] In making a conscious decision to adopt this interpretative perspective, this study hopes to avoid the accusations of Clines against those who uncritically defend the normative power of the text's perspective; Clines, "Metacommentating Amos," 142–60. Collins provides an interesting response that suggests attempting again to get to the world behind the text and confirming the validity of Amos' fulminations; Collins, *Bible after Babel,* 158–59. Such an attempt may cut through the "fog of undecidability" that Clines tries to impose. Of course, adopting such an approach requires a hermeneutic that permits the interpreter to claim that they have correctly described the world behind the text.

Overall, the flexibility of rhetorical-critical approaches and richness of the prophetic literature provide the prospect of further fruitful inquiry. There are issues to explore concerning the situation that the text presents as well as the orientation that the interpreter chooses to adopt. These coincide with the text's use of poetic devices and literary artistry to communicate its message. All of these issues offer the potential for a valuable program of study that can deepen our understanding of prophetic books as persuasive literature. Studying Joel through the lens of rhetorical criticism reveals its depth and richness and illustrates the potential of continued research in this field.

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