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Joel

From Commentary on the Old Testament

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch

adapted for Grace Notes training by Warren Doud

Grace Notes

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Joel

Introduction

Person and Times of the Prophet Joel.

—*Joel* (יְאוֹל, i.e., whose God is Jehovah, יְהוָה) is distinguished from other men of the same name, which occurs very frequently (e.g., 1 Sam. 8:2; 1 Chron. 4:35; 5:4; 8:12; 6:21; 7:3; 2 Chron. 29:12; Neh. 11:9), by the epithet “son of *Pethuel*” (בְּתוּעַל, the open-heartedness or sincerity of God). Nothing is known of the circumstances connected with his life, since the traditional legends as to his springing from *Bethom* (Βηθὼν, al. Θεβυράν in Ps. Epiph.), or *Bethomeron* in the tribe of Reuben (*Ps. Dorothe.*), are quite unsupported. All that can be inferred with any certainty from his writings is, that he lived in Judah, and in all probability prophesied in Jerusalem. The date of his ministry is also a disputed point; though so much is certain, namely, that he did not live in the reign of Manasseh or Josiah, or even later, as some suppose, but was one of the earliest of the twelve minor prophets. For even Amos (Amos 1:2) commences his prophecy with a passage from Joel (Joel 3:16), and closes it with the same promises, adopting in Amos 9:13 the beautiful imagery of Joel, of the mountains dripping with new wine, and the hills overflowing (Joel 3:18). And Isaiah, again, in his description of the coming judgment in Isa. 13, had Joel in his mind; and in v. 6 he actually borrows a sentence from his prophecy (Joel 1:15), which is so peculiar that the agreement cannot be an accidental one. Consequently, Joel prophesied before Amos, i.e., before the twenty-seven years of the contemporaneous reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II. How long before, can only be inferred with any degree of probability from the historical circumstances to which he refers in his prophecy. The only enemies that he mentions besides Egypt and Edom (Joel 3:19), as those whom the Lord would punish for the hostility they had shown towards the people of God, are Tyre and Zidon, and the coasts of Philistia (Joel 3:4); but not the Syrians, who

planned an expedition against Jerusalem after the conquest of Gath, which cost Joash not only the treasures of the temple and palace, but his own life also (2 Kings 12:18ff.; 2 Chron. 24:23ff.), on account of which Amos predicted the destruction of the kingdom of Syria, and the transportation of the people to Assyria (Amos 1:3–5). But inasmuch as this expedition of the Syrians was not “directed against the Philistines, so that only a single detachment made a passing raid into Judah on their return,” as Hengstenberg supposes, but was a direct attack upon the kingdom of Judah, to which the city of Gath, that Rehoboam had fortified, may still have belonged (see at 2 Kings 12:18, 19), and inflicted a very severe defeat upon Judah, Joel would surely have mentioned the Syrians along with the other enemies of Judah, if he had prophesied after that event. And even if the absence of any reference to the hostility of the Syrians towards Judah is not strictly conclusive when taken by itself, it acquires great importance from the fact that the whole character of Joel’s prophecy points to the times before Amos and Hosea. We neither meet with any allusion to the sins which Hosea and Amos condemn on the part of Judah, and which brought about the Assyrian judgment; nor is idolatry, as it prevailed under Joram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah, ever mentioned at all; but, on the contrary, the Jehovah-worship, which Jehoiada the high priest restored when Joash ascended the throne (2 Kings 11:17ff.; 2 Chron. 23:16ff.), is presupposed with all its well-regulated and priestly ceremonial. These circumstances speak very decidedly in favour of the conclusion that the first thirty years of the reign of Joash, during which the king had Jehoiada the high priest for his adviser, are to be regarded as the period of Joel’s ministry. No well-founded objection can be brought against this on account of the position which his book occupies among the minor prophets, since there is no ground for the opinion that the writings of the twelve minor prophets are arranged with a strict regard to chronology.

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2. The Book of Joel.

—The writings of Joel contain a connected prophetic proclamation, which is divided into two equal halves by Joel 2:18 and 19*a*. In the first half the prophet depicts a terrible devastation of Judah by locusts and scorching heat; and describing this judgment as the harbinger, or rather as the dawn, of Jehovah's great day of judgment, summons the people of all ranks to a general day of penitence, fasting, and prayer, in the sanctuary upon Zion, that the Lord may have compassion upon His nation (Joel 1:2–2:17). In the second half there follows, as the divine answer to the call of the people to repentance, the promise that the Lord will destroy the army of locusts, and bestow a rich harvest blessing upon the land by sending early and latter rain (Joel 2:19*b*–27), and then in the future pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28–32), and sit in judgment upon all nations, who have scattered His people and divided His land among them, and reward them according to their deeds; but that He will shelter His people from Zion, and glorify His land by rivers of abundant blessing (Joel 3). These two halves are connected together by the statement that Jehovah manifests the jealousy of love for His land, and pity towards His people, and answers them (Joel 2:18, 19*a*). So far the commentators are all agreed as to the contents of the book. But there are differences of opinion, more especially as to the true interpretation of the first half,—namely, whether the description of the terrible devastation by locusts is to be understood literally or allegorically.¹

The decision of this question depends upon the reply that is given to the prior question, whether Joel 1:2–2:17 contains a description of a present or a future judgment. If we observe, first of all, that the statement in Joel 2:18 and 19*a*, by which the promise is introduced, is expressed in four successive imperfects with *Vav. consec.* (the standing form for historical narratives), there can be no doubt whatever that this remark contains a historical announcement of what has taken place on the part of the Lord in consequence of the

penitential cry of the people. And if this be established, it follows still further that the first half of our book cannot contain the prediction of a strictly future judgment, but must describe a calamity which has at any rate in part already begun. This is confirmed by the fact that the prophet from the very outset (Joel 1:2–4) described the devastation of the land by locusts as a present calamity, on the ground of which he summons the people to repentance. As Joel begins with an appeal to the old men, to see whether such things have happened in their own days, or the days of their fathers, and to relate them to their children and children's children, and then describes the thing itself with simple perfects, יָתֵר הַגִּזְמוֹם אָכַל וגו', it is perfectly obvious that he is not speaking of something that is to take place in the future, but of a divine judgment that has been inflicted already.² It is true that the prophets frequently employ preterites in their description of future events, but there is no analogous example that can be found of such a use of them as we find here in Joel 1:2–4; and the remark made by Hengstenberg, to the effect that we find the preterites employed in exactly the same manner in Joel 3, is simply incorrect. But if Joel had an existing calamity before his eye, and depicts it in Joel 1:2ff., the question in dispute from time immemorial, whether the description is to be understood allegorically or literally, is settled in favour of the literal view. "An allegory must contain some significant marks of its being so. Where these are wanting, it is arbitrary to assume that it is an allegory at all." And we have no such marks here, as we shall show in our exposition in detail. "As it is a fact established by the unanimous testimony of the most credible witnesses, that wherever swarms of locusts descend, all the vegetation in the fields immediately vanishes, just as if a curtain had been rolled up; that they spare neither the juicy bark of woody plants, nor the roots below the ground; that their cloud-like swarms darken the air, and render the sun and even men at a little distance off invisible; that their innumerable and closely compact army advances in military array in a straight course,

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most obstinately maintained; that it cannot be turned back or dispersed, either by natural obstacles or human force; that on its approach a loud roaring noise is heard like the rushing of a torrent, a waterfall, or a strong wind; that they no sooner settle to eat, than you hear on all sides the grating sound of their mandibles, and, as Volney expresses it, might fancy that you heard the foraging of an invisible army;—if we compare these and other natural observations with the statements of Joel, we shall find everywhere the most faithful picture, and nowhere any hyperbole requiring for its justification and explanation that the army of locusts should be paraphrased into an army of men; more especially as the devastation of a country by an army of locusts is far more terrible than that of an ordinary army; and there is no allusion, either expressed or hinted at, to a massacre among the people. And if we consider, still further, that the migratory locusts (*Acridium migratorium*, in Oken, *Allg. Naturgesch.* v. 3, p. 1514ff.) find their grave sometimes in dry and barren steppes, and sometimes in lakes and seas, it is impossible to comprehend how the promise in Joel 2:20—one part of the army now devastating Judah shall be hurled into the southern desert, the van into the Dead Sea, and the rear into the Mediterranean—can harmonize with the allegorical view” (Delitzsch).³ The only thing that appears to favour the idea that the locusts are used figuratively to represent hostile armies, is the circumstance that Joel discerns in the devastation of the locusts as depicted by him, the drawing near or coming of the day of the Lord (Joel 1:15; 2:1), connected with the fact that Isaiah speaks of the judgment upon Baal, which was accomplished by a hostile army, in the words of Joel (Joel 1:15; see Isa. 13:6). But on closer examination, this appearance does not rise into reality. It is true that by the “day of Jehovah” we cannot understand a different judgment from the devastation of the locusts, since such a supposition would be irreconcilable with Joel 2:1ff. But the expression, “for the day of Jehovah is at hand, and as a destruction from

the Almighty does it come,” shows that the prophet did not so completely identify the day of the Lord with the plague of locusts, as that it was exhausted by it, but that he merely saw in this the approach of the great day of judgment, i.e., merely one element of the judgment, which falls in the course of ages upon the ungodly, and will be completed in the last judgment. One factor in the universal judgment is the judgment pronounced upon Babylon, and carried out by the Medes; so that it by no means follows from the occurrence of the words of Joel in the prophecy of Isaiah, that the latter put an allegorical interpretation upon Joel’s description of the devastation by the locusts. But even if there are no conclusive indications or hints, that can be adduced in support of the allegorical interpretation, it cannot be denied, on the other hand, that the description, as a whole, contains something more than a poetical painting of one particular instance of the devastation of Judah by a more terrible swarm of locusts than had ever been known before; that is to say, that it bears an ideal character surpassing the reality,—a fact which is overlooked by such commentators as can find nothing more in the account than the description of a very remarkable plague. The introduction, “Hear this, ye old men; and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land: hath this been in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children the following generation” (Joel 1:2, 3); and the lamentation in v. 9, that the meat-offering and drink-offering have been destroyed from the house of Jehovah; and still more, the picture of the day of the Lord as a day of darkness and of gloominess like the morning red spread over the mountains; a great people and a strong, such as has not been from all eternity, and after which there will be none like to for ever and ever (Joel 2:2),—unquestionably show that Joel not only regarded the plague of locusts that came upon Judah in the light of divine revelation, and as a sign, but described it as the breaking of the Lord’s great day of judgment, or that in the advance of the locusts he saw the army of God,

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at whose head Jehovah marched as captain, and caused His voice, the terrible voice of the Judge of the universe, to be heard in the thunder (Joel 2:11), and that he predicted this coming of the Lord, before which the earth trembles, the heavens shake, and sun, moon, and stars lose their brightness (Joel 2:10), as His coming to judge the world. This proclamation, however, was no production of mere poetical exaggeration, but had its source in the inspiration of the Spirit of God, which enlightened the prophet; so that in the terrible devastation that had fallen upon Judah he discerned one feature of the day of judgment of the Lord, and on the ground of the judgment of God that had been thus experienced, proclaimed that the coming of the Lord to judgment upon the whole world was near at hand. The medium through which this was conveyed to his mind was meditation upon the history of the olden time, more especially upon the judgments through which Jehovah had effected the redemption of His people out of Egypt, in connection with the punishment with which Moses threatened the transgressors of the law (Deut. 28:38, 39, 42),—namely, that locusts should devour their seed, their plants, their fields, and their fruits. Hengstenberg has correctly observed, that the words of Joel in Joel 2:10, “There have not been ever the like,” are borrowed from Ex. 10:14; but it is not in these words alone that the prophet points to the Egyptian plague of locusts. In the very introduction to his prophecy (Joel 1:2, 3), viz., the question whether such a thing has occurred, and the charge, Tell it to your children, etc., there is an unmistakable allusion to Ex. 10:2, where the Lord charges Moses to tell Pharaoh that He will do signs, in order that Pharaoh may relate it to his son and his son’s son, and then announces the plague of locusts in these words: “that thy fathers and thy fathers’ fathers have not seen such things since their existence upon the earth” (Ex. 10:6).

As the basis of this judgment of God which fell upon Egypt in the olden time, and by virtue of a higher illumination, Joel discerned in the similar judgment that had burst upon Judah in

his own time, a type of the coming of Jehovah’s great day of judgment, and made it the substratum of his prophecy of the judgment of the wrath of the Lord which would come upon Judah, to terrify the sinners out of their self-security, and impel them by earnest repentance, fasting, and prayer, to implore the divine mercy for deliverance from utter destruction. This description of the coming day of Jehovah, i.e., of the judgment of the world, for which the judgment inflicted upon Judah of the devastation by locusts prepared the way, after the foretype of these occurrences of both the olden and present time, is no allegory, however, in which the heathen nations, by whom the judgments upon the covenant nation that had gone further and further from its God would be executed in the time to come, are represented as swarms of locusts coming one after another and devastating the land of Judah; but it has just the same reality as the plague of locusts through which God once sought to humble the pride of the Egyptian Pharaoh. We are no more at liberty to turn the locusts in the prophecy before us into hostile armies, than to pronounce the locusts by which Egypt was devastated, allegorical figures representing enemies or troops of hostile cavalry. Such a metamorphosis as this is warranted neither by the vision in Amos 7:1–3, where Amos is said to have seen the divine judgment under the figure of a swarm of locusts; nor by that described in Rev. 9:3ff., where locusts which come out of the bottomless pit are commanded neither to hurt the grass nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only to torment men with their scorpion-stings: for even in these visions the locusts are not figurative, representing hostile nations; but on the basis of the Egyptian plague of locusts and of Joel’s prophecy, they stand in Amos as a figurative representation of the devastation of the land, and in the Apocalypse as the symbol of a supernatural plague inflicted upon the ungodly. Lastly, another decisive objection to the allegorical interpretation is to be found in the circumstance, that neither in the first nor in the second half of his book does Joel predict the particular judgments which God will inflict in

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the course of time, partly upon His degenerate people, and partly upon the hostile powers of the world, but that he simply announces the judgment of God upon Judah and the nations of the world in its totality, as the great and terrible day of the Lord, without unfolding more minutely or even suggesting the particular facts in which it will be historically realized. In this respect, the ideality of his prophecy is maintained throughout; and the only speciality given to it is, that in the first half the judgment upon the covenant people is proclaimed, and in the second the judgment upon the heathen nations: the former as the groundwork of a call to repentance; the latter as the final separation between the church of the Lord and its opponents. And this separation between the covenant nation and the powers of the world is founded on fact. The judgment only falls upon the covenant nation when it is unfaithful to its divine calling, when it falls away from its God, and that not to destroy and annihilate it, but to lead it back by means of chastisement to the Lord its God. If it hearken to the voice of its God, who speaks to it in judgments, the Lord repents of the evil, and turns the calamity into salvation and blessing. It was Joel's mission to proclaim this truth in Judah, and turn the sinful nation to its God. To this end he proclaimed to the people, that the Lord was coming to judgment in the devastation that the locusts had spread over the land, and by depicting the great and terrible day of the Lord, called upon them to turn to their God with all their heart. This call to repentance was not without effect. The Lord was jealous for His land, and spared His people (Joel 2:18), and sent His prophets to proclaim the removal of the judgment and the bestowal of a bountiful earthly and spiritual blessing: viz., for the time immediately ensuing the destruction of the army of locusts, the sending of the teacher for righteousness, and a plentiful fall of rain for the fruitful supply of the fruits of the ground (Joel 2:19, 27); and in the more remote future, the pouring out of His Spirit upon the whole congregation, and on the day of the judgment upon all nations the deliverance and preservation of His faithful worshippers;

and finally, after the judgment, the transformation and eternal glory of Zion (Joel 2:28-3:21). Here, again, the ideality of the prophetic announcement is maintained throughout, although a distinction is made between the inferior blessing in the immediate future, and the higher benediction of the church of God at a more distant period. The outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh is followed, without any intervening link, by the announcement of the coming of the terrible day of the Lord, as a day of judgment upon all nations, including those who have shown themselves hostile to Judah, either in Joel's own time or a little while before. The nations are gathered together in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and there judged by Jehovah through His mighty heroes; but the sons of Israel are delivered and sheltered by their God. Here, again, all the separate judgments, which fall upon the nations of the world that are hostile to God, during the many centuries of the gradual development of the kingdom of God upon earth, are summed up in one grand judicial act on the day of Jehovah, through which the separation is completely effected between the church of the Lord and its foes, the ungodly power of the world annihilated, and the kingdom of God perfected; but without the slightest hint, that both the judgment upon the nations and the glorification of the kingdom of God will be fulfilled through a succession of separate judgments.

The book of Joel, therefore, contains two prophetic addresses, which are not only connected together as one work by the historical remark in Joel 2:18, 19a, but which stand in the closest relation to each other, so far as their contents are concerned, though the one was not delivered to the people directly after the other, but the first during the devastation by the locusts, to lead the people to observe the judgment of God and to assemble together in the temple for a service of penitence and prayer; and the second not till after the priests had appointed a day of fasting, penitence, and prayer, in the house of the Lord, in consequence of His solemn call to repentance, and in the

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name of the people had prayed to the Lord to pity and spare His inheritance. The committal of these addresses to writing did not take place, at any rate, till after the destruction of the army of the locusts, when the land began to recover from the devastation that it had suffered. But whether Joel committed these addresses to writings just as he delivered them to the congregation, and merely linked them together into one single work by introducing the historical remark that unites them, or whether he merely inserted in his written work the essential contents of several addresses delivered after this divine judgment, and worked them up into one connected prophecy, it is impossible to decide with certainty. But there is no doubt whatever as to the composition of the written work by the prophet himself.—For the different commentaries upon the book of Joel, see my *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

Joel 1

I. The Judgment of God, and the Prophet's Call to Repentance—Ch. 1:2–2:17

Joel 1:2–2:17. An unparalleled devastation of the land of Judah by several successive swarms of locusts, which destroyed all the seedlings, all field and garden fruits, all plants and trees, and which was accompanied by scorching heat, induced the prophet to utter a loud lamentation at this unparalleled judgment of God, and an earnest call to all classes of the nation to offer prayer to the Lord in the temple, together with fasting, mourning, and weeping, that He might avert the judgment. In the first chapter, the lamentation has reference chiefly to the ruin of the land (Joel 1:2–20); in the second, the judgment is depicted as a foretype and harbinger of the approaching day of the Lord, which the congregation is to anticipate by a day of public fasting, repentance, and prayer (Joel 2:1–17); so that Joel 1 describes rather the magnitude of the judgment, and Joel 2:1–17 its significance in relation to the covenant nation.

Lamentation Over the Devastation of Judah by Locusts and Drought—Ch. 1

After an appeal to lay to heart the devastation by swarms of locusts, which has fallen upon the land (vv. 2–4), the prophet summons the following to utter lamentation over this calamity: first the drunkards, who are to awake (vv. 5–7); then the congregation generally, which is to mourn with penitence (vv. 8–12); and then the priests, who are to appoint a service of repentance (vv. 13–18). For each of these appeals he gives, as a reason, a further description of the horrible calamity, corresponding to the particular appeal; and finally, he sums up his lamentation in a prayer for the deliverance of the land from destruction (vv. 19, 20).

Joel 1:1. Ver. 1 contains the heading to the book, and has already been noticed in the introduction. V. 2. *"Hear this, ye old men; and attend, all ye inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing indeed happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? V. 1. Ye shall tell your sons of it, and your sons their sons, and their sons the next generation. V. 4. The leavings of the gnawer the multiplier ate, and the leavings of the multiplier the licker ate, and the leavings of the licker the devourer ate."* Not only for the purpose of calling the attention of the hearers to his address, but still more to set forth the event of which he is about to speak as something unheard of—a thing that has never happened before, and therefore is a judgment inflicted by God—the prophet commences with the question addressed to the old men, whose memory went the furthest back, and to all the inhabitants of Judah, whether they had ever experienced anything of the kind, or heard of such a thing from their fathers; and with the command to relate it to their children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.⁴

"The inhabitants of the land" are the inhabitants of Judah, as it was only with this kingdom that Joel was occupied (cf. v. 14 and Joel 2:1). נִסִּי is the occurrence related in v. 4, which is represented by the question "Has this been in your days?" as a fact just experienced.

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Yether haggâzâm, the leavings of the gnawer, i.e., whatever the gnawer leaves unconsumed of either vegetables or plants. The four names given to the locusts, viz., *gâzâm*, *'arbeh*, *yeleq*, and *châsîl*, are not the names applied in natural history to four distinct species, or four different generations of locusts; nor does Joel describe the swarms of two successive years, so that "*gâzâm* is the migratory locust, which visits Palestine chiefly in the autumn, *'arbeh* the young brood, *yeleq* the young locust in the last stage of its transformation, or before changing its skin for the fourth time, and *châsîl* the perfect locust after this last change, so that as the brood sprang from the *gâzâm*, *châsîl* would be equivalent to *gâzâm*" (Credner). This explanation is not only at variance with Joel 2:25, where *gâzâm* stands last, after *châsîl*, but is founded generally merely upon a false interpretation of Nah. 3:15, 16 (see the passage) and Jer. 51:27, where the adjective *sâmâr* (*horridus*, horrible), appended to *yeleq*, from *sâmar*, to shudder, by no means refers to the rough, horny, wing-sheath of the young locusts, and cannot be sustained from the usage of the language. It is impossible to point out any difference in usage between *gâzâm* and *châsîl*, or between these two words and *'arbeh*. The word *gâzâm*, from *gâzam*, to cut off (in Arabic, Ethiopic, and the Rabb.), occurs only in this passage, in Joel 2:25, and in Amos 4:9, where it is applied to a swarm of flying locusts, which leave the vine, fig-tree, and olive, perfectly bare, as it is well known that all locusts do, when, as in Amos, the vegetables and field fruits have been already destroyed. *'Arbeh*, from *râbhâh*, to be many, is the common name of the locust, and indeed in all probability of the migratory locust, because this always appears in innumerable swarms. *Châsîl*, from *châsal*, to eat off, designates the locust (*hâ'arbeh*), according to Deut. 28:38, by its habit of eating off the field crops and tree fruits, and is therefore used in 1 Kings 8:37, 2 Chron. 6:28, Ps. 78:46, as synonymous with *hâ'arbeh*, and in Isa. 33:4 in its stead. *Yeleq*, from *yâlaq* = *lâqaq*, to lick, to lick off, occurs in Ps. 105:34 as equivalent to *'arbeh*, and in Nahum as synonymous with it;

and indeed it there refers expressly to the Egyptian plague of locusts, so that young locusts without wings cannot possibly be thought of. *Haggâzâm* the gnawer, *hayyeleq* the licker, *hechâsîl* the devourer, are therefore simply poetical epithets applied to the *'arbeh*, which never occur in simple plain prose, but are confined to the loftier (rhetorical and poetical) style. Moreover, the assumption that Joel is speaking of swarms of locusts of two successive years, is neither required by Joel 2:25 (see the comm. on this verse), nor reconcilable with the contents of the verse itself. If the *'arbeh* eats what the *gâzâm* has left, and the *yeleq* what is left by the *'arbeh*, we cannot possibly think of the field and garden fruits of two successive years, because the fruits of the second year are not the leavings of the previous year, but have grown afresh in the year itself.⁵ The thought is rather this: one swarm of locusts after another has invaded the land, and completely devoured its fruit. The use of several different words, and the division of the locusts into four successive swarms, of which each devours what has been left by its precursor, belong to the rhetorical drapery and individualizing of the thought. The only thing that has any real significance is the number four, as the four kinds of punishment in Jer. 15:3, and the four destructive judgments in Ezek. 14:21, clearly show. The number four, "the stamp of oecumenicity" (Kliefoth), indicates here the spread of the judgment over the whole of Judah in all directions.

Joel 1:5-7. In order that Judah may discern in this unparalleled calamity a judgment of God, and the warning voice of God calling to repentance, the prophet first of all summons the wine-bibbers to sober themselves, and observe the visitation of God. V. 5. *"Awake, ye drunken ones, and weep! and howl, all ye drinkers of wine! at the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.* V. 6. *For a people has come up over my land, a strong one, and innumerable: its teeth are lion's teeth, and it has the bite of a lioness.* V. 7. *It has made my vine a wilderness, and my fig-tree into sticks. Peeling, it has peeled it off, and cast it away: its shoots have grown*

white.” הַקִּיץ to awake out of the reeling of intoxication, as in Prov. 23:35. They are to howl for the new wine, the fresh sweet juice of the grape, because with the destruction of the vines it is taken away and destroyed from their mouth. Vv. 6 and 7 announce through whom. In the expression *gōi ‘âlâh* (a people has come up) the locusts are represented as a warlike people, because they devastate the land like a hostile army. *Gōi* furnishes no support to the allegorical view. In Prov. 30:25, 26, not only are the ants described as a people (*‘âm*), but the locusts also; although it is said of them that they have no king. And *‘âm* is synonymous with *gōi*, which has indeed very frequently the idea of that which is hostile, and even here is used in this sense; though it by no means signifies a heathen nation, but occurs in Zeph. 2:9 by the side of *‘âm*, as an epithet applied to the people of Jehovah (i.e., Israel: see also Gen. 12:2). The weapons of this army consist in its teeth, its “bite,” which grinds in pieces as effectually as the teeth of the lion or the bite of the lioness (מִתְלַעֲוֹת; see at Job 29:17). The suffix attached to אֲרִצִּי does not refer to Jehovah, but to the prophet, who speaks in the name of the people, so that it is the land of the people of God. And this also applies to the suffixes in גַּפְנֵי and הַאֲנָתִי in v. 7. In the description of the devastation caused by the army of locusts, the vine and fig-tree are mentioned as the noblest productions of the land, which the Lord has given to His people for their inheritance (see at Hos. 2:14). לְקַצֵּפָה, εἰς κλασμόν, literally, for crushing. The suffix in *chāsâphâh* refers, no doubt, simply to the vine as the principal object, the fig-tree being mentioned casually in connection with it. *Châsaph*, to strip, might be understood as referring simply to the leaves of the vine (cf. Ps. 29:9); but what follows shows that the gnawing or eating away of the bark is also included. *Hishlîkh*, to throw away not merely what is uneatable, “that which is not green and contains no sap” (Hitzig), but the vine itself, which the locusts have broken when eating off its leaves and bark. The branches of the vine

have become white through the eating off of the bark (*sârîgîm*, Gen. 40:10).⁶

Joel 1:8–12. The whole nation is to mourn over this devastation. V. 8. *“Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.* V. 9. *The meat-offering and the drink-offering are destroyed from the house of Jehovah. The priests, the servant of Jehovah, mourn.* V. 10. *The field is laid waste, the ground mourns: for the corn is laid waste: the new wine is spoiled, the oil decays.* V. 11. *Turn pale, ye husbandmen; howl, ye vinedressers, over wheat and barley: for the harvest of the field is perished.* V. 12. *The vine is spoiled, and the fig-tree faded; the pomegranate, also the palm and the apple tree: all the trees of the field are withered away; yea, joy has expired from the children of men.”* In v. 8 Judah is addressed as the congregation of Jehovah. אֲלֵי is the imperative of the verb אָלַה, equivalent to the Syriac *‘elâ’*, to lament. The verb only occurs here. The lamentation of the virgin for the בַּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ, i.e., the beloved of your youth, her bridegroom, whom she has lost by death (Isa. 54:6), is the deepest and bitterest lamentation. With reference to הִגְרַת־שֶׁק, see Delitzsch on Isa. 3:24. The occasion of this deep lamentation, according to v. 9, is the destruction of the meat-offering and drink-offering from the house of the Lord, over which the servants of Jehovah mourn. The meat and drink offerings must of necessity cease, because the corn, the new wine, and the oil are destroyed through the devastation of the field and soil. *Hokhrath minchâh* does not affirm that the offering of the daily morning and evening sacrifice (Ex. 29:38–42)—for it is to this that מְנַחֵה וְנִסְדָּה chiefly, if not exclusively, refers—has already ceased; but simply that any further offering is rendered impossible by the failure of meal, wine, and oil. Now Israel could not suffer any greater calamity than the suspension of the daily sacrifice; for this was a practical suspension of the covenant relation—a sign that God had rejected His people. Therefore, even in the last siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, the sacrificial worship was not

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suspended till it had been brought to the last extremity; and even then it was for the want of sacrificers, and not of the material of sacrifice (Josephus, *de bell. Jud.* vi. 2, 1). The reason for this anxiety was the devastation of the field and land (v. 10); and this is still further explained by a reference to the devastation and destruction of the fruits of the ground, viz., the corn, i.e., the corn growing in the field, so that the next harvest would be lost, and the new wine and oil, i.e., the vines and olive-trees, so that they could bear no grapes for new wine, and no olives for oil. The verbs in v. 11a are not perfects, but imperatives, as in the fifth verse. הָבִישׁ has the same meaning as *bōsh*, as in Jer. 2:26; 6:15, etc., to stand ashamed, to turn pale with shame at the disappointment of their hope, and is probably written defectively, without ו, to distinguish it from הוֹבִישׁ, the *hiphil* of בָּשׂ, to be parched or dried up (vv. 10 and 12). The hope of the husbandmen was disappointed through the destruction of the wheat and barley, the most important field crops. The vine-growers had to mourn over the destruction of the vine and the choice fruit-trees (v. 12), such as the fig and pomegranate, and even the date-palm (*gam-tâmâr*), which has neither a fresh green rind nor tender juicy leaves, and therefore is not easily injured by the locusts so as to cause it to dry up; and *tappûäch*, the apple-tree, and all the trees of the field, i.e., all the rest of the trees, wither. "All trees, whether fruit-bearing or not, are consumed by the devastating locusts" (Jerome). In the concluding clause of v. 12, the last and principal ground assigned for the lamentation is, that joy is taken away and withered from the children of men (*hōbhîsh min, constr. praegn.*). כִּי introduces a reason here as elsewhere, though not for the clause immediately preceding, but for the clause הָבִישׁוּ and הִלְלִילוּ in v. 11, the leading thought in both verses; and we may therefore express it by an emphatic *yea*.

Joel 1:13-20. The affliction is not removed by mourning and lamentation, but only through repentance and supplication to the Lord, who

can turn away all evil. The prophet therefore proceeds to call upon the priests to offer to the Lord penitential supplication day and night in the temple, and to call the elders and all the people to observe a day of fasting, penitence, and prayer; and then offers supplication himself to the Lord to have compassion upon them (v. 19). From the motive assigned for this appeal, we may also see that a terrible drought had been associated with the devastation by the locusts, from which both man and beast had endured the most bitter suffering, and that Joel regarded this terrible calamity as a sign of the coming of the day of the Lord. V. 13. "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests; howl, ye servants of the altar; come, pass the night in sackcloth, ye servants of my God: for the meat-offering and drink-offering are withdrawn from the house of your God. V. 14. Sanctify a fast, call out an assembly, assemble the elders, all ye inhabitants of the land, at the house of Jehovah your God, and cry to Jehovah." From what follows we must supply *bassaqqîm* (with sackcloth) to *chigrû* (gird yourselves). Gird yourselves with mourning apparel, i.e., put it on (see v. 8). In this they are to pass the night, to offer supplication day and night, or incessantly, standing between the altar and the porch (Joel 2:17). "Servants of my God," i.e., of the God whose prophet I am, and from whom I can promise you a hearing. The reason assigned for this appeal is the same as for the lamentation in v. 9. But it is not the priests only who are to pray incessantly to the Lord; the elders and all the people are to do the same. קָדַשׁ צוֹם, to sanctify a fast, i.e., to appoint a holy fast, a divine service of prayer connected with fasting. To this end the priests are to call an *'âtsârâh*, i.e., a meeting of the congregation for religious worship. *'Atsârâh*, or *'âtsereth*, πανήγυρις, is synonymous with מִקְרָא קוֹדֵשׁ in Lev. 23:36 (see the exposition of that passage). In what follows, כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל is attached ὁσυσδέτως to זָקְנִים; and the latter is not a vocative, but an accusative of the object. On the other hand, בֵּית יְהוָה, is an *accus. loci*, and dependent upon זָעַק, אָסַפוּ, to cry, used

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of loud and importunate prayer. It is only by this that destruction can still be averted.

Joel 1:15. *“Alas for the day! for the day of Jehovah is near, and it comes like violence from the Almighty.”* This verse does not contain words which the priests are to speak, so that we should have to supply לְאֹמֵר, like the Syriac and others, but words of the prophet himself, with which he justifies the appeal in vv. 13 and 14. לַיּוֹם is the time of the judgment, which has fallen upon the land and people through the devastation by the locusts. This “day” is the beginning of the approaching day of Jehovah, which will come like a devastation from the Almighty. *Yōm Yehōvâh* is the great day of judgment upon all ungodly powers, when God, as the almighty ruler of the world, brings down and destroys everything that has exalted itself against Him; thus making the history of the world, through His rule over all creatures in heaven and earth, into a continuous judgment, which will conclude at the end of this course of the world with a great and universal act of judgment, through which everything that has been brought to eternity by the stream of time unjudged and unadjusted, will be judged and adjusted once for all, to bring to an end the whole development of the world in accordance with its divine appointment, and perfect the kingdom of God by the annihilation of all its foes. (Compare the magnificent description of this day of the Lord in Isa. 2:12–21.) And accordingly this particular judgment—through which Jehovah on the one hand chastises His people for their sins, and on the other hand destroys the enemies of His kingdom—forms one element of the day of Jehovah; and each of these separate judgment is a coming of that day, and a sign of His drawing near. This day Joel saw in the judgment that came upon Judah in his time, *keshōd misshaddai*, lit., like a devastation from the Almighty,—a play upon the words (since *shōd* and *shaddai* both come from *shâdad*), which Rückert renders, though somewhat too freely, by *wie ein Graussen vom grossen Gott*. הַיּוֹם is the so-called הַיּוֹם *veritatis*, expressing a comparison between the

individual and its genus or its idea. On the relation between this verse and Isa. 13:6, see the Introduction.

Joel 1:16. *“Is not the food destroyed before our eyes, joy and exulting from the house of our God? V. 17. The grains have mouldered under their clods, the storehouses are desolate, the barns have fallen down; because the corn is destroyed. V. 18. How the cattle groan! the herds of oxen are bewildered, for no pasture was left for them; even the flocks of sheep suffer.”* As a proof that the day of the Lord is coming like a devastation from the Almighty, the prophet points in v. 16 to the fact that the food is taken away before their eyes, and therewith all joy and exulting from the house of God. “The food of the sinners perishes before their eyes, since the crops they looked for are snatched away from their hands, and the locust anticipates the reaper” (Jerome). אֶפְסוּ, food as the means of sustenance; according to v. 19, corn, new wine, and oil. The joy is thereby taken from the house of Jehovah, inasmuch as, when the crops are destroyed, neither first-fruits nor thank-offerings can be brought to the sanctuary to be eaten there at joyful meals (Deut. 12:6, 7; 16:10, 11). And the calamity became all the more lamentable, from the fact that, in consequence of a terrible drought, the seed perished in the earth, and consequently the prospect of a crop the following year entirely disappeared. The prophet refers to this in v. 17, which has been rendered in extremely different ways by the LXX, Chald., and Vulg., on account of the ἀπ. λεγ. מְרֻדוֹת, פְּרֻדוֹת, and מְגֻרְפוֹת (compare Pococke, *ad h. l.*). מְרֻדוֹת signifies to moulder away, or, as the injury was caused by dryness and heat, to dry up; it is used here of grains of corn which lose their germinating power, from the Arabic *'bs*, to become dry or withered, and the Chaldee עֲפָשׁ, to get mouldy. *Perudōth*, in Syriac, grains of corn sowed broadcast, probably from *pârad*, to scatter about. *Megrâphōth*, according to Ab. Esr., clods of earth (compare Arab. *jurf*, *gleba terrae*), from *gâraph*, to wash away (Judg. 5:21) a detached piece of earth. If the seed-corn loses

its germinating power beneath the clod, no corn-harvest can be looked for. The storehouses (*ōtsârōth*; cf. 2 Chron. 32:27) moulder away, and the barns (*mammegūrâh* with *dag. dirim.* = *megūrâh* in Hag. 2:19) fall, tumble to pieces, because being useless they are not kept in proper condition. The drought also deprives the cattle of their pasture, so that the herds of oxen and flocks of sheep groan and suffer with the rest from the calamity. נִפְחָל, *niphāl*, to be bewildered with fear. 'Ashēm, to expiate, to suffer the consequences of men's sin.

The fact, that even irrational creatures suffer along with men, impels the prophet to pray for help to the Lord, who helps both man and beast (Ps. 36:7). V. 19. "To Thee, O Jehovah, do I cry: for fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has consumed all the trees of the field. V. 20. Even the beasts of the field cry unto Thee; for the water-brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness." Fire and flame are the terms used by the prophet to denote the burning heat of the drought, which consumes the meadows, and even scorches up the trees. This is very obvious from the drying up of the water-brooks (in v. 20). For v. 20a, compare Jer. 14:5, 6. In v. 20b the address is rhetorically rounded off by the repetition of וַיֵּשׁ אֶקְלָה וְגַר from v. 19.

Joel 2

Summons to Penitential Prayer for the Removal of the Judgment—Ch. 2:1–17

Joel 2:1–17. This section does not contain a fresh or second address of the prophet, but simply forms the second part of his sermon of repentance, in which he repeats with still greater emphasis the command already hinted at in Joel 1:14, 15, that there should be a meeting of the congregation for humiliation and prayer, and assigns the reason in a comprehensive picture of the approach of Jehovah's great and terrible judgment-day (vv. 1–11), coupled with the cheering assurance that the Lord will still take compassion upon His people, according to His great grace, if they

will return to Him with all their heart (vv. 12–14); and then closes with another summons to the whole congregation to assemble for this purpose in the house of the Lord, and with instructions how the priests are to pray to the Lord (vv. 15–17).

Joel 2:1–11. By blowing the far-sounding horn, the priests are to make known to the people the coming of the judgment, and to gather them together in the temple to pray. V. 1. "Blow ye the trumpet upon Zion, and cause it to sound upon my holy mountain! All the inhabitants of the land shall tremble; for the day of Jehovah cometh, for it is near." That this summons is addressed to the priests, is evident from v. 15, compared with v. 14. On *tiq'ū shōphâr* and *hârī'ū*, see at Hos. 5:8. "Upon Zion," i.e., from the top of the temple mountain. Zion is called the holy mountain, as in Ps. 2:6, because the Lord was there enthroned in His sanctuary, on the summit of Moriah, which He claimed as His own. *Râgaz*, to tremble, i.e., to start up from their careless state (Hitzig). On the expression, "for the day of Jehovah cometh," see Joel 1:15. By the position of בּוֹא at the head of the

sentence, and that in the perfect בָּא instead of the imperfect, as in Joel 1:15, the coming of the day of Jehovah is represented as indisputably certain. The addition of *kī qârōbh* (for it is near) cannot be accounted for, however, from the fact that in the spiritual intuition of the prophet this day had already come, whereas in reality it was only drawing near (Hengstenberg); for such a separation as this between one element of prophesying and another is inconceivable. The explanation is simply, that the day of the Lord runs throughout the history of the kingdom of God, so that it occurs in each particular judgment: not, however, as fully manifested, but simply as being near or approaching, so far as its complete fulfilment is concerned. Joel now proclaims the coming of the day in its full completion, on the basis of the judgment already experienced, as the approach of a terrible army of locusts that darkens the land, at the head of which Jehovah is riding in all the majesty of the Judge of the world. The

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description is divided into three strophes thus: he first of all depicts the sight of this army of God, as seen afar off, and its terrible appearance in general (vv. 2b and 3); then the appearance and advance of this mighty army (vv. 4–6); and lastly, its irresistible power (vv. 7–11); and closes the first strophe with a figurative description of the devastation caused by this terrible army, whilst in the second and third he gives prominence to the terror which they cause among all nations, and over all the earth.

Joel 2:2. *“A day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and cloudy night: like morning dawn spread over the mountains, a people great and strong: there has not been the like from all eternity, nor will there be after it even to the years of generation and generation. v. 3. Before it burneth fire, and behind it flameth flame: the land before it as the garden of Eden, and behind it like a desolate wilderness; and even that which escaped did not remain to it.”* With four words, expressing the idea of darkness and obscurity, the day of Jehovah is described as a day of the manifestation of judgment. The words חֹשֶׁךְ עָנָן וְעֲרֵפֶל are applied in Deut. 4:11 to the cloudy darkness in which Mount Sinai was enveloped, when Jehovah came down upon it in the fire; and in Ex. 10:22, the darkness which fell upon Egypt as the ninth plague is called אֲפֹלֶה בְּשַׁחַר. אֲפֹלֶה does not belong to what precedes, nor does it mean blackness or twilight (as Ewald and some Rabbins suppose), but “the morning dawn.” The subject to *pârus* (spread) is neither *yôm* (day), which precedes it, nor *’am* (people), which follows; for neither of these yields a suitable thought at all. The subject is left indefinite: “like morning dawn is it spread over the mountains.” The prophet’s meaning is evident enough from what follows. He clearly refers to the bright glimmer or splendour which is seen in the sky as a swarm of locusts approaches, from the reflection of the sun’s rays from their wings.⁷ With עַם רַב וְעָצוּם (a people great and strong) we must consider the verb בָּא (cometh) in v. 1 as still retaining its force. *Yôm* (day) and *’âm* (people) have the

same predicate, because the army of locusts carries away the day, and makes it into a day of cloudy darkness. The darkening of the earth is mentioned in connection with the Egyptian plague of locusts in Ex. 10:15, and is confirmed by many witnesses (see the comm. on Ex. *l.c.*). The fire and the flame which go both before and behind the great and strong people, viz., the locusts, cannot be understood as referring to the brilliant light kindled as it were by the morning dawn, which proceeds from the fiery armies of the vengeance of God, i.e., the locusts (Umbreit), nor merely to the burning heat of the drought by which everything is consumed (Joel 1:19); but this burning heat is heightened here into devouring flames of fire, which accompany the appearing of God as He comes to judgment at the head of His army, after the analogy of the fiery phenomena connected with the previous manifestations of God, both in Egypt, where a terrible hail fell upon the land before the plague of locusts, accompanied by thunder and balls of fire (Ex. 9:23, 24), and also at Sinai, upon which the Lord came down amidst thunder and lightning, and spoke to the people out of the fire (Ex. 19:16–18; Deut. 4:11, 12). The land, which had previously resembled the garden of paradise (Gen. 2:8), was changed in consequence into a desolate wilderness. פָּלִיטָה does not mean escape or deliverance, either here or in Ob. 17, but simply that which has run away or escaped. Here it signifies that part of the land which has escaped the devastation; for it is quite contrary to the usage of the language to refer לוֹ, as most commentators do, to the swarm of locusts, from which there is no escape, no deliverance (cf. 2 Sam. 15:14, Judg. 21:17, Ezra 9:13, in all of which לוֹ refers to the subject, to which the thing that escaped was assigned). Consequently לוֹ can only refer to הָאָרֶץ. The perfect הֵיטָה stands related to אֶחָרָיו, according to which the swarm of locusts had already completed the devastation.

Joel 2:4–6. In vv. 4–6 we have a description of this mighty army of God, and of the alarm

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caused by its appearance among all nations. V. 4. *“Like the appearance of horses is its appearance; and like riding-horses, so do they run.* V. 5. *Like rumbling of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the crackling of flame which devours stubble, like a strong people equipped for conflict.* V. 6. *Before it nations tremble; all faces withdraw their redness.”* The comparison drawn between the appearance of the locusts and that of horses refers chiefly to the head, which, when closely examined, bears a strong resemblance to the head of a horse, as Theodoret has already observed; a fact which gave rise to their being called *Heupferde* (hay-horses) in German. In v. 4b the rapidity of their motion is compared to the running of riding-horses (*pârâshîm*); and in v. 5 the noise caused by their springing motion to the rattling of chariots, the small two-wheeled war-chariots of the ancients, when driven rapidly over the rough mountain roads. The noise caused by their devouring the plants and shrubs is also compared to the burning of a flame over a stubble-field that has been set on fire, and their approach to the advance of a war force equipped for conflict. (Compare the adoption and further expansion of these similes in Rev. 9:7, 9). At the sight of this terrible army of God the nations tremble, so that their faces grow pale. *’Ammîm* means neither people (see at 1 Kings 22:28) nor the tribes of Israel, but nations generally. Joel is no doubt depicting something more here than the devastation caused by the locusts in his own day. There are differences of opinion as to the rendering of the second hemistich, which Nahum repeats in Nah. 2:11. The combination of פָּאֲרוֹר with פָּרוֹר, a pot (Chald., Syr., Jer., Luth., and others), is untenable, since פָּרוֹר comes from פָּרַר, to break in pieces, whereas פָּאֲרוֹר (= פָּאָרוֹר) is from the root פָּאֲר, *piel*, to adorn, beautify, or glorify; so that the rendering, “they gather redness,” i.e., glow with fear, which has an actual but not a grammatical support in Isa. 13:8, is evidently worthless. We therefore understand פָּאֲרוֹר, as Ab. Esr., Abul Wal., and others have done, in the

sense of *elegantia, nitor, pulchritudo*, and as referring to the splendour or healthy ruddiness of the cheeks, and take קָבַץ as an intensive form of קָבַץ, in the sense of drawing into one’s self, or withdrawing, inasmuch as fear and anguish cause the blood to fly from the face and extremities to the inward parts of the body. For the fact of the face turning pale with terror, see Jer. 30:6.

Joel 2:7–10. In vv. 7–10 the comparison of the army of locusts to a well-equipped army is carried out still further; and, in the first place, by a description of the irresistible force of its advance. V. 7. *“They run like heroes, like warriors they climb the wall; every one goes on its way, and they do not change their paths.* V. 8. *And they do not press one another, they go every one in his path; and they fall headlong through weapons, and do not cut themselves in pieces.* V. 9. *They run about in the city, they run upon the wall, they climb into the houses, they come through the windows like a thief.”* This description applies for the most part word for word to the advance of the locusts, as Jerome (*in loc.*) and Theodoret (on v. 8a) attest from their own observation.⁸ They run like heroes—namely, to the assault: רוּץ referring to an attack, as in Job 15:26 and Ps. 18:30, “as their nimbleness has already been noticed in v. 4” (Hitzig). Their climbing the walls also points to an assault. Their irresistible march to the object of their attack is the next point described. No one comes in another’s way; they do not twist (עִבְטוּ) their path, i.e., do not diverge either to the right hand or to the left, so as to hinder one another. Even the force of arms cannot stop their advance. שֵׁלַח is not a missile, *telum*, missile (Ges. and others), but a weapon extended or held in front (Hitzig); and the word is not only applied to a sword (2 Chron. 23:10; Neh. 4:11), but to weapons of defence (2 Chron. 32:5). בָּצַע, not “to wound themselves” (= פָּצַע), but “to cut in pieces,” used here intransitively, to cut themselves in pieces. This does no doubt transcend the nature even of the locust; but it may be explained on the ground that they are

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represented as an invincible army of God.⁹ On the other hand, the words of v. 9 apply, so far as the first half is concerned, both to the locusts and to an army (cf. Isa. 33:4; Nah. 2:5); whereas the second half applies only to the former, of which Theodoret relates in the passage quoted just now, that he has frequently seen this occur (compare also Ex. 10:6).

Joel 2:10, 11. The whole universe trembles at this judgment of God. V. 10. *“Before it the earth quakes, the heavens tremble: sun and moon have turned black, and the stars have withdrawn their shining.* V. 11. *And Jehovah thunders before His army, for His camp is very great, for the executor of His word is strong; for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible, and who can endure it?”* The remark of Jerome on v. 10, viz., that “it is not that the strength of the locusts is so great that they can move the heavens and shake the earth, but that to those who suffer from such calamities, from the amount of their own terror, the heavens appear to shake and the earth to reel,” is correct enough so far as the first part is concerned, but it by no means exhausts the force of the words. For, as Hitzig properly observes, the earth could only quake because of the locusts when they had settled, and the heavens could only tremble and be darkened when they were flying, so that the words would in any case be very much exaggerated. But it by no means follows from this, that לִפְנֵי is not to be taken as referring to the locusts, like מִפְּנֵי in v. 6, but to the coming of Jehovah in a storm, and that it is to be understood in this sense: “the earth quakes, the air roars at the voice of Jehovah, i.e., at the thunder, and storm-clouds darken the day.” For although *nâthan qôlô* (shall utter His voice) in v. 11 is to be understood as referring to the thunder, Joel is not merely describing a storm, which came when the trouble had reached its height and put an end to the plague of locusts (Credner, Hitzig, and others). לִפְנֵי cannot be taken in any other sense than that in which it occurs in v. 3; that is to say, it can only refer to “the great people and strong,” viz., the army of locusts, like

מִפְּנֵי. Heaven and earth tremble at the army of locusts, because Jehovah comes with them to judge the world (cf. Isa. 13:13; Nahum 1:5, 6; Jer. 10:10). The sun and moon become black, i.e., dark, and the stars withdraw their brightness (*’âsaph*, withdraw, as in 1 Sam. 14:19), i.e., they let their light shine no more. That these words affirm something infinitely greater than the darkening of the lights of heaven by storm-clouds, is evident partly from the predictions of the judgment of the wrath of the Lord that is coming upon the whole earth and upon the imperial power (Isa. 13:10; Ezek. 32:7), at which the whole fabric of the universe trembles and nature clothes itself in mourning, and partly from the adoption of this particular feature by Christ in His description of the last judgment (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24, 25). Compare, on the other hand, the poetical description of a storm in Ps. 18:8ff., where this feature is wanting. (For further remarks, see at Joel 3:4.) At the head of the army which is to execute His will, the Lord causes His voice of thunder to sound (*nâthan qôl*, to thunder; cf. Ps. 18:14, etc.). The reason for this is given in three sentences that are introduced by *kî*. Jehovah does this because His army is very great; because this powerful army executes His word, i.e., His command; and because the day of judgment is so great and terrible, that no one can endure it, i.e., no one can stand before the fury of the wrath of the Judge (cf. Jer. 10:10; Mal. 3:1).

Joel 2:12–14. But there is still time to avert the completion of the judgment by sincere repentance and mourning; for God is merciful, and ready to forgive the penitent. V. 12. *“Yet even now, is the saying of Jehovah, turn ye to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.* V. 13. *And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn back to Jehovah your God; for He is gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and great in kindness, and suffers Himself to repent of the evil.* V. 14. *Who knoweth He turns and repents, and leaves behind Him blessing, meat-offering and drink-offering for Jehovah your God?”* As the plague of

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locusts was intended to bring the people to reflect upon their conduct towards the Lord, so was the announcement of the great day of judgment and all its terrors made with no other object than to produce repentance and conversion, and thereby promote the good of the people of God. Joel therefore appends to the threatening of judgment a summons to sincere conversion to the Lord; and this he does by first of all addressing the summons to the people as a saying of Jehovah (v. 12), and then explaining this word of God in the most emphatic manner (vv. 13, 14). The Lord God requires conversion to Himself with all the heart (cf. 1 Sam. 7:3, and Deut. 6:5; and for שׁוּב עַד, Hos. 14:2), associated with deep-rooted penitence on account of sin, which is to be outwardly manifested in fasting and mourning. But lest the people should content themselves with the outward signs of mourning, he proceeds in v. 13 with the warning admonition, "Rend your heart, and not your garments." Rending the heart signifies contrition of heart (cf. Ps. 51:19; Ezek. 36:26). He then assigns the motive for this demand, by pointing to the mercy and grace of God, in the words of Ex. 34:6, with which the Lord made known to Moses His inmost nature, except that in the place of וְאֵמַת, which we find in this passage, he adds, on the ground of the facts recorded in Ezek. 32:14 and 2 Sam. 24:16, וְנָחַם עַל הָרֶעָה. On the strength of these facts he hopes, even in the present instance, for forgiveness on the part of God, and the removal of the judgment. "Who knoweth?" equivalent to "perhaps;" not because "too confident a hope would have had in it something offensive to Jehovah" (Hitzig), but "lest perchance they might either despair on account of the magnitude of their crimes, or the greatness of the divine clemency might make them careless" (Jerome).¹⁰ יָשׁוּב, to turn, sc. from coming to judgment. אָחַרָיו as in v. 13. הִשָּׂאֵר אַחֲרָיו, to leave behind Him, sc. when He returns to His throne in heaven (Hos. 5:15). *B'erâkhâh*, a blessing, viz., harvest-produce for a meat-offering and drink-

offering, which had been destroyed by the locusts (Joel 1:9, 13).

Joel 2:15–17. To make this admonition still more emphatic, the prophet concludes by repeating the appeal for the appointment of a meeting in the temple for prayer, and even gives the litany in which the priests are to offer their supplication. V. 15. *"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, proclaim a meeting.* V. 16. *Gather the people together, sanctify an assembly, bring together the old men, gather together the children and sucklings at the breasts. Let the bridegroom go out of his chamber, and the bride out of her room.* V. 17. *Between the porch and the altar are the priests, the servants of Jehovah, to weep and say, Spare, O Jehovah, Thy people, and give not up Thine inheritance to shame, so that the heathen scoff at them. Wherefore should men say among the nations, Where is their God?"* V. 15 is a literal repetition from v. 1 and Joel 1:14a; v. 16 a more detailed expansion of Joel 1:14b, in which, first of all, the people generally (עַם) are mentioned, and then the objection of the summons explained in the words קְדָשׁוּ קְהָל, "Call a holy meeting of the congregation." But in order that none may think themselves exempt, the people are more precisely defined as old men, children, and sucklings. Even the bride and bridegroom are to give up the delight of their hearts, and take part in the penitential and mournful worship. No age, no rank, is to stay away, because no one, not even the suckling, is free from sin; but all, without exception, are exposed to the judgment. "A stronger proof of the deep and universal guilt of the whole nation could not be found, than that on the great day of penitence and prayer, even new-born infants were to be carried in their arms" (Umbreit). The penitential supplication of the whole nation is to be brought before the Lord by the priests as the mediators of the nation. יָבֹנוּ in v. 17 is jussive, like יִצְאָה in v. 16, though Hitzig disputes this, but on insufficient grounds. The allusion to the priests in the former could only be unsuitable, if they were merely commanded to go to the temple like the rest of the people. But

it is not to this that v. 17 refers, but to the performance of their official duty, when the people had assembled for the penitential festival. They were to stand between the porch of the temple and the altar of burnt-offering, i.e., immediately in front of the door of the holy place, and there with tears entreat the Lord, who was enthroned in the sanctuary, not to give up the people of His possession (*nachălâh* as in 1 Kings 8:51; cf. Deut. 4:20; 32:9) to the reproach of being scoffed at by the heathen. לְמִשְׁלֵי-בָּם גּוֹיִם is rendered by Luther and others, “that heathen rule over them,” after the ancient versions; and Ps. 106:41, Deut. 15:6, and Lam. 5:8, might be appealed to in support of this rendering. But although grammatically allowable, it is not required by the parallelism, as Hengstenberg maintains. For even if the reproach of Israel could consist in the fact that they, the inheritance of the Lord, were subjected to the government of heathen, this thought is very remote from the idea of the passage before us, where there is no reference at all in the threatening of punishment to subjection to the heathen, but simply to the devastation of the land. מָשַׁל with כִּי also signifies to utter a proverb (= to scoff) at any one, for which Ezekiel indeed makes use of מָשַׁל מָשַׁל (Ezek. 17:2; 18:2, and in 12:23 and 18:3 construed with כִּי); but it is evident that *mâshal* was sometimes used alone in this sense, from the occurrence of *môshelîm* in Num. 21:27 as a term applied to the inventors of proverbs, and also of *meshôl* as a proverb or byword in Job 17:6, whether we take the word as an infinitive or a substantive. This meaning, as Marck observes, is rendered probable both by the connection with חֲרָפָה, and also by the parallel clause which follows, viz., “Wherefore should men among the heathen say,” etc., more especially if we reflect that Joel had in his mind not Deut. 15:6, which has nothing in common with the passage before us except the verb *mâshal*, but rather Deut. 28:37, where Moses not only threatens the people with transportation to another land for their

apostasy from the Lord, and that they shall become “an astonishment, a proverb (*mâshâl*), and a byword” among all nations, but (vv. 38, 40–42) also threatens them with the devastation of their seed-crops, their vineyards, and their olive-grounds by locusts. Compare also 1 Kings 9:7, 8, where not only the casting out of Israel among the heathen, but even the destruction of the temple, is mentioned as the object of ridicule on the part of the heathen; also the combination of לְחָרְפָה and לְמִשְׁלֵי in Jer. 24:9. But v. 19 is decisive in favour of this view of לְמִשְׁלֵי בָּם גּוֹיִם. The Lord there promises that He will send His people corn, new wine, and oil, to their complete satisfaction, and no longer make them a reproach among the nations; so that, according to this, it was not subjugation or transportation by heathen foes that gave occasion to the scoffing of the nations at Israel, but the destruction of the harvest by the locusts. The saying among the nations, “Where is their God?” is unquestionably a sneer at the covenant relation of Jehovah to Israel; and to this Jehovah could offer no inducement, since the reproach would fall back upon Himself. Compare for the fact itself, Ex. 32:12, Mic. 7:10, and Ps. 115:2. Thus the prayer closes with the strongest reason why God should avert the judgment, and one that could not die away without effect.

II. The Promise of God to Avert the Judgment, and Bestow an Abundant Blessing—Ch. 2:18–3:21

Joel 2:18–3:21. The promise, which the Lord conveys to His people through the prophet in answer to the prayer of the priests, refers to the present and the future. In the first part, relating to the present and the times immediately following (Joel 2:19–27), they are promised the destruction of the army of locusts, the gift of a teacher for righteousness, and the pouring out of a plentiful fall of rain for abundant harvests. To this there are appended, by means of the formula, “And it shall come to pass afterward” (וְהָיָה אַחֲרָי כֵן), in Joel 2:28 (Heb. Bib. 3:1), the promise of a higher blessing through the

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outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, the judgment upon the nations that are hostile to Israel, and the eternal deliverance and benediction of the church of God (Joel 2:28–3:21). The blessing which the Lord promises for the time just coming, and for the remote future, is not a twofold one, so that the outpouring of the fertilizing rain and the outpouring of the Spirit of God answer to one another on the one hand, and the destruction of the army of locusts and that of the army of men on the other, but a threefold one, as v. Hofmann has shown, viz.: What the raising up of the teacher for righteousness, the destruction of the army of locusts, and the return of a fruitful season are to the time present, that will the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, the judgment upon the army of the heathen world, and the eternal salvation and glorification of the people of God, be in the last times.

Destruction of the Army of Locusts, and Renewal of the Spiritual and Earthly Blessings—Ch. 2:18–27

Joel 2:18, 19a. Verses 18 and 19a contain the historical statement, that in consequence of the penitential prayer of the priests, the Lord displayed His mercy to His people, and gave them a promise, the first part of which follows in vv. 19–27. Vv. 18, 19a. *“Then Jehovah was jealous for His land, and had compassion upon His people. And Jehovah answered, and said.”* The grammar requires that we should take the imperfects with *Vav consec.* in these clauses, as statements of what actually occurred. The passages in which imperfects with *Vav cons.* are either really or apparently used in a prophetic announcement of the future, are of a different kind; e.g., in v. 23, where we find one in a subordinate clause preceded by perfects. As the verb *וַיִּשְׁמַע* describes the promise which follows, as an *answer* given by Jehovah to His people, we must assume that the priests had really offered the penitential and supplicatory prayer to which the prophet had summoned them in v. 17. The circumstance that this is not expressly mentioned, neither warrants us in rendering

the verbs in v. 17 in the present, and taking them as statements of what the priest really did (Hitzig), nor in changing the historical tenses in vv. 18, 19 into futures. We have rather simply to supply the execution of the prophet’s command between vv. 17 and 18. *אָנֹכִי* with *לְ*, to be jealous for a person, i.e., to show the jealousy of love towards him, as in Ex. 39:25, Zech. 1:14 (see at Ex. 20:5). *לִמְנָה* as in Ex. 2:6, 1 Sam. 23:21. In the answer from Jehovah which follows, the three features in the promise are not given according to their chronological order; but in order to add force to the description, we have first of all, in v. 19, a promise of the relief of the distress at which both man and beast had sighed, and then, in v. 20, a promise of the destruction of the devastator; and it is not till vv. 21–23b that the third feature is mentioned in the further development of the promise, viz., the teacher for righteousness. Then finally, in vv. 23c–27, the fertilizing fall of rain, and the plentiful supply of the fruits of the ground that had been destroyed by the locusts, are more elaborately described, as the first blessing bestowed upon the people.

Joel 2:19b, 20. The promise runs as follows. V. 19b. *“Behold, I send you the corn, and the new wine, and the oil, that ye may become satisfied therewith; and will no more make you a reproach among the nations. V. 20. And I will remove the northern one far away from you, and drive him into the land of drought and desert; its van into the front sea, and its rear into the hinder sea: and its stink will ascend, and its corruption ascend, for it has done great things.”* The Lord promises, first of all, a compensation for the injury done by the devastation, and then the destruction of the devastation itself, so that it may do no further damage. V. 19 stands related to Joel 1:11. *Shâlach*, to send: the corn is said to be sent instead of given (Hos. 2:10), because God sends the rain which causes the corn to grow. Israel shall no longer be a reproach among the nations, “as a poor people, whose God is unable to assist it, or has evidently forsaken it” (Ros.). Marck and Schmieler have already observed that this

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promise is related to the prayer, that He would not give up His inheritance to the reproach of the scoffings of the heathen (v. 17: see the comm. on this verse). הַצְפוֹנִי, the northern one, as an epithet applied to the swarm of locusts, furnishes no decisive argument in favour of the allegorical interpretation of the plague of locusts. For even if locusts generally come to Palestine from the south, out of the Arabian desert, the remark out of the Arabian desert, the remark made by Jerome, to the effect that “the swarms of locusts are *more* generally brought by the south wind than by the north,” shows that the rule is not without its exceptions. “Locusts come and go with all winds” (Oedmann, ii. p. 97). In Arabia, Niebuhr (*Beschreib.* p. 169) saw swarms of locusts come from south, west, north, and east. Their home is not confined to the desert of Arabia, but they are found in all the sandy deserts, which form the southern boundaries of the lands that were, and to some extent still are, the seat of cultivation, viz., in the Sahara, the Libyan desert, Arabia, and Irak (Credner, p. 285); and Niebuhr (*l.c.*) saw a large tract of land, on the road from Mosul to Nisibis, completely covered with young locusts. They are also met with in the Syrian desert, from which swarms could easily be driven to Palestine by a north-east wind, without having to fly across the mountains of Lebanon. Such a swarm as this might be called the *ts^ephōnī*, i.e., the northern one, or northerner, even if the north was not its true home. For it cannot be philologically proved that *ts^ephōnī* can only denote one whose home is in the north. Such explanations as the Typhonian, the barbarian, and others, which we meet with in Hitzig, Ewald, and Meier, and which are obtained by alterations of the text or far-fetched etymologies, must be rejected as arbitrary. That which came from the north shall also be driven away by the north wind, viz., the great mass into the dry and desert land, i.e., the desert of Arabia, the van into the front (or eastern) sea, i.e., the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:18; Zech. 14:8), the rear into the hinder (or western) sea, i.e., the Mediterranean (cf. Deut. 11:24). This is, of course, not to be understood

as signifying that the dispersion was to take place in all these three directions at one and the same moment, in which case three different winds would blow at the same time; but it is a rhetorical picture of rapid and total destruction, which is founded upon the idea that the wind rises in the north-west, then turns to the north, and finally to the north-east, so that the van of the swarm is driven into the eastern sea, the great mass into the southern desert, and the rear into the western sea. The explanation given by Hitzig and others—namely, that *pânim* signifies the eastern border, and *soph* the western border of the swarm, which covered the entire breadth of the land, and was driven from north to south—cannot be sustained. Joel mentions both the van and the rear after the main body, simply because they both meet with the same fate, both falling into the sea and perishing there; whereupon the dead bodies are thrown up by the waves upon the shore, where their putrefaction fills the air with stench. The perishing of locusts in seas and lakes is attested by many authorities.¹¹ For עֲלֵהּ שִׁשְׁבַּי, compare Isa. 34:3 and Amos 4:10. צִהְרָה is ἄπ. λεγ.; but the meaning corruption is sustained partly by the parallelism, and partly by the Syriac verb, which means to be dirty. The army of locusts had deserved this destruction, because it had done great things. הַגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת, to do great things, is affirmed of men or other creatures, with the subordinate idea of haughtiness; so that it not only means he has done a mighty thing, accomplished a mighty devastation, but is used in the same sense as the German *grosstun*, via. to brag or be proud of one strength. It does not follow from this, however, that the locusts are simply figurative, and represent hostile nations. For however true it may be that sin and punishment presuppose accountability (Hengst., Hävernick), and conclusion drawn from this—namely, that they cannot be imputed to irrational creatures—is incorrect. The very opposite is taught by the Mosaic law, according to which God will punish every act of violence done by beasts upon man

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(Gen. 9:5), whilst the ox which killed a man was commanded to be stoned (Ex. 21:28–32).

Joel 2:21–23. This promise is carried out still further in what follows; and Joel summons the earth (v. 21), the beasts of the field (v. 22), and the sons of Zion (v. 23) to joy and exultation at this mighty act of the Lord, by which they have been delivered from the threatening destruction. V. 21. *“Fear not, O earth! exult and rejoice: for Jehovah doeth great things! V. 22. Fear ye not, O beasts of the field! for the pastures of the desert become green, for the tree bears its fruit; fig-tree and vine yield their strength. V. 23. And ye sons of Zion, exult and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He giveth you the teacher for righteousness, and causes to come down to you a rain-fall, early rain and latter rain, first of all.”* The soil had suffered from the drought connected with the swarms of locusts (Joel 1:9); the beasts of the field had groaned on account of the destruction of all the plants and vegetation of every kind (Joel 1:18); the men had sighed over the unparalleled calamity that had befallen both land and people. The prophet here calls to all of them not to fear, but to exult and rejoice, and gives in every case an appropriate reason for the call. In that of the earth, he introduces the thought that Jehovah had done great things—had destroyed the foe that did great things; in that of the beasts, he points to the fresh verdure of the pastures, and the growth of the fruit upon the trees; in that of men, he lays stress upon a double fact, viz., the gift of a teacher for righteousness, and the pouring out of a plentiful rain. In this description we have to notice the rhetorical individualizing, which forms its peculiar characteristic, and serves to explain not only the distinction between the earth, the beasts of the field, and the sons of Zion, but the distribution of the divine blessings among the different members of the creation that are mentioned here. For, so far as the fact itself is concerned, the threefold blessing from God benefits all three classes of the earthly creation: the rain does good not only to the sons of Zion, or to men, but also to animals and to the soil; and so again do the green of the pastures and

the fruits of the trees; and lastly, even the הַגִּידִיל לְעֵשׂוֹת not only blesses the earth, but also the beasts and men upon it. It is only through overlooking this rhetorico-poetical distribution, that any one could infer from v. 22*b*, that because the fruits are mentioned here as the ordinary food of animals, in direct contrast to Gen. 1:28, 29, where the fruit of the trees is assigned to men for food, the beasts of the field signify the heathen. The perfects in the explanatory clauses of these three verses are all to be taken alike, and not to be rendered in the preterite in v. 21, and in the present in vv. 22 and 23. The perfect is not only applied to actions, which the speaker looks upon from his own standpoint as actually completed, as having taken place, or as things belonging to the past, but to actions which the will or the lively fancy of the speaker regards as being as good as completed, in other words, assumes as altogether unconditional and certain, and to which in modern languages we should apply the present (Ewald, § 135, *a*, etc.). The latter is the sense in which it is used here, since the prophet sets forth the divine promise as a fact, which is unquestionably certain and complete, even though its historical realization has only just begun, and extends into the nearer or more remote future. The divine act over which the prophet calls upon them to rejoice, is not to be restricted to the destruction of those swarms of locusts that had at that time invaded Judah, and the revivification of drying nature, but is an act of God that is being constantly repeated whenever the same circumstances occur, or whose influence continues as long as this earth lasts; since it is a tangible pledge, that to all eternity, as is stated in vv. 26, 27, the people of the Lord will not be put to shame. The “sons of Zion” are not merely the inhabitants of Zion itself, but the dwellers in the capital are simply mentioned as the representatives of the kingdom of Judah. As the plague of locusts fell not upon Jerusalem only, but upon the whole land, the call to rejoicing must refer to all the inhabitants of the land (Joel 1:2, 14). They are to rejoice in Jehovah, who has proved Himself

to be their God by the removal of the judgment and the bestowal of a fresh blessing.

This blessing is twofold in its nature. He gives them אֶת־הַמּוֹרָה לְצִדְקָה. From time immemorial there has been a diversity of opinion as to the meaning of these words. Most of the Rabbins and earlier commentators have followed the Chaldee and Vulgate, and taken *mōreh* in the sense of “teacher;” but others, in no small number, have taken it in the sense of “early rain,” e.g., Ab. Ezra, Kimchi, Tanch., Calvin, and most of the Calvinistic and modern commentators. But although *mōreh* is unquestionably used in the last clause of this verse in the sense of early rain; in every other instance this is called *yōreh* (Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24); for Ps. 84:7 cannot be brought into the account since the meaning is disputed. Consequently the conjecture is a very natural one, that in the last clause of the verse Joel selected the form *mōreh*, instead of *yōreh*, to signify early rain, simply on account of the previous occurrence of *hammōreh* in the sense of “teacher,” and for the sake of the unison. This rendering of *hammōreh* is not only favoured by the article placed before it, since neither *mōreh* = *yōreh* (early rain), nor the corresponding and tolerably frequent *malqōsh* (latter rain), ever has the article, and no reason can be discovered why *mōreh* should be defined by the article here if it signified early rain; but it is decisively confirmed by the following word לְצִדְקָה, which is quite inapplicable to early rain, since it cannot mean either “in just measure,” or “at the proper time,” or “in becoming manner,” as *tsēdāqâh* is only used in the ethical sense of righteousness, and is never met with *sensu physico*, neither in 2 Sam. 19:29, Neh. 2:20, nor in Ps. 23:3 and Lev. 19:36, where moreover צֶדֶק occurs. For מַעְגְּלֵי צֶדֶק (in the Psalm) are not straight or right ways, but ways of righteousness (spiritual ways); and although אֲבָנֵי צֶדֶק, מֵאֲזֵנֵי צֶדֶק, are no doubt really correct scales and weight-stones, this is simply because they correspond to what is ethically right, so that we cannot deduce from this the idea of

correct measure in the case of the rain. Ewald and Umbreit, who both of them recognise the impossibility of proving that *tsēdāqâh* is used in the physical sense of correctness or correct measure, have therefore adopted the rendering “rain for justification,” or “for righteousness;” Ewald regarding the rain as a sign that they are adopted again into the righteousness of God, whilst Umbreit takes it as a manifestation of eternal righteousness in the flowing stream of fertilizing grace. But apart from the question, whether these thoughts are in accordance with the doctrine of Scripture, they are by no means applicable here, where the people have neither doubted the revelation of the righteousness of God, nor prayed to God for justification, but have rather appealed to the compassion and grace of God in the consciousness of their sin and guilt, and prayed to be spared and rescued from destruction (vv. 13, 17). By the “teacher for righteousness,” we are to understand neither the prophet Joel only (v. Hofmann), nor the Messiah directly (Abarbanel), nor the idea teacher or collective body of messengers from God (Hengstenberg), although there is some truth at the foundation of all these suppositions. The direct or exclusive reference to the Messiah is at variance with the context, since all the explanatory clauses in vv. 21–23 treat of blessings or gifts of God, which were bestowed at any rate partially at that particular time. Moreover, in v. 23, the sending of the rain-fall is represented by וַיִּזְרַד (imperf. c. *Vav cons.*), if not as the consequence of the sending of the teacher for righteousness, at any rate as a contemporaneous event. These circumstances apparently favour the application of the expression to the prophet Joel. Nevertheless, it is by no means probable that Joel describes himself directly as the teacher for righteousness, or speaks of his being sent to the people as the object of exultation. No doubt he had induced the people to turn to the Lord, and to offer penitential supplication for His mercy through his call to repentance, and thereby effected the consequent return of rain and fruitful seasons; but his address and summons would not have had this result, if the people

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had not been already instructed by Moses, by the priests, and by other prophets before himself, concerning the ways of the Lord. All of these were teachers for righteousness, and are included under *hammōreh*. Still we must not stop at them. As the blessings of grace, at the reception of which the people were to rejoice, did not merely consist, as we have just observed, in the blessings which came to it at that time, or in Joel's days, but also embraced those which were continually bestowed upon it by the Lord; we must not exclude the reference to the Messiah, to whom Moses had already pointed as the prophet whom the Lord would raise up unto them, and to whom they were to hearken (Deut. 18:18, 19), but must rather regard the sending of the Messiah as the final fulfilment of this promise. This view answers to the context, if we simply notice that Joel mentions here both the spiritual and material blessings which the Lord is conveying to His people, and then in what follows expounds the material blessings still further in vv. 23c-27, and the spiritual blessings in vv. 28-32 and Joel 3. They are both of them consequences of the gift of the teacher for righteousness.

Hence the expansion of the earthly saving gifts is attached by וַיִּזְרַד with *Vav cons.* Joel mentions first of all *geshem*, a rain-fall, or plentiful rain for the fertilizing of the soil and then defines it more exactly as early rain, which fell in the autumn at the sowing time and promoted the germination and growth of the seed, and latter rain, which occurred in the spring shortly before the time of harvest and brought the crops to maturity (see at Lev. 26:3). בְּרֵאשִׁיטוֹן, in the beginning, i.e., first (= ראשִׁיטָה in Gen. 33:2, just as בְּרֵאשִׁיטוֹן is used in Lev. 9:15 for בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה in Num. 10:13), not in the first month (Chald., etc.), or in the place of בְּבִרְאשִׁיטָה, as before (LXX, Vulg., and others). For בְּרֵאשִׁיטוֹן corresponds to אֶחָד־רֵיבֹן in v. 28 (Heb. 3:1), as Ewald, Meier, and Hengstenberg admit. *First of all* the pouring out of a plentiful rain (an individualizing expression for all kinds of earthly blessings,

chosen here with reference to the opposite of blessing occasioned by the drought); and *after that*, the pouring out of the spiritual blessing (Joel 2:28-3:21).

Joel 2:24-27. Effects of the rain. V. 24. "And the barns become full of corn, and the vats flow over with new wine and oil. V. 25. And I repay to you the years which the locust has eaten, the licker, and the devourer, and the gnawer, my great army which I sent among you. V. 26. And ye will eat, eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of Jehovah your God, who hath done wondrously with you; and my people shall not be put to shame to all eternity. V. 27. And ye will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and I (am) Jehovah your God, and none else, and my people shall not be put to shame to all eternity." V. 24 is practically the same as v. 19a, and the counterpart to Joel 1:10-12. שׁוּק הַשִּׁיב from שׁוּק, to run, *hiphil* only here and Joel 4:13, to run over, to overflow; *pilel*, Ps. 65:10, *shōqēq*, to cause to overflow. יִקְבִּים, the vats of the wine-presses, into which the wine flows when trodden out; here it also applies to the vats of the oil-presses, into which the oil ran as it was pressed out. Through these bountiful harvests God would repay to the people the years, i.e., the produce of the years, which the locusts ate. The plural, *shânīm*, furnishes no certain proof that Joel referred in Joel 1 to swarms of locusts of several successive years; but is used either with indefinite generality, as in Ge. 21:7, or with a distinct significance, viz., as a poetical expression denoting the greatness and violence of the devastation. On the different names of the locusts, see at Joel 1:4. It is to be observed here that the copula stands before the last two names, but not before *yeleq*, so that the last three names belong to one another as co-ordinates (Hitzig), i.e., they are merely different epithets used for 'arbeh, the locusts.

Joel 2:26. On the reception of these benefits the people will praise the Lord, who has shown it such wondrous grace, lit., has acted towards it even to the doing of wonders.

Joel 2:27. They will learn thereby that Jehovah is present among His people, and the only true

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God, who does not suffer His people to be put to shame. The repetition of וְלֹא יִבְשׁוּ וְגַר, by which the promised grace is guaranteed to the people for all ages, serves as a rhetorical rounding off of the section (see at Joel 2:20).

Outpouring of the Spirit of God Upon All Flesh; Judgment Upon the World of Nations, and Eternal Deliverance and Glorification of the People of God—Ch. 2:28–3:21 (Heb. Bib. Ch. 3 and 4)

These three distinct features in the higher blessing set before the congregation of the Lord are practically connected very closely together: inasmuch as, with the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, the judgment breaks upon the ungodly world; and with the judgment not only does the rescue of the true worshippers of God ensue, but the sanctification and glorification of the kingdom of God begin. Consequently we do not find these three features kept rigidly separate in the prophetic announcement; but just as in Joel 2:28–32 (Joel 3 according to the ordinary division of the chapters) the signs of the dawning of the judgment are appended to the outpouring of the Spirit of God, so in Joel 3 (Heb. etc. Joel 4) the description of the judgment is framed as it were in the prediction of the restoration of Judah (v. 1), and of the salvation and transfiguration of Zion (vv. 16, 17); and in vv. 18–21 the eternal glorification of the kingdom of God is interwoven, by way of contrast, into the lasting devastation of the power of the world.

Joel 2:28–32. (Heb. Joel 3). Outpouring of the Spirit of God, and Announcement of Judgment.¹² V. 28. *“And it will come to pass afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men see visions. V. 29. And also upon the men-servants and maid-servants I will put out my Spirit in those days.”* As *’achārē-khēn* points back to *bâri’shôn* in v. 23, the formula *vêhâyâh achārē-khēn* describes the outpouring of the Spirit as a second and later consequence of the gift of the

teacher for righteousness. וְשָׁפַךְ, to pour out, signifies communication in rich abundance, like a rain-fall or water-fall. For the communication of the Spirit of God was not entirely wanting to the covenant nation from the very first. In fact, the Spirit of God was the only inward bond between the Lord and His people; but it was confined to the few whom God endowed as prophets with the gift of His Spirit. This limitation was to cease in the future.¹³ What Moses expressed as a wish—namely, that the people were all prophets, and the Lord would put His Spirit upon them (Num. 11:29)—was to be fulfilled in the future. *Rûäch Yehōvâh* is not the first principle of the physico-creaturely life (i.e., not equivalent to *rûäch Elōhîm* in Gen. 1:2), but that of the spiritual or ethical and religious life of man, which filled the prophets under the Old Testament as a spirit of prophecy; consequently Joel describes its operations under this form. “All flesh” signifies all men. The idea that it embraces the irrational animals, even the locusts (Credner), is rejected with perfect justice by Hitzig as an inconceivable thought, and one unheard-of in the Bible; but he is wrong in adding that the Old Testament does not teach a communication of the Spirit of God to all men, but limits it to the people of Israel. A decided protest is entered against this by Gen. 6:3, where Jehovah threatens that He will no longer let His Spirit rule *bâ’âdâm*, i.e., in the human race, because it has become *bâsâr* (flesh). *Bâsâr*, as contrasted with *rûäch Yehōvâh*, always denotes human nature regarded as incapacitated for spiritual and divine life. Even in this verse we must not restrict the expression “all flesh” to the members of the covenant nation, as most of the commentators have done; for whatever truth there may be in the remark made by Calovius and others (compare Hengstenberg, *Christol.* i. p. 328 transl.), that the following clause, “your sons, your daughters, your old men, your young men, and men-servants and maid-servants,” contains a specification of כָּל-בֶּשָׂר, it by no means follows with certainty from this, that the word *all* does not do away with the limitation to one

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particular nation, but merely that in this one nation even the limits of sex, age, and rank are abolished; since it cannot be proved that the specification in vv. 2 and 3 is intended to exhaust the idea of "all flesh." Moreover, as the prophecy of Joel had respect primarily to Judah, Joel may primarily have brought into prominence, and specially singled out of the general idea of *kol-bâsâr* in vv. 28 and 29, only those points that were of importance to his contemporaries, viz., that all the members of the covenant nation would participate in this outpouring of the Spirit, without regard to sex, age, or rank; and in so doing, he may have looked away from the idea of the entire human race, including all nations, which is involved in the expression "all flesh." We shall see from v. 32 that this last thought was not a strange one to the prophet. In the specification of the communication of the Spirit, the different forms which it assumes are rhetorically distributed as follows: to the sons and daughters, prophesying is attributed; to the old, dreams; to the young, sights or visions. But it by no means follows from this, that each of these was peculiar to the age mentioned. For the assertion, that the Spirit of God only manifests itself in the weakened mind of the old man by dreams and visions of the night; that the vigorous and lively fancy of the youth or man has sights by day, or true visions; and lastly, that in the soul of the child the Spirit merely works as *furor sacer* (Tychs., Credner, Hitzig, and others), cannot be historically sustained. According to Num. 12:6, visions and dreams are the two forms of the prophetic revelation of God; and אִנְּוּ is the most general manifestation of the prophetic gift, which must not be restricted to the ecstatic state associated with the prophesying. The meaning of this rhetorical individualizing, is simply that their sons, daughters, old persons, and youths, would receive the Spirit of God with all its gifts. The outpouring of the Spirit upon slaves (men-servants and maidens) is connected by *vēgam*, as being something very extraordinary, and under existing circumstances not to be expected. Not a single case occurs in the whole of the Old Testament

of a slave receiving the gift of prophecy. Amos, indeed, was a poor shepherd servant, but not an actual slave. And the communication of this gift to slaves was irreconcilable with the position of slaves under the Old Testament. Consequently even the Jewish expositors could not reconcile themselves to this announcement. The LXX, by rendering it ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας μου, have put servants of God in the place of the slaves of men; and the Pharisees refused to the ὄχλος even a knowledge of the law (John 7:49). The gospel has therefore also broken the fetters of slavery. Judgment upon all nations goes side by side with the outpouring of the Spirit of God. V. 30. *"And I give wonders in the heavens and on earth, blood, fire, and pillars of smoke. V. 31. The sun will turn into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the day of Jehovah, the great and terrible (day), comes. V. 32. And it comes to pass, every one who shall call upon the name of Jehovah will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem will be fugitives, as Jehovah hath said, and among those that are left will be those whom Jehovah calls."* With the word וְנִתְּנָהּ, v. 3 is attached to v. 2 as a simple continuation (Hitzig). The wonders which God will give in the heavens and upon earth are the forerunners of judgment. *Mōphethīm* (see at Ex. 4:21) are extraordinary and marvellous natural phenomena. The wonders on earth are mentioned first, in v. 30b; then in v. 31 those in the heavens. Blood and fire recal to mind the plagues which fell upon Egypt as signs of the judgment: the blood, the changing of the water of the Nile into blood (Ex. 7:17); the fire, the balls of fire which fell to the earth along with the hail (Ex. 9:24). Blood and fire point to bloodshed and war. *Timrōth 'âshân* signifies cloud-pillars (here and in Song of Sol. 3:6), whether we regard the form *timrōth* as original, and trace it to *timrâh* and the root *tâmar*, or prefer the reading תִּמְרוֹת, which we meet with in many codices and editions, and take the word as a derivative of *yâmar* = *mūr*, as Hengstenberg does (*Christol.* i. p. 334 transl.). This sign has its type in the descent of Jehovah

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upon Sinai, at which the whole mountain smoked, and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a smelting-furnace (Ex. 19:18). We have not to think, therefore, of columns of cloud ascending from basins of fire, carried in front of caravans or armies on the march to show the way (see at Song of Sol. 3:6), but of pillars of cloud, which roll up from burning towns in time of war (Isa. 9:17). V. 31. In the heavens the sun is darkened, and the moon assumes a dull, blood-red appearance. These signs also have their type in the Egyptian plague of darkness (Ex. 10:21ff.). The darkening and extinction of the lights of heaven are frequently mentioned, either as harbingers of approaching judgment, or as signs of the breaking of the day of judgment (it was so in Joel 2:2, 10, and is so again in Joel 3:14: see also Isa. 13:10; 34:4; Jer. 4:23; Ezek. 32:1–8; Amos 8:9; Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25). What we have to think of here, is not so much periodically returning phenomena of nature, or eclipses of the sun and moon, as extraordinary (not ecliptic) obscurations of the sun and moon, such as frequently occur as accompaniments to great catastrophes in human history.¹⁴ And these earthly and celestial phenomena are forerunners and signs of the approaching or bursting judgment; not only so far as subjective faith is concerned, from the impression which is made upon the human mind by rare and terrible phenomena of nature, exciting a feeling of anxious expectation as to the things that are about to happen,¹⁵ but also in their real connection with the onward progress of humanity towards its divinely appointed goal, which may be explained from the calling of man to be the lord of the earth, though it has not yet received from science its due recognition and weight; in accordance with which connection, they show “that the eternal motion of the heavenly worlds is also appointed by the world-governing righteousness of God; so that the continued secret operation of this peculiar quality manifests itself through a strong cosmico-uranian symbolism, in facts of singular historical significance” (Zoeckler, *l. c.*).

Joel 2:31b. For v. 31b, see at Joel 2:1, 11. But it is only by the world and its children that the terrible day of the Lord is to be feared; to the children of God it brings redemption (Luke 21:28). Whoever calls upon the name of Jehovah, i.e., the believing worshippers of the Lord, will be exempted from the judgment. “Calling upon the name of Jehovah” signifies not only the public worship of God, but inward worship also, in which the confession of the mouth is also an expression of the heart. Upon Mount Zion will be *p^lētâh*, i.e., not deliverance, but that which has escaped, or, in a collective sense, those who have escaped the judgment, as the synonym *serîdîm*, which follows, clearly shows. Mount Zion and Jerusalem are not mentioned here as the capital of the kingdom of Judah, but, according to their spiritual significance, as the place where the Lord was enthroned in the sanctuary in the midst of His people; that is to say, as the central spot of the kingdom of God. Consequently it is not “to the whole nation of Judah as such that deliverance is promised, on the assumption that in those times of distress the population of the land would have streamed to Jerusalem” (Hitzig), but only to those who call upon the name of the Lord, i.e., to the true worshippers of God, upon whom the Spirit of God is poured out. The words בְּאִשֶּׁר אָמַר יי are not synonymous with כִּי יי דַבֵּר or נִאֵם יי (Joel 4:8; Isa. 1:20; 40:5, etc.), but point to a prophetic word already known, viz., to Ob. 17, where the saying of the Lord, that in the midst of the judgment there would be rescued ones upon Mount Zion, occurs upon word. כִּי תִהְיֶה ... וּבְשָׂרֵי יְדֵימ also depends upon תִּהְיֶה ... כִּי: “and among those that remain will be those whom Jehovah calls.” *Sârîd* is one who is left after a judgment or a battle; hence in Jer. 42:17 and Josh. 8:22 it is connected with *pâlîl* (one who has escaped from destruction), so that here *serîdîm* and *p^lētâh* are actually alike, the *serîdîm* being just the escaped ones upon Mount Zion. Through this clause there is appended to what precedes the fresh definition, that among the saved will be found those whom the Lord calls. These may either be the believing portion

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of Judah, or believers from among the heathen. If we adopted the first view, the sentence would simply contain a more precise definition of the thought, that none are saved but those who call upon the name of the Lord, and therefore would preclude the possibility of including all the inhabitants of Judah among those who call upon the Lord. If we took the second view, the sentence would add this new feature to the thought contained in the first hemistich, that not only citizens of Jerusalem and Judah would be saved in the time of judgment, but all who called upon the Lord out of every nation. The latter view deserves the preference, because the expression קרא בשם יי did not need a more precise definition. The salvation of believers from the heathen world is implied in the first half of the verse, since it is simply connected with calling upon the name of the Lord. The Apostle Paul has quoted it in this sense in Rom. 10:13, as a proof of the participation of the heathen in the Messianic salvation.

If we proceed now to seek for the fulfilment of this prophecy, the Apostle Peter quoted the whole of these verses (28–32), with the exception of v. 32*b*, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, on the first Whitsuntide feast of the apostolical church, as having been fulfilled by that Whitsuntide miracle (Acts 2:17–21); and in his subsequent reference to this fulfilment in Joel 2:39, “For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call,” he even adds the closing words of Joel (v. 32*b*).¹⁶

Consequently the Christian church from time immemorial has recognised in the miracle of Pentecost the outpouring of the Spirit of God predicted in vv. 1, 2:¹⁷ so that the only point upon which there has been a division of opinion has been, whether the fulfilment is to be confined to the feast of Pentecost (as nearly all the fathers and earlier Lutheran commentators suppose); or is to be sought for in certain events of Joel’s own time, as well as the first feast of Pentecost (Ephr. Syr., Grot., and others); or, lastly, whether the occurrence at the first

feast of Pentecost is to be regarded as simply the beginning of the fulfilment which has continued throughout the whole of the Christian era (Calov., Hengstenberg, and many others). Even the Rabbins, with the exception of *R. Mose Hakkohen* in *Aben Ezra*, who sees only a reference to some event in Joel’s own time, expect the fulfilment to take place in the future on the advent of the Messiah (Yarchi, Kimchi, Abarb.). Of the three views expressed by Christian commentators, the third is the only one that answers to the nature of the prophecy as correctly interpreted. The outpouring of the Spirit of God, or the communication of it in all its fulness to the covenant nation, without any limitation whatever, is a standing mark with the prophets of the Messianic times (compare Isa. 32:15 with 11:9 and 54:13) or new covenant (Jer. 31:33, 34; Ezek. 36:26ff.; Zech. 12:10). And even if the way was opened and prepared for this by the prophetic endowment of particular members of the old covenant, these sporadic communications of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament times cannot be regarded as the first steps in the fulfilment of our prophecy, since they were not *outpourings* of the Spirit of God. This first took place when Christ Jesus the Son of God had completed the work of redemption, i.e., on the first feast of Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Previous to this the words of John 7:39 applied: οὐπω ἦν πνεῦμα ἄγιον ὅτι ὀΐησούς οὐδέπω ἐδοξάσθη. The reference in this prophecy to the founding of the new covenant, or Christian church, is also evident from the words, “And it shall come to pass afterwards,” for which Peter substituted, “And it shall come to pass in the last days,” interpreting אחריו בן, the use of which was occasioned by the retrospective reference to בראשון in Joel 2:23, with perfect correctness so far as the fact was concerned, by the formula answering to באחרית בימי, viz., ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, which always denotes the Messianic future, or times of the completion of the kingdom of God. And just as *achārē khēn* precludes any reference to an event in Joel’s own time, so does ἐν ταῖς

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ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις preclude any fulfilment whatever in the times before Christ. But however certain it may be that the fulfilment first took place at the first Christian feast of Pentecost, we must not stop at this one pentecostal miracle. The address of the Apostle Peter by no means requires this limitation, but rather contains distinct indications that Peter himself saw nothing more therein than the commencement of the fulfilment, “but a commencement, indeed, which embraced the ultimate fulfilment, as the germ enfolds the tree.” We see this in v. 38, where he exhorts his hearers to repent and be baptized, and adds the promise, “and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;” and again in v. 39, where he observes, “The promise belongs to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off (τοῖς εἰς μακράν), as many as the Lord our God will call.” For if not only the children of the apostle’s contemporaries, but also those that were afar off—i.e., not foreign Jews, but the far-off heathen—were to participate in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which commenced at Pentecost must continue as long as the Lord shall receive into His kingdom those who are still standing afar off, i.e., until the fulness of the Gentiles shall have entered the kingdom of God. See Hengstenberg, *Christology*, i. pp. 326ff. transl., where further reasons are adduced for taking this to be the allusion in the prophecy.

There is far greater diversity in the opinions entertained as to the fulfilment of vv. 30–32: some thinking of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (Grotius, Turretius, and the Socinians); and others of judgments upon the enemies of the covenant nation shortly after the return from the Babylonian exile (Ephr. Syr. and others); others, again, of the last judgment (Tertull., Theod., Crus.), or the destruction of Jerusalem and the last judgment (Chrys.). Of all these views, those which refer to events occurring before the Christian era are irreconcilable with the context, according to which the day of the Lord will come after the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Even the wonders connected with the death of Christ and

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, of which some have thought, cannot properly be taken into account, although the marvellous phenomena occurring at the death of Christ—the darkening of the sun, the shaking of the earth, and the rending of the rocks—were harbingers of the approaching judgment, and were recognised by the ὄχλοις as warnings to repent, and so escape from the judgment (Matt. 27:45, 51; Luke 23:44, 48). For the signs in heaven and earth that are mentioned in vv. 30 and 31 were to take place before the coming of the terrible day of the Lord, which would dawn after the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, and which came, as history teaches, upon the Jewish nation that had rejected its Saviour on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and upon the Gentile world-power in the destruction of the Roman empire, and from that time forward breaks in constant succession upon one Gentile nation after another, until all the ungodly powers of this world shall be overthrown (cf. Joel 3:2). On account of this internal connection between the day of Jehovah and the outpouring of the Spirit upon the church of the Lord, Peter also quoted vv. 30–32 of this prophecy, for the purpose of impressing upon the hearts of all the hearers of his address the admonition, “Save yourselves from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40), and also of pointing out the way of deliverance from the threatening judgment to all who were willing to be saved.

Joel 3

Joel 3. (Heb. Bib. Joel 4.) Judgment upon the World of Nations, and Glorification of Zion—Vv. 1, 2. *“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall turn the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather together all nations, and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will contend with them there concerning my people and my inheritance Israel, which they have scattered among the nations, and my land have they divided. V. 3. And for my people they cast the lot; and gave the boy for a harlot, and the maiden they have sold for wine, and drunk (it).”* The description of the judgment-day

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predicted in Joel 2:31 commences with an explanatory כִּי. The train of thought is the following: When the day of the Lord comes, there will be deliverance upon Zion only for those who call upon the name of the Lord; for then will all the heathen nations that have displayed hostility to Jehovah's inheritance be judged in the valley of Jehoshaphat. By *hinnēh*, the fact to be announced is held up as something new and important. The notice as to the time points back to the "afterward" in 2:28: "in those days," viz., the days of the outpouring of the Spirit of God. This time is still further described by the apposition, "at that time, when I shall turn the captivity of Judah," as the time of the redemption of the people of God out of their prostrate condition, and out of every kind of distress. שׁוּב אֶת שְׁבוּת is not used here in the sense of "to bring back the prisoners," but, as in Hos. 6:11, in the more comprehensive sense of *restitutio in integrum*, which does indeed include the gathering together of those who were dispersed, and the return of the captives, as one element, though it is not exhausted by this one element, but also embraces their elevation into a new and higher state of glory, transcending their earlier state of grace. In וְקִבְצָתִי the prediction of judgment is appended to the previous definition of the time in the form of an apodosis. The article in כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם (all the nations) does not refer to "all those nations which were spoken of in Joel 1 and 2 under the figure of the locusts" (Hengstenberg), but is used because the prophet had in his mind all those nations upon which hostility towards Israel, the people of God, is charged immediately afterwards as a crime: so that the article is used in much the same manner as in Jer. 49:36, because the notion, though in itself an indefinite one, is more fully defined in what follows (cf. Ewald, § 227, a). The valley of *Yehōshāphāt*, i.e., Jehovah judges, is not the valley in which the judgment upon several heathen nations took place under Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20), and which received the name of *Valley of blessing*, from the feast of thanksgiving which Jehoshaphat held there (2 Chron. 20:22–

26), as Ab. Ezra, Hofmann, Ewald, and others suppose; for the "Valley of blessing" was not "the valley of Kidron, which was selected for that festival in the road back from the desert of Tekoah to Jerusalem" (see Bertheau on 2 Chron. l.c.), and still less "the plain of Jezreel" (Kliefoth), but was situated in the neighbourhood of the ruins of *Bereikût*, which have been discovered by Wolcott (see Ritter, *Erdkunde*, xv. p. 635, and Van de Velde, *Mem.* p. 292). On the other hand, the valley of Jehoshaphat is unquestionably to be sought for, according to this chapter (as compared with Zech 14:4), in or near Jerusalem; and the name, which does not occur anywhere else in either the Old or New Testament, excepting here and in v. 12, is formed by Joel, like the name *'ēmeq hechârûts* in v. 14, from the judgment which Jehovah would hold upon the nations there. The tradition of the church (see Euseb. and Jerome in the *Onom.* s.v. *κοιλίας*, *Caelas*, and *Itiner. Anton.* p. 594; cf. Robinson, *Pal.* i. pp. 396, 397) has correctly assigned it to the valley of the Kidron, on the eastern side of Jerusalem, or rather to the northern part of that valley (2 Sam. 18:18), or valley of *Shaveh* (Gen. 14:17). There would the Lord contend with the nations, hold judgment upon them, because they had attacked His people (*nachălâthî*, the people of Jehovah, as in Joel 2:17) and His kingdom (*'artsî*). The dispersion of Israel among the nations, and the division (חֲלִיק) of the Lord's land, cannot, of course, refer to the invasion of Judah by the Philistines and Arabians in the time of Joram (2 Chron. 21:16, 17). For although these foes did actually conquer Jerusalem and plunder it, and carried off, among other captives, even the sons of the king himself, this transportation of a number of prisoners cannot be called a dispersion of the people of Israel among the heathen; still less can the plundering of the land and capital be called a division of the land of Jehovah; to say nothing of the fact, that the reference here is to the judgment which would come upon all nations after the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, and that it is not till vv. 4–8 that Joel proceeds to speak of the calamities which

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neighbouring nations had inflicted upon the kingdom of Judah. The words presuppose as facts that have already occurred, both the dispersion of the whole nation of Israel in exile among the heathen, and the conquest and capture of the whole land by heathen nations, and that in the extent to which they took place under the Chaldeans and Romans alone.

Joel 3:2, 3. In vv. 2 and 3 Joel is speaking not of events belonging to his own time, or to the most recent past, but of that dispersion of the whole of the ancient covenant nation among the heathen, which was only completely effected on the conquest of Palestine and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and which continues to this day; though we cannot agree with Hengstenberg, that this furnishes an argument in favour of the allegorical interpretation of the army of locusts in Joel 1 and 2. For since Moses had already foretold that Israel would one day be driven out among the heathen (Lev. 26:33ff.; Deut. 28:36ff.), Joel might assume that this judgment was a truth well known in Israel, even though he had not expressed it in his threatening of punishment in Joel 1 and 2. V. 3 depicts the ignominious treatment of Israel in connection with this catastrophe. The prisoners of war are distributed by lot among the conquerors, and disposed of by them to slave-dealers at most ridiculous prices,—a boy for a harlot, a girl for a drink of wine. Even in Joel's time, many Israelites may no doubt have been scattered about in distant heathen lands (cf. v. 5); but the heathen nations had not yet cast lots upon the nation as a whole, to dispose of the inhabitants as slaves, and divide the land among themselves. This was not done till the time of the Romans.¹⁸ But, as many of the earlier commentators have clearly seen, we must not stop even at this. The people and inheritance of Jehovah are not merely the Old Testament Israel as such, but the church of the Lord of both the old and new covenants, upon which the Spirit of God is poured out; and the judgment which Jehovah will hold upon the nations, on account of the injuries inflicted upon His people, is the last general judgment

upon the nations, which will embrace not merely the heathen Romans and other heathen nations by whom the Jews have been oppressed, but all the enemies of the people of God, both within and without the earthly limits of the church of the Lord, including even carnally-minded Jews, Mohammedans, and nominal Christians, who are heathens in heart.¹⁹

Before depicting the final judgment upon the hostile nations of the world, Joel notices in vv. 4–8 the hostility which the nations round about Judah had manifested towards it in his own day, and foretels to these a righteous retribution for the crimes they had committed against the covenant nation. V. 4. *“And ye also, what would ye with me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all ye coasts of Philistia? will ye repay a doing to me, or do anything to me? Quickly, hastily will I turn back your doing upon your head.* V. 5. *That ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have brought my best jewels into your temples.* V. 6. *And the sons of Judah and the sons of Jerusalem ye have sold to the sons of Javan, to remove them far from their border.* V. 7. *Behold, I waken them from the place whither ye have sold them, and turn back your doing upon your head.* V. 8. *And sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of Javan, and they sell them to the Sabaeans, to a people far off; for Jehovah has spoken it.”* By *vēgam* the Philistines and Phoenicians are added to the *gōyim* already mentioned, as being no less culpable than they; not, however, in the sense of, “and also if one would inquire more thoroughly into the fact” (Ewald), or, “and even so far as ye are concerned, who, in the place of the friendship and help which ye were bound to render as neighbours, have oppressed my people” (Rosenmüller), for such additions as these are foreign to the context; but rather in this sense, “and yea also ... do not imagine that ye can do wrong with impunity, as though he had a right so to do.” לִי מָה אֶתֶּם does not mean, “What have I to do with you?” for this would be expressed differently (compare Josh. 22:24; Judg. 11:12); but, “What would ye with me?” The question is unfinished, because of its

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emotional character, and is resumed and completed immediately afterwards in a disjunctive form (Hitzig). Tyre and Sidon, the two chief cities of the Phoenicians (see at Josh. 19:29 and 11:8), represent all the Phoenicians. כָּל גְּלִילוֹת פְּלִיִּיִּים, "all the circles or districts of the Philistines," are the five small principedoms of Philistia (see at Josh. 13:2). גָּמֹל, the doing, or inflicting (sc., of evil), from *gâmal*, to accomplish, to do (see at Isa. 3:9). The disjunctive question, "Will ye perhaps repay to me a deed, i.e., a wrong, that I have done to you, or of your own accord attempt anything against me?" has a negative meaning: "Ye have neither cause to avenge yourselves upon me, i.e., upon my people Israel, nor any occasion to do it harm. But if repayment is the thing in hand, I will, and that very speedily (*qal mehêrâh*, see Isa. 5:26), bring back your doing upon your own head" (cf. Ps. 7:17). To explain what is here said, an account is given in vv. 5, 6 of what they have done to the Lord and His people,—namely, taken away their gold and silver, and brought their costly treasures into their palaces or temples. These words are not to be restricted to the plundering of the temple and its treasury, but embrace the plundering of palaces and of the houses of the rich, which always followed the conquest of towns (cf. 1 Kings 14:26; 2 Kings 14:14). הַיְכָלֵיכֶם also are not temples only, but palaces as well (cf. Isa. 13:22; Amos 8:3; Prov. 30:28). Joel had no doubt the plundering of Judah and Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabians in the time of Jehoram in his mind (see 2 Chron. 21:17). The share of the Phoenicians in this crime was confined to the fact, that they had purchased from the Philistines the Judaeans who had been taken prisoners, by them, and sold them again as slaves to the sons of Javan, i.e., to the Ionians or Greeks of Asia Minor.²⁰ The clause, "that ye might remove them far from their border," whence there would be no possibility of their returning to their native land, serves to bring out the magnitude of the crime. This would be repaid to them according to the true *lex talionis* (vv. 7, 8). The Lord would raise up the members

of His own nation from the place to which they had been sold, i.e., would bring them back again into their own land, and deliver up the Philistines and Phoenicians into the power of the Judaeans (*mâkhar beyâd* as in Judg. 2:14; 3:8, etc.), who would then sell their prisoners as slaves to the remote people of the Sabaeans, a celebrated trading people in Arabia Felix (see at 1 Kings 10:1). This threat would certainly be fulfilled, for Jehovah had spoken it (cf. Isa. 1:20). This occurred partly on the defeat of the Philistines by Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:6, 7) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:8), where Philistian prisoners of war were certainly sold as slaves; but principally after the captivity, when Alexander the Great and his successors set many of the Jewish prisoners of war in their lands at liberty (compare the promise of King Demetrius to Jonathan, "I will send away in freedom such of the Judaeans as have been made prisoners, and reduced to slavery in our land," Josephus, Ant. xiii. 2, 3), and portions of the Philistian and Phoenician lands were for a time under Jewish sway; when Jonathan besieged Ashkelon and Gaza (1 Macc. 10:86; 11:60); when King Alexander (Balas) ceded Ekron and the district of Judah (1 Macc. 10:89); when the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus conquered Gaza, and destroyed it (Josephus, Ant. xiii. 13, 3; bell. Jud. i. 4, 2); and when, subsequent to the cession of Tyre, which had been conquered by Alexander the Great, to the Seleucidae, Antiochus the younger appointed Simon commander-in-chief from the Ladder of Tyre to the border of Egypt (1 Macc. 1:59).

Joel 3:9–17. Fulfilment of the judgment upon all the heathen predicted in v. 2. Compare the similar prediction of judgment in Zech. 14:2ff. The call is addressed to all nations to equip themselves for battle, and march into the valley of Jehoshaphat to war against the people of God, but in reality to be judged by the Lord through His heavenly heroes, whom He sends down thither. V. 9. "Proclaim ye this among the nations; sanctify a war, awaken the heroes, let all the men of war draw near and come up! V. 10. Forge your coulter into swords, and your vine-sickles into spears: let the weak one say, A hero

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am I. V. 11. Hasten and come, all ye nations round about, and assemble yourselves! Let thy heroes come down thither, O Jehovah! V. 12. The nations are to rise up, and come into the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there shall I sit to judge all the heathen round about." The summons to prepare for war (v. 9) is addressed, not to the worshippers of Jehovah or the Israelites scattered among the heathen (Cyr., Calv., Umbreit), but to the heathen nations, though not directly to the heroes and warriors among the heathen, but to heralds, who are to listen to the divine message, and convey it to the heathen nations. This change belongs to the poetical drapery of thought, that at a sign from the Lord the heathen nations are to assemble together for war against Israel. קָדַשׁ מַלְחָמָה does not mean "to declare war" (Hitzig), but to consecrate a war, i.e., to prepare for war by sacrifices and religious rites of consecration (cf. 1 Sam. 7:8, 9; Jer. 6:4). הָעִירוּ: waken up or arouse (not wake up) the heroes from their peaceful rest to battle. With יִגְשׁוּ the address passes over from the second person to the third, which Hitzig accounts for on the ground that the words state what the heralds are to say to the nations or heroes; but the continuance of the imperative *kōttū* in v. 10 does not suit this. This transition is a very frequent one (cf. Isa. 41:1; 34:1), and may be very simply explained from the lively nature of the description. עָלָה is here applied to the advance of hostile armies against a land or city. The nations are to summon up all their resources and all their strength for this war, because it will be a decisive one. They are to forge the tools of peaceful agriculture into weapons of war (compare Isa. 2:4 and Mic. 4:3, where the Messianic times of peace are depicted as the turning of weapons of war into instruments of agriculture). Even the weak one is to rouse himself up to be a hero, "as is generally the case when a whole nation is seized with warlike enthusiasm" (Hitzig). This enthusiasm is expressed still further in the appeal in v. 11 to assemble together as speedily as possible. The

ἀπ. λεγ. εἰσὶν is related to εἰσὶν, to hasten; whereas no support can be found in the language to the meaning "assemble," adopted by the LXX, Targ., etc. The expression כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם by no means necessitates our taking these words as a summons or challenge on the part of Joel to the heathen, as Hitzig does; for this can be very well interpreted as a summons, with which the nations call one another to battle, as the following וְנִקְבְּצוּ requires; and the assumption of Hitzig, Ewald, and others, that this form is the imperative for וְנִקְבְּצוּ, cannot be sustained from Isa. 43:9 and Jer. 50:5. It is not till v. 11b that Joel steps in with a prayer addressed to the Lord, that He will send down His heavenly heroes to the place to which the heathen are flowing together. *Hanchath* an *imper. hiph.*, with *pathach* instead of *tzere*, on account of the guttural, from *nâchath*, to come down. The heroes of Jehovah are heavenly hosts, or angels, who execute His commands as *gibbōrē khōāch* (Ps. 103:20, cf. 78:25). This prayer is answered thus by Jehovah in v. 12: "Let the nations rise up, and come into the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will He hold judgment upon them." יַעֲזֹרוּ corresponds to הָעִירוּ in v. 9; and at the close, "all the heathen round about" is deliberately repeated. Still there is no antithesis in this to "all nations" in v. 2, as though here the judgment was simply to come upon the hostile nations in the neighbourhood of Judah, and not upon all the heathen universally (Hitzig). For even in v. 2 כָּל הַגּוֹיִם are simply all the heathen who have attacked the people of Jehovah—that is to say, all the nations round about Israel. Only these are not merely the neighbouring nations to Judah, but all heathen nations who have come into contact with the kingdom of God, i.e., all the nations of the earth without exception, inasmuch as before the last judgment the gospel of the kingdom is to be preached in all the world for a testimony to all nations (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10).

It is to the last decisive judgment, in which all the single judgments find their end, that the

command of Jehovah to His strong heroes refers. V. 13. *“Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread, for the win-press is full, the vats overflow: for their wickedness is great.”* The judgment is represented under the double figure of the reaping of the fields and the treading out of the grapes in the wine-press. The angels are first of all summoned to reap the ripe corn (Isa. 17:5; Rev. 14:16), and then commanded to tread the wine-presses that are filled with grapes. The opposite opinion expressed by Hitzig, viz., that the command to tread the wine-presses is preceded by the command to cut off the grapes, is supported partly by the erroneous assertion, that *bâshal* is not applied to the ripening of corn, and partly upon the arbitrary assumption that *qâtsîr*, a harvest, stands for *bâtsîr*, a vintage; and *maggâl*, a sickle (cf. Jer. 50:16), for *mazmêrâh*, a vine-dresser’s bill. But *bâshal* does not mean “to boil,” either primarily or literally, but to be done, or to be ripe, like the Greek πέσσω πέπω, to ripen, to make soft, to boil (see at Ex. 12:9), and hence in the *piel* both to boil and roast, and in the *hiphil* to make ripe or ripen (Gen. 40:10), applied both to grapes and corn. It is impossible to infer from the fact that Isaiah (Isa. 16:9) uses the word *qâtsîr* for the vintage, on account of the alliteration with *qayits*, that this is also the meaning of the word in Joel. But we have a decisive proof in the resumption of this passage in Rev. 14:15 and 18, where the two figures (of the corn-harvest and the gathering of the grapes) are kept quite distinct, and the clause כִּי בְשֵׁל קָצִיר is paraphrased and explained thus: “The time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” The ripeness of the corn is a figurative representation of ripeness for judgment. Just as in the harvest—namely, at the threshing and winnowing connected with the harvest—the grains of corn are separated from the husk, the wheat being gathered into the barns, the husk blown away by the wind, and the straw burned; so will the good be separated from the wicked by the judgment, the former being gathered into the kingdom of God for the enjoyment of eternal life,—the latter, on

the other hand, being given up to eternal death. The harvest field is the earth (ἡ γῆ, Rev. 14:16), i.e., the inhabitants of the earth, the human race. The ripening began at the time of the appearance of Christ upon the earth (John 4:35; Matt. 9:38). With the preaching of the gospel among all nations, the judgment of separation and decision (ἡ κρίσις, John 3:18–21) commenced; with the spread of the kingdom of Christ in the earth it passes over all nations; and it will be completed in the last judgment, on the return of Christ in glory at the end of this world. Joel does not carry out the figure of the harvest any further, but simply presents the judgment under the similar figure of the treading of the grapes that have been gathered. רָדוּ, not from *yârad*, to descend, but from *râdâh*, to trample under foot, tread the press that is filled with grapes. הַשִּׁיקוּ הַיְקָבִים is used in Joel 2:24 to denote the most abundant harvest; here it is figuratively employed to denote the great mass of men who are ripe for the judgment, as the explanatory clause, for “their wicked (deed) is much,” or “their wickedness is great,” which recalls Gen. 6:5, clearly shows. The treading of the wine-press does not express the idea of wading in blood, or the execution of a great massacre; but in Isa. 63:3, as well as in Rev. 14:20, it is a figure denoting an annihilating judgment upon the enemies of God and of His kingdom. The wine-press is “the wine-press of the wrath of God,” i.e., “what the wine-press is to ordinary grapes, the wrath of God is to the grapes referred to here” (Hengstenberg on Rev. 14:19).

The execution of this divine command is not expressly mentioned, but in v. 14ff. the judgment is simply depicted thus: first of all we have a description of the streaming of the nations into the valley of judgment, and then of the appearance of Jehovah upon Zion in the terrible glory of the Judge of the world, and as the refuge of His people. V. 14. *“Tumult, tumult in the valley of decision: for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision.”* *Hāmōnîm* are noisy crowds, whom the prophet sees in the Spirit pouring into the valley of Jehoshaphat.

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The repetition of the word is expressive of the great multitude, as in 2 Kings 3:16. עִמְקֵי הַתְּרוּגָה not valley of threshing; for though *chârûts* is used in Isa. 28:27 and 41:15 for the threshing-sledge, it is not used for the threshing itself, but valley of the deciding judgment, from *chârats*, to decide, to determine irrevocably (Isa. 10:22; 1 Kings 20:40), so that *chârûts* simply defines the name *Jehoshaphat* with greater precision. כִּי קָרוֹב וְגוֹ (compare Joel 1:15; 2:1) is used here to denote the immediate proximity of the judgment, which bursts at once, according to v. 15.

Joel 3:15. *“Sun and moon have become black, and the stars have withdrawn their shining. V. 16. And Jehovah roars out of Zion, and He thunders out of Jerusalem; and heaven and earth quake: but Jehovah is a refuge to His people, and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. V. 17. And ye will perceive that I Jehovah am your God, dwelling upon Zion, my holy mountain: and Jerusalem will be a sanctuary, and strangers will not pass through it any more.”* On the forebodings of the judgment in v. 15, see at Joel 2:10. Out of Zion, the place of His throne, will Jehovah cause His thunder-voice to sound, will roar like a lion which is rushing upon its prey (Hos. 5:14; Amos 3:4), so that heaven and earth tremble in consequence. But it is only to His enemies that He is terrible; to His people, the true Israel, He is a refuge and strong tower. From the fact that He only destroys His enemies, and protects His own people, the latter will learn that He is their God, and dwells upon Zion in His sanctuary, i.e., that He there completes His kingdom, that He purifies Jerusalem of all foes, all the ungodly through the medium of the judgment, and makes it a holy place which cannot be trodden any more by strangers, by Gentiles, or by the unclean of either Gentiles or Israelites (Isa. 35:8), but will be inhabited only by the righteous (Isa. 60:21; Zech. 14:21), who, as Rev. 21:27 affirms, are written in the Lamb’s book of life. For Zion or Jerusalem is of course not the Jerusalem of the earthly Palestine, but the sanctified and glorified city of the living God, in which the

Lord will be eternally united with His redeemed, sanctified, and glorified church. We are forbidden to think of the earthly Jerusalem or the earthly Mount Zion, not only by the circumstance that the gathering of all the heathen nations takes place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, i.e., in a portion of the valley of the Kidron, which is a pure impossibility, but also by the description which follows of the glorification of Judah.

Joel 3:18–21. After the judgment upon all nations, the land of the Lord will overflow with streams of divine blessing; but the seat of the world-power will become a barren waste. V. 18. *“And it comes to pass in that day, the mountains will trickle down with new wine, and the hills flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah flow with water; and a fountain will issue from the house of Jehovah, and water the Acacia valley. V. 19. Egypt will become a desolation, and Edom a barren waste, for the sin upon the sons of Judah, that they have shed innocent blood in their land. V. 20. But Judah, it will dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. V. 21. And I shall expiate their blood that I have not expiated: and Jehovah dwelleth upon Zion.”* The end of the ways of the Lord is eternal blessing for His people, whilst the enemies of His kingdom fall victims to the curse. This thought is expressed in figures taken from the state of the covenant land of the Old Testament, and those of the bordering kingdoms of Egypt and Edom which were hostile to Israel. If we bear this in mind, we shall not fall into Volck’s error, of seeking in this description for a clear statement as to the transfiguration of the land of Israel during the thousand years’ reign, whilst the rest of the earth is not yet glorified; for it is evident from v. 18, as compared with the parallel passages, viz., Zech. 14:6ff. and Ezek. 47:1–12, that this passage does not teach the earthly glorification of Palestine, and desolation of Egypt and Idumaea, but that Judah and Jerusalem are types of the kingdom of God, whilst Egypt and Edom are types of the world-powers that are at enmity against God; in other words, that this description is not to be understood literally, but spiritually. “In that

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day," viz., the period following the final judgment upon the heathen, the mountains and hills of Judah, i.e., the least fruitful portions of the Old Testament kingdom of God in the time of the prophet, will overflow with new wine and milk, and all the brooks of water be filled, i.e., no more dry up in the hot season of the year (Joel 1:20). Thus will the fruitfulness of Canaan, the land of the Lord, flowing with milk and honey, come forth in all its potency. Even the unfruitful acacia valley will be watered by a spring issuing from the house of Jehovah, and turned into a fruitful land. The valley of *Shittim* is the barren valley of the Jordan, above the Dead Sea. The name *Shittim*, acacia, is taken from the last encampment of the Israelites in the steppes of Moab, before their entrance into Canaan (Num. 25:1; Josh. 3:1), and was chosen by the prophet to denote a very dry valley, as the acacia grows in a dry soil (cf. Celsii, *Hierob.* i. p. 500ff.). The spring which waters this valley, and proceeds from the house of Jehovah, and the living water that flows from Jerusalem, according to Zech. 14:8, are of course not earthly streams that are constantly flowing, as distinguished from the streams caused by rain and snow, which very soon dry up again, but spiritual waters of life (John 4:10, 14; 7:38); and, in fact, as a comparison of Ezek. 47:7–12 with Rev. 22:1, 2 clearly shows, the "river of the water of life, clear as a crystal," which in the New Jerusalem coming down from God upon the earth (Rev. 21:10) proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and on both sides of which there grows the tree of life, that bears its fruit twelve times a-year, or every month, and the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. The partially verbal agreement between the description of this river of water in Rev. 22:2, and that in Ezek. 47:12, overthrows the millenarian view, that the glorification of Judah and Jerusalem, predicted by Joel, Zechariah, and Ezekiel, will be a partial glorification of the earth, viz., of the Holy Land, which takes place before the creation of the new heaven and the new earth.

Joel 3:19. On the other hand, the curse of desolation will fall upon Egypt and Edom, on

account of the sin which they have committed upon the sons of Judah. תְּחַסֵּם בְּנֵי, with the genitive of the object, as in Ob. 10, Hab. 2:8, 17, etc. This sin is then more precisely defined, as consisting in the fact that they had shed innocent blood of the sons of Judah, i.e., of the people of God, in their land (*'artsâm*, the land of the Egyptians and Edomites, not of the Judaeans): that is to say, in the Egypt in the olden time, more especially by the command to slay all the Hebrew boys (Ex. 1:16), and in the Edom of more recent times, probably when throwing off the dominion of Judah (see at Amos 1:11 and Ob. 10). These nations and lands had both thereby become types of the power of the world in its hostility to God, in which capacity they are mentioned here, and Edom again in Isa. 34 and 63; cf. Jer. 49:7ff. and Ezek. 35.

Joel 3:20. On the other hand, Judah and Jerusalem shall dwell for ever,—a poetical expression for "be inhabited," both land and city being personified, as in Isa. 13:20, etc. Thus will Jehovah, by means of the final judgment upon the heathen, wipe away the bloodguiltiness that they have contracted in their treatment of His people, and manifest Himself as King of Zion. With these thoughts the prophecy of Joel closes (v. 21). The verb *niqqâh*, to cleanse, with *dâm*, to wipe away or expunge blood-guiltiness by punishment, is chosen with reference to נִקֵּי דָם in v. 19; and לֹא נִקֵּיתִי, which follows, is to be taken in a relative sense: so that there is no need to alter נִקֵּיתִי into נִקְמֵתִי (Ges.); and the latter has no critical support in the Septuagint rendering καὶ ἐκζητήσω, which merely reproduces the sense.

Joel 3:21. Ver. 21a does not contain the announcement of a still further punishment upon Egypt and Edom, but simply the thought with which the proclamation of the judgment closes,—namely, that the eternal desolation of the world-kingsdoms mentioned here will wipe out all the wrong which they have done to the people of God, and which has hitherto remained unpunished. But Zion will rejoice in the eternal

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reign of its God. Jehovah dwells upon Zion, when He manifests Himself to all the world as the King of His people, on the one hand by the

annihilation of His foes, and on the other hand by the perfecting of His kingdom in glory.
