

JOEL

“Jah is God”

—prophet to Judah, end of fifth century (?), or possibly mid-ninth century

1. Author and date of Joel

The author of the book is named as Joel, son of Pethuel (1:1); he is unknown otherwise. The authorship and unity of the book are not contested by most scholars, although Duhm denied Joel's authorship of all the apocalyptic passages.

The date of the book is not specified, and there is a wide range of possibilities.

earliest date: after Jehoshaphat, 873-848 BC (3:2), phps in the days of the boy king, Joash, since no king is mentioned and the priests (Jehoiada?) are prominently mentioned.

Also taken into account is the reference to a captivity in 3:1 and the activity of the Greeks in 3:6

latest date: before destruction of Sidon by Persians, 345 BC (3:4)

Evidence for **date of Joel**:

1) no king mentioned: could mean exilic/post-exilic period, period of weak king (boy Joash or Zedekiah), or could mean nothing at all. Patterson in *EBC* argues extensively for the era of King Uzziah, about 750, after contracting leprosy.

Other possible times:

- Athaliah
- Zedekiah the puppet
- No king (i.e., after exile begins)

2) Judah and Israel used interchangeably (2:27; 3:1-2,16,19)

could be generic use of Israel (occurs in eschatological contexts or promise of restoration of the two; cf. Ezek. 37:15-23)

3) enemies listed

- Tyre, Sidon (3:4)
- Philistia (3:4)
- Greeks (Javan; 3:6)
- Sheba (Sabaeans; 3:8)
- Egypt (3:19)
- Edom (3:19)

compare enemies not mentioned:

Assyria
Babylon
Persia
Syria
Rome

4) idolatry not mentioned as a sin of Judah = post-exilic

5) previous captivity referred to (3:2)

could be Babylonian captivity
or could be eschatological (cf. v. 1)

could be past or future

Preliminary Conclusion: A date after the exile seems likely, as best fitting all the evidence. Yet an earlier date is possible.

6) Note Joel's placement in the canon for support of early date

R. K. Harrison, who first suggested a date of shortly before 400 BC (*Introduction to the OT*, p. 879; 1969), changed his opinion to ca. 830 BC ("Joel, Book of," *ZPEB* 3:621; 1975).

2. Historical background of Joel

locust plagues

see pictures in *ZPEB* 3:619, 949

normally locusts come from the south, sometimes from the north (2:20)

also "fire" mentioned (1:19-20); perhaps drought

3. Outline of Joel

1) The locust plague, ch. 1 - 2:27

ch. 1, locusts

uncontested as to meaning

v. 4, types of locusts (*ZPEB* 3:948; #1, 6, 7, 8)

perhaps phases of migrating locusts (*ZPEB* 3:948, par. 2)

v. 8, בְּתוּלָה *bethulah* = young widow, not virgin

but Keil and NASB “bridegroom,” implies not yet married

בַּעַל נְעוּרֵיהָ *ba`al ne`ureh*; cf. Isa. 54:6

but see Isa. 54:4

BDB, p. 127a, “husband” in Joel 1:8; ASV, NIV

v. 15, day of Yahweh at hand

cf. 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14

Amos 5:18; Obad. 15

ch. 2:1-27, disputed interpretation as to locusts, or northern army

army arguments: from north (v. 20)

nations rule (v. 17)

but cf. ASV marg., NASB, NIV, on לְמִשַׁל בָּם *limshal bam*

locust arguments: “**like, as**” (vv. 4-9); not vice-versa

“army” (2:11, 25; nation in 1:6)

“darkness” (2:2, 10)

vv. 4-11, description of locusts

cf. with Rev. 9:1-11

vv. 15-27, call for repentance and relief

2. The last great battle, 2:28 - ch. 3

[in Hebrew Bible, ch. 3-4]

2:28-32, signs preceding the second coming: “After this...”

v. 30, Lk. 21:11, 25-26

v. 31, Mt. 24:29

vv. 28-32, Acts 2:16-21

to what extent related to Pentecost? Peter, “This is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel . . . “ *touto estin to eiremenon* (Acts 2:16)

- 1) fulfillment in Peter’s time
- 2) beginning of fulfillment in Peter’s time, concluding at last day
- 3) same kind of signs that shall be in last day
- 4) sign of immanent kingdom; coming of Messiah to follow immediately after the signs; cf. Acts 2:33-36; 3:18-21; 4:2

ch. 3, the challenge to war

v. 1, return from captivity

v. 2, Valley of Jehoshaphat: “Yahweh shall judge”; cf. vv. 12,14

Payne takes it as the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem

vv. 3,4,7,8 could be Alexander the Great

vv. 9-10, call to war

v. 13, sickle

cf. Rev. 14:14-20

after 5th trumpet (9:1-12, locusts)

after 6th trumpet (9:13 = 200 million horsemen)

after 7th trumpet (11:15, leading “quickly” to bowls of ch. 16)

v. 14, “Valley of Verdict”

vv. 17-21, theocratic kingdom

18, ctr. to the locusts

17 "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again."

18 And it will come to pass in that day That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Acacias.

—spring from the house of the Lord