

A dramatic scene depicting a massive swarm of locusts. The locusts are shown in various stages of flight, filling the sky and the foreground. In the background, a city skyline with several tall buildings is visible, partially obscured by the density of the swarm. The foreground shows a field of tall, dry grass, with some locusts landing on it. The overall atmosphere is one of a catastrophic natural event.

STUDY GUIDE

The Book of
JOEL

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Joel

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Chapter 1

As the last days approach less and less people are going to worship G-d. Many are going to focus upon their own desires, and move away from what is pleasing to the L-rd. In this prophecy there is an emphasis upon “The day of the L-rd”. This is a term of judgement, and a term that refers to the wrath of G-d - His anger falling upon the world. The main theme of this prophecy is that of redemption.

Verse 1: *“The word of the L-rd which was to Joel the son of Pethuel.”*

Joel: (יֹאֵל) Hebrew is read from right to left. The first two letters of Joel’s name (יֹ) make up part of the sacred name of the L-rd (יְהוָה). The final two letters (אֵל) are the generic name for G-d. Most scholars believe this name is simply a reference to the L-rd G-d.

Verse 2: *“Hear this, O elders, and give ear all the inhabitants of the land! Has there ever been something like this in your days, or in the days of your forefathers?”*

Hear: To listen for the purpose of responding. G-d wants them (us) to implement, or apply, His truth in their (our) lives.

Land: Most scholars believe the land, mentioned here, is not a reference to the whole world. This prophesy has relevance for the entire world, and is going to affect all of creation, but, here, in a unique way, Joel is speaking to the people who dwell in the Land of Israel.

Has there ever been: What is emphasised here is that what is going to happen is something unique or different. It is something that has never been seen before.

Verse 3: *“Concerning this tell also to your sons, and your sons to their sons, and their sons until the last generation.”*

Concerning this: This prophecy is foundational in regard to what G-d is going to do. His wrath and judgement are going to be poured out before His Kingdom is manifested. The church is not going to usher in a time of G-dliness, peace, and righteousness before Messiah returns. This is a false teaching. In fact, Paul teaches us in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 that there is going to be a falling away, an apostasy, before the return of Yeshua. That means that many will move away from right doctrine – heresy will be taught by an increasing number of people who claim to be believers. The prophets (Paul and Yeshua) reveal to us that things are going to get a lot worse before Messiah comes to establish His Kingdom (Matt 24:6-14).

Until the last (later) generation: This prophecy needs to be taught in every generation, until the last generation. It has particular relevance for this final generation.

Verse 4: *“What was left over from the chewing locust is going to be eaten up by the swarming locust. What the swarming locust left is going to be eaten up by the crawling locust. What the crawling locust left will be eaten by the consuming locust.”*

Note: Four different types of locusts are mentioned here. The rabbinical commentators say each one is worse, and does greater damage, than the one before it.

Consuming: They eat up everything so that there is absolutely nothing left. The idea of these locusts has to do with the all-consuming judgment of G-d. G-d is going to act in the last days to bring about emptiness (lack of provision or blessing), due to the insufficient worship of His covenant (old and new) people.

Verse 5: *“Wake up, those who are drunk, and weep; let all those who drink wine lament concerning the new wine, for it is going to be cut off from your mouth.”*

Wake up: One epoch of time is coming to an end, something else is about to begin.

Drunk: Those who are drunk with wine have a desire to find pleasure from the things of this world, rather than finding favour or joy in the L-rd. Joel is warning them to stop this.

Those who drink wine: They emphasize the things of this world.

New wine: The future wine – speaks of a future “joy”. Many people find much temporal satisfaction in the things of this world, but Joel is warning that a time is coming when they will no longer be able to find any happiness, any joy, or any pleasure in the things of this world.

Verse 6: *“For a nation goes up upon My land, strong and without number. Their teeth are like the teeth of a lion, and their molars are like the teeth of a powerful lion.”*

A nation: Usually, within this context, this is a group of people who have no covenantal relationship with G-d – i.e. They are an enemy (This enemy could be satanic in origin, or it could be G-d using evilness in order to accomplish His purpose).

Without number: They are so numerous that they cannot be counted.

Molars: Their largest teeth

Powerful lion: This nation is like a young, strong, angry lion.

Verse 7: *“I have set My vine to destruction, and My fig tree I am going to lay bare; I am going to cast the branch out and they are going to become white.”*

Note: The punishment that is coming (ultimately intended to bring repentance) is going to, mainly, be placed upon G-d's Old Covenant people. In the last days, Israel is going to be far removed from G-d, and He is not going to be pleased with them.

Vine...fig tree: A reference to G-d's Old Covenant people - the Jewish people, Israel (Hosea 9:10).

White: They are going to dry out. Instead of showing signs of life they will be white – like death. In the last days Israel should be viewed as heading toward spiritual and physical death.

Verse 8: *“Unto me, as a virgin bride, she will put on sackcloth because of the husband of her youth.”*

A virgin bride: A young, newlywed woman whose husband, before their marriage can be consummated, is struck dead. What the Scripture is saying is that because of spiritual death there is a separation between G-d the Father (the husband of Israel) and His people.

Verse 9: *“For the grain offering and drink offering have been cut off from the house of the L-rd. Let the priests mourn, those who are the servants of the L-rd.”*

Grain...Drink: Two different types of offerings (See Numbers 28:2-8). The drink offering, or libation, was an additional offering. It was made in order to seek G-d’s favour. People made these offerings as they wanted more from G-d.

Have been cut off: Either these offerings are not being done as the people are not interested in offering thanks to G-d anymore, or, because of His judgment, there is nothing to offer Him.

The priests: The leadership should have the greatest amount of discernment. They should be able to glean from the events what is going on, and should be able to read the spiritual condition of the people. G-d is calling the priests to lead by example – as they mourn, the people will be encouraged to mourn because of their state of affairs.

Verse 10: *“For the field is plundered, the ground will mourn because the grain has been robbed; the new wine will be withered up, the oil will be afflicted.”*

Plundered: This is a word used for something that has been stolen or taken away (G-d has taken away the harvest).

Oil: Olive oil

Note: Grain, wine and oil are often repeated in prophecy. If G-d is pleased with the people the harvest is good. If G-d is displeased with the people the harvest is poor or non-existent. The yield in the field reflected the spiritual condition of the people. When there was no yield it was an indication that the people were not worshiping G-d.

Verse 11: *“The farmers will be ashamed, and the vineyard workers are going to lament concerning the wheat and barley, for the harvest of the field has perished.”*

Wheat and barley: These are the spring crops. Their season concludes with the Feast of Shavuot or Pentecost (i.e. A time of celebration for G-d’s provision – Leviticus 23:15-22). This verse is telling us that there is not going to be any provision/outcome/harvest. The favour of G-d is not upon these people.

Verse 12: *“The vine is withered up, the figs are in the most miserable condition, the pomegranate and also the palm tree and the apple tree. All the trees of the field wither away, because the joy withered up from the sons of men.”*

The vine...the figs: See comment under Joel 1:7.

Withered up: In a state of decay, displaying a lack of fruitfulness.

Palm tree: Usually bears dates.

All the trees of the field: I.e. relates to the nations of the world. When Israel is not right with G-d neither are the nations right with Him. When Israel repents and gets right with G-d the trees of the field (the nations) clap, rejoice, praise and worship (Isaiah 55:12, see also Zechariah 8:23 – when Israel is in right relationship with G-d every Jew has the potential to influence at least ten Gentiles for good – Zechariah 8:23). This is not what is happening here.

Joy: A natural joy that cannot be contained. It is a joy that comes from the intimacy, blessings and presence of G-d with His people. This is absent.

Sons of men: All of humanity.

Verse 13: *“Gird yourselves and lament, O priests. Wail all servants of the altar. Come and lament in sackcloth, all servants of my G-d. For withheld from the house of your G-d is the grain offering and the drink offering.”*

Gird yourselves: Remove their normal clothes in order to put on sackcloth.

Servants of the altar: Referring to the priests and the Levites.

Note: The people are not interested in worshipping G-d, and nor do they desire to give thanks to Him. This tells us what the spiritual condition of Israel will be like in the last days.

Verse 14: *“Sanctify a fast. Proclaim a stop. That the elders may be gathered, and all the inhabitants of the land, to the house of the L-rd your G-d. And let them cry out to the L-rd.”*

Sanctify: Proclaim

A fast: Always accompanied by prayer - seeking G-d.

Stop: Often translated “assembly” but it literally means to stop i.e. whatever they were doing needed to be stopped.

Cry out: A word which means to raise their voices in great despair.

Verse 15: *“Alas for the day! For close is the day of the L-rd; as a thief from the Almighty, it will come.”*

Alas: This is a word of acknowledgment and discernment. The people have realized, based upon the spiritual condition of the land (lack of harvest or fruitfulness, inability to offer sacrifices because the land has yielded nothing), that, if there is no change, things are going to go from bad to worse.

The day: The day of the L-rd.

As a thief: An Old Testament reference for this idea of G-d's judgment coming as a thief in the night. Messiah does NOT come as a thief in the night for believers (1 Thessalonians 5:2-6).

Verse 16: *“For surely, before our eyes, the food has been cut off from the house of the L-rd, gladness and joy.”*

Note: Many rabbinical commentators say that the world is in such a situation that there is nothing physically available to even offer up to G-d. Others look at it differently and say, “G-d's not blessing, not giving, not ministering, not moving in the world,” (Spiritual sustenance has been removed and therefore there is a lack of gladness and joy)

Gladness and joy: Two words that relate to worship. They are not experiencing the outcome of worship because they are not worshipping G-d as He demands to be worshipped.

Verse 17: *“The seeds have become mouldy; they are all together with clods of dirt. The granaries are destroyed, and the silos are torn down, because all the grain has become withered.”*

The seeds have become mouldy: G-d caused the people to look at their situation.

They are all together with clods of dirt: They put their seeds into the ground and when they took them up they were unusable, there were clumps of dirt with them.

Verse 18: *“The animals groan, the cattle are confused for there is no pasture for them, and also the herds of the flock are ashamed.”*

Flock: Meaning sheep

Ashamed: It is not normal for animals to feel ashamed of how they look. These sheep will be ashamed because they are going to be so skinny, and their wool will not look good. They look like this because of a lack of true spiritual worship.

Verse 19: *“Unto the L-rd I will call, for fire is going to consume the good places in the wilderness, they are going to be like flames of fire to destroy all the trees of the field.”*

I will call: Joel is saying that in the midst of these things we need to call unto the L-rd. He is showing true leadership and prophetic discernment. When we see these things taking place we do not raise our fist at G-d – like the world does – but we need to realise the need to turn, in repentance, toward G-d, in order that there might be a restoration.

Verse 20: *“Also the animals of the field are going to pant unto You, because all the brooks of water have dried up. For fire has consumed the oasis in the wilderness.”*

Pant: The animals are going to lament as well.

Wilderness: Desert.

Note: G-d is not sending His judgement as a means to destroy His people. This judgement is a call to repentance, a call to save the people from eternal destruction (Proverbs 3:12, Hebrews 12:6-11).

Chapter 2

Part 1: Joel 2:1-14

In this chapter we see that, finally, the people understand what G-d wants to bring about in the nation of Israel. As the nation of Israel goes, so will go the world.

Verse 1: *“Sound the shofar in Zion, and shout in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble. For the day of the L-rd is coming, for it is close.”*

Shofar: The purpose of the shofar is to remind us of G-d’s provision for entering into His Kingdom. This is a proclamation of Kingdom provision and gives us Kingdom hope.

Zion: This word confirms that we are reading about the Kingdom of G-d.

Shout: This shout is a shout of power, a shout of assurance.

Holy mountain: The provision of G-d enables us to be able to worship Him in the place that He desires to be worshipped.

Tremble: Trembling implies that a change is going to take place. When we have seen truth, and have understood divine revelation, we are going to respond to it with seriousness.

Verse 2: *“For it is a day of darkness and thick darkness. A day of cloud and fog - that spreads forth as dawn upon the mountains. A mighty and strong people come; the like of whom has never been, nor will there ever be such after them - unto years of generations and generations.”*

Thick darkness: Exodus 10:21-23

As dawn upon the mountains: An image that speaks of the sun rising. The sun rises at a very rapid pace – especially as it rises over a mountain. This is revealing to us that G-d's judgment on the world is going to come quickly. We need to be ready.

Nor will there ever be such after them: This is a unique time. It is unlike anything that has ever happened before.

Verse 3: *“Before Him is a consuming fire, and after Him the flames will burn. It was like the Garden of Eden in the land before it, but afterward it will be like the desolation of the wilderness. Never will there be any escape because of it.”*

Note: No one will be able to escape this consuming wrath.

Verse 4: *“For it has the appearance of horses. Like swift horsemen that come forth and let them run.”*

Horsemen: Cavalry

Verse 5: *“For their sound is like chariots. Upon the tops of mountains they leap, like the sound of a flame of fire as it consumes hay. For the people are mighty and have been prepared for war.”*

Leap: Chariots descend very quickly down a mountain.

The people: This mighty army that is coming.

Verse 6: *“Before it the people will contort with pain, and every face will be gathered up.”*

Every face will be gathered up: Every face will lose its colour because of fear.

Verse 7: *“Like mighty men they run. Like men of warfare, they go up upon the wall of the city. Each man will run quickly in his way. They will not deviate from their track.”*

Will not deviate from their track: They will be on the path that they are meant to be on.

Note: This verse is portraying an image of a large and mighty army that is well disciplined, well equipped, and well prepared for battle. What Joel wants us to understand is that left to ourselves, without any help from G-d, there is utter hopelessness.

Verse 8: *“For each of them do not push one another a man from his way. Even if they shall fall upon their weapon it will have no effect.”*

Do not push: They all go in the proper path.

Fall upon their weapon: They receive what should be a death blow.

No effect: There is a supernatural quality to this army. This enemy cannot be killed (Much like the angel called “Destroyer” in Egypt – Exodus 12:23).

Verse 9: *“Into the city they rush. Upon the walls they run. Into the houses they go up. They go through the windows. They come as a thief.”*

As a thief: They do so in an undisturbed way. This again conveys to us the total sense of hopelessness. Weapons of warfare are not going to be able to stop or hurt this army. There is no way to defeat the enemy through human power.

Verse 10: *“For before him (this mighty army) the land trembles. The heavens and the earth they quake. The sun and the moon they turn to darkness, and the stars gather up their light.”*

Note: This is very similar to what we read in Matthew 24:29. This verse speaks about the signs of the second coming of Messiah (a very different event to the Blessed Hope/rapture).

Verse 11: *“And the L-rd will set forth His voice before His army. For great and abundant is His camp. For massive is the one that does His word. For great is the day of the L-rd, very awesome. Who is able to be sustained?”*

Massive: This word speaks about size and power. It speaks about a vast and powerful army - and G-d is directing them.

Who is able to be sustained: How can we be sustained against such an army? All of this has one purpose - for the people to experience a total hopelessness in relying upon themselves.

Note: This destruction is happening to those who are rebellious against G-d - both Jew and Gentile. The hope, however, is that in the midst of this Israel would understand that the only One that can provide deliverance for them is G-d.

Verse 12: *“And also now, declares the L-rd, turn unto Me with all your hearts - with fasting, with weeping, and with lamentation.”*

Note: When G-d's judgment, His wrath, comes upon this world the only hope people have for salvation is the mercy of G-d. It should be a life-changing experience for those of us who have experienced that mercy, through the blood of Messiah. It should make us people who are grateful, people who are thankful, and people who are serious about worship. Here, Israel was not worshipping G-d as they had been commanded to. Because of that they were not experiencing the blessing of G-d. This lack of worship gave the enemy a stronghold over them and ultimately they became the recipients of G-d's judgment.

Also: Even at a time like that - with all these things going on.

Now: Portrays a great sense of urgency.

Declares the L-rd: Rabbinical scholars tell us that this phrase should always be understood within a context of a promise. When G-d declares something, He is making a promise.

Turn: Repent.

Turn unto Me: Even at this dire time, this late hour, G-d is calling the people to repent, to fast, to weep, to lament. These last three verbs have to do with mourning.

Verse 13: *“Tear your hearts and not your garments. Turn to the L-rd your G-d, for He is gracious and merciful. Slow to anger and of abundant grace. He relents from doing evil.”*

Tear your hearts: There is a tradition that when someone you love dies you tear your clothes. G-d is telling these people that they need to tear their hearts -inward, rather than outward, changes needed to take place.

Slow to anger: G-d is willing to suffer long because He wants to provide grace and kindness to people. He does not run out of grace.

Grace: Through grace G-d makes the impossible a reality. Grace brings about restoration.

Relents: This word has to do with comfort. When people are grieving they find something that comforts them. This is what this word is alluding to. G-d's abundant grace has the potential to comfort us.

Evil: G-d does not do evil in the sense that we might think of evil. Humanly when we think of evil we relate it to something bad or ungodly. This word, however, speaks to that which was not G-d's original intent (i.e. It was not His perfect will from the beginning). G-d has a will for our lives, but sometimes, because of rebellion or sin, what G-d intended can no longer be. Evil is falling short of G-d's will for our lives. Evil is that which is outside of G-d's original plan.

Verse 14: *“Who knows whether He will return and be comforted, and leave after Him blessing -a grain offering and a drink offering for the L-rd your G-d?”*

He: G-d

Be comforted: Meaning - instead of casting off the people maybe He will return to them (Malachi 3:7). Comfort is a word of restoration - bringing about that which is impossible, and making it a reality.

A grain offering and a drink offering: The blessing that G-d may leave behind is the means whereby they would again be in a position to worship Him, with the offerings which He required. True blessing, true victory, is being able to worship G-d.

Chapter 2

Part 2: Joel 2:15-32

In this book we see G-d moving in a harsh, but mighty, way among His people. All of this is necessary in order that the good things that G-d wants to bring about might become a reality. We can take comfort that when we, as His people, go through difficult or hard times all things in the end will work out for His glory and for our edification - that we might be transformed into, literally, the people of G-d.

Verse 15: *“Sound the shofar in Zion, sanctify a fast and proclaim a stop.”*

Sound the shofar in Zion: This verse starts off in exactly the same way as Joel 2:1 did. It reveals to us that what took place in the first half of chapter 2 had a purpose and produced an outcome.

Note: In the first half of chapter 2 we saw very difficult things taking place. A powerful army rose up and brought about hardship and destruction. However, despite the difficulties, Israel was positioned to seek G-d's assistance, to cry out for help and mercy. The hardships softened up the people spiritually. It made them less stubborn and caused them to focus on the L-rd their G-d.

Stop: G-d wanted the people (everyone) to stop what they were doing, so that they were able to seek Him for revelation.

Verse 16: *“Assemble the people. Sanctify the congregation. Gather up the elders. Assemble those who are very young, those who are nursing. Let the groom go forth from his chamber, and the bride from her marriage canopy.”*

Congregation: This word speaks of a group of people.

Elders: The old ones.

Those who are nursing: The babies.

Let the groom go forth: This is a call for urgency. Right in the midst of the time that the wedding was going to take place G-d’s covenant was about to be established. It shows that there needs to be a change, an interruption, to the everyday activities of our lives.

Verse 17: *“Between the hall and the altar let the priests, the servants of the L-rd, weep. Let them say, ‘O L-rd, be gracious upon Your people. Do not allow Your inheritance to be set forth for disgrace, and do not let the nations rule over them. For why should the people (the Gentiles) be saying, ‘Where is their G-d?’”*

The hall: This is the place where the priests would prepare for service.

The altar: The place where the offerings would be given to G-d.

Priests: They were the mediators between G-d and man. A priest had a call and a responsibility to influence the people spiritually - so that they would be right before G-d.

Weep: They weep because they understand how inadequate they are in their ability to bring about a change in the people. Only G-d can bring about a transformation in the lives of people.

Gracious: This is a different word to grace. It is a word for having pity.

Nations: Those who have no covenantal relationship with G-d.

Verse 18: *“And the L-rd will be zealous for His land, and He is going to have pity upon His people.”*

Zealous for His land: This stands out in the text. Up to this point the spiritual condition of the people has been discussed, however, when things get down to the foundational level, now the land is being referred to. The land of Israel is inherently connected to the spiritual condition of the people (For example: When the people are not worshipping G-d the land becomes desolate. When the people get right with the L-rd the land goes through a transformation).

Verse 19: *“And the L-rd will answer, and He will say to His people, ‘Behold, I am sending to you the grain, and the new wine, and the oil. You will be satisfied by them. I will allow no more the disgrace of the nations to be placed upon you.”*

His people: G-d’s covenant with Israel has eternal ramifications.

I am sending to you: A change, or transformation, comes about because of repentance. The people are going to suffer in the last days (Jeremiah 30:7), but this suffering causes them to get serious about G-d.

Grain...wine...oil: These three things are prominent, prophetically, and are mentioned frequently. They are a spiritual indication of what G-d is up to (whether He is blessing or judging). When these things were removed from the people they suffered. When the people repented G-d, because of His covenantal faithfulness, restored them to the people.
Disgrace: Humiliation.

Note: The transition (from disgrace to glory) that Israel is going to go through in the last days is going to be a last days phenomena. This verse is another indication that what we are reading about is future and has not yet been fulfilled – this has never happened before in Israel’s history.

Verse 20: *“And the northern (army) I will put far from you. And I will cast him into a land that is desolate and dry. And his face I will place in the eastern sea, and his back into the western sea. And will go up his stench, a foul odour. For he has made himself great.”*

The northern (army): Most scholars believe that this is the northern army that is going to come and try to destroy the Jewish people and take control of Jerusalem.

Him: Referring to that army.

Face: This speaks of the very essence of someone.

Note: What G-d is going to do to this army is very reminiscent of what He did to Pharaoh’s army in Exodus 14:21-28.

His stench: A word related to decay. The enemy is going to be put to death. He is going to rot and decay.

Made himself great: The enemy exalted himself by believing that he could destroy the apple of G-d’s eye (Israel).

Verse 21: *“Do not fear O land, but rather rejoice and be glad. For the L-rd has done great things!”*

The L-rd has done great things!: The enemy thought he was great (v20), but in fact it was G-d who was the Great One.

Verse 22: *“And do not be afraid O animals of the field, for in the place of desolation shall go forth the grass. And it shall become an oasis in the desert. For the tree will lift up its fruit, and the fig and the vine will give forth their power.”*

In Joel 1:19-20 this oasis in the desert had been set on fire. It had become a place of shame and judgment. Now, because of repentance, fasting and prayer this same land is going to be made glorious.

Verse 23: *“And the children of Zion are going to be joyful. Rejoice in the L-rd your G-d, because He has given to you rain for righteousness. And He will bring down unto you the rain – both the early and latter rains in the first (month).”*

Zion: This word comes from a Hebrew word which means “to mark something as excellent”. G-d is going to take these people, who are so uninterested and far removed from Him, and He is going to turn them into His most excellent children. G-d is able to take miserable people, who have failed Him over and over again, and is able to turn them into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Rain: מורה This is a unique play on words in Hebrew. It is a word normally thought of as a “teacher”, but in this context it refers to a very distinct period of rain. Scripturally, rain is usually thought of as a blessing. When we understand and see things from G-d's perspective, and we see His blessings in our lives, it teaches us spiritual truth.

Rain for righteousness: The blessings that G-d is going to pour out are going to be a source of revelation to the people. When people understand this revelation, it is going to produce righteousness in their lives.

First (month): The context of G-d's blessing is set within the first month -Aviv or Nisan. This month was foundational to the Israelites (Exodus 12:2) and should remind us of Passover and, therefore, redemption (Exodus 12:2-7). It is only through redemption that a change can be brought about.

Verse 24: *“The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.”*

Wheat: Grain

Vats: There are two types of vats – a vat for pressing out grapes for wine, but also a vat for pressing out olives for oil.

Verse 25: *“And I will restore to you all the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust – My great army which I sent among you.”*

I will restore: שלמתי The root of this word in Hebrew is the word “Shalom”. G-d will bring all that they lost into a state of peace – into His will.

The locusts: Joel 1:4

Verse 26: *“And you will eat the food and you will be satisfied. And you will praise the name of the L-rd your G-d who has done marvellous things with you. And My people will never be ashamed again.”*

Note: There is a great similarity between this verse and Deuteronomy 8:10. In the last days we are going to see these Torah purposes being fulfilled.

Verse 27: *“And you shall know in the midst of Israel am I. I am the L-rd your G-d, there is no other. And there will no longer be any shame placed upon My people, never again.”*

In the midst of Israel am I: This word order reveals to us that G-d is not emphasizing Himself here, but He is emphasizing His location – where He is, i.e. in the midst of His people. This is a description of a Kingdom reality.

Never again: The fact that His people will never again experience shame is strongly emphasised.

Note: Joel 2:28-32 is chapter 3 in the Hebrew Bible. This section reveals to us how we can experience eternal glory without having to go through what has been described in the previous chapters - those difficult times to bring Israel to repentance, to bring her to a realization of how ungodly and far away from the L-rd she is. This section reminds the people of how they can escape this wrath (punishment, judgment) of G-d.

Verse 28: *“And it will be afterwards that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and the elders are going to dream dreams, and the young men are going to see visions.”*

Afterwards: “Afterwards” does not mean that this will happen after the things we have just read about. This phrase has to do with something that is going to happen at the end of time.

I will pour out My Spirit: G-d, by means of His Redeemer, is going to turn away sin from His people – after He has brought about redemption. The Spirit being poured out is an outcome of redemption. This (together with Joel 2:23’s reference to the first month) sets this passage within the context of redemption.

All flesh: This opportunity for redemption is not just for the Old Covenant people. Redemption is inclusive and available to everyone. G-d’s purpose, from the very beginning, was a desire to bless all flesh. He created Israel to do just that – to be a blessing to ALL the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3).

Sons and...daughters: This speaks of the next generation. The idea of the next generation is always tied to Kingdom expectation.

Prophecy: There is a connection between the moving of the Spirit and prophecy. This is why we should always emphasize Scriptural prophetic truth.

Verse 29: *“And upon all the male servants and upon all the female servants, in those days, I will pour out My Spirit.”*

Pour out My Spirit: Being baptised with the Holy Spirit is an outcome of redemption.

Verse 30: *“I will give you wonders in the heavens and the earth. Blood, fire, and pillars of smoke.”*

Note: G-d gives us these signs in order to help us to understand the timing of when these verses are going to be a reality.

Blood, fire, and pillars of smoke: These are going to be plagues that happen in the last days.

Verse 31: *“And the sun is going to turn to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the L-rd.”*

Sun ... turn to darkness, and the moon into blood (together with prophesy, dreams, visions, blood, fire, pillars of smoke etc – all happening around the same time period): G-d is going to send some very specific signs (that must happen) prior to the rapture, or our Blessed Hope, taking place. These signs will announce the coming of the rapture, but they will also announce that G-d’s powerful, awesome, terrifying judgement and wrath is on the horizon.
Awesome: Powerful judgment

Verse 32: *“And it shall be that **all** who will call upon the name of the L-rd will escape. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, just as the L-rd has said, and with the survivors whom the L-rd calls.”*

All: Jew or Gentile, male or female.

Mount Zion: A place of worship.

In Jerusalem there will be deliverance: Jerusalem is the place that G-d caused His name to dwell (2 Chronicles 6:6). This does not mean that if we are physically in Jerusalem on that day we are going to be delivered. This is talking about the attitude of our hearts. If we want to escape, be delivered or saved, then we need to be found in an attitude of surrender to Him (We need to call on His name).

The L-rd calls: All of these specific events (signs in the heavens and on the earth) are happening because G-d is calling people to respond to the name of the L-rd. We know from the New Testament that this is talking about calling on the name of Messiah Yeshua, our Redeemer (Romans 10:8-13, Acts 4:10-12)

Note: Blood was so foundational in the first Passover (the first exodus from Egypt), and so will blood be necessary for the second. Leaving Exodus was important, but just as important was the call to enter into the Promised land. The emphasis should not just be on leaving Egypt (leaving our lives of sin, figuratively speaking) but on the objective to enter into the Promised land. In that same way, (like the people in Egypt with the lamb) it is only through the blood of Messiah (our Lamb – John 1:29) that we have the hope of entering into the land – leaving the world, not from a sense of escapism but for the purpose of entering into the Kingdom of G-d.

True Redemption gives us a Kingdom focus and commitment.

Chapter 3

The end times are going to be difficult times, full of persecution and trouble. That is why Messiah spoke of them as sorrows or birth pains (Matthew 24:8). Birth pangs have a purpose though - in the end a child is born! This end time sorrow also leads to a glorious result – the establishment of G-d’s Kingdom! If we are truly excited about the purpose of G-d, to establish His kingdom, then we are going to be interested in discerning, understanding and being ready for those last days.

Note: In the Hebrew Bible this chapter is chapter 4.

Verse 1: *“For behold the days are coming, at that time, I will bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem.”*

The days are coming: If you are a good student of prophecy you will be aware that many end time events have already begun. We are not yet in those final seven years, spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 9:27), but things are moving fast.

Bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem: This is an end time event – G-d bringing back the Jewish people to His land! After nearly 2000 years of exile G-d has been gathering the Jewish people, from the places that they were scattered to, and He has been returning them to the land of Israel (This has escalated in the last 70 years).

Verse 2: *“I will gather all the nations, and I will bring them to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will be judged with him. They will see how I behave concerning My inheritance Israel, because you (those nations) have scattered them (The Jewish people) among the nations, and have divided up My land.”*

Gather all the nations: This re-establishing of the nation of Israel is going to be a catalyst for conflict. G-d is aware of this.

Valley of Jehoshaphat: This means: “G-d judges”. G-d is going to bring the rebellious and boastful nations to this location in order to pass judgement on them.

Note 1: This valley is also called the Jezreel Valley. In Hebrew “Jezreel” means “G-d will plant”. The context tells us that G-d is going to plant His people, once more, in the Land of Israel.

Note 2: This valley is also known by a third name: The valley of Megiddo or Armageddon.

I will be judged: At this place, the nations are going to understand the nature of G-d – that He is faithful, holy, truthful and righteous. G-d is going to be manifested to these people as He judges them there.

My inheritance: We can know a lot about G-d by how He handles and deals with this land and this people.

Divided up my land: We believe this is as yet unfulfilled. We can expect the Land of Israel to be divided up in the future. What we are going to see is that this is going to lay the foundation for a time, again, of Jewish persecution (Jeremiah 30:7).

Verse 3: *“And because of My people you cast lots for them. For a small boy you have given to the harlot, and a young Jewish girl you have sold for wine that you might drink.”*

A small boy: The context is of a small Jewish boy.

Given to the harlot: Meaning: you have paid the harlot with a young Jewish boy.

A young Jewish girl you have sold for wine: They are not going to see the significance of G-d's covenant people.

Verse 4: *“Also, what are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? I am going to do your recompense. And if you try to recompense Me, light and quick I will bring your recompense upon your head.”*

What are you to me: G-d had no relationship with these people because they had not entered into a covenant with Him.

Tyre and Sidon: Regions north of Israel. Both found in Lebanon today.

Philistia: פְּלִשְׁתִּים - This is the ancient Hebrew word where the term “Philistines” comes from. Today this word is applied to the Palestinians. These peoples lived to the east of Israel.

Do your recompense: What they have done will be paid out to them.

Try to recompense mM: If they try to get out of this G-d is going to respond.

Bring your recompense: What they have done.

Note: Those who bless Israel are going to be blessed. Those who curse Israel will be cursed (Genesis 12:3).

Verse 5: *“My silver and My gold you have taken, those good and desirable things, and have brought them into your sanctuaries.”*

Silver and ...gold: That which is precious to Him.

Brought them into your sanctuaries: They used the things which belonged to G-d for pagan purposes.

Verse 6: *“And the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem you have sold to the Europeans, on account that you might push them far from their borders.”*

You have sold: The enemies of G-d, those who stand in opposition to His will, think that they will be successful (ie that the will of G-d will not be brought about) if they remove the Jewish people from the land of Israel (move them outside of the borders that G-d had called them to live in). In Joel 3:1 G-d was bringing the people back to within their boundaries. In this verse the enemy is trying to reverse what G-d is doing. There is a battle going on in regard to where these people are going to dwell.

Verse 7: *“Behold, I am stirring them up from that place where you have sold them. And I will bring back your recompense upon your head.”*

Recompense: What you have done.

Verse 8: *“I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of Judah. And they will sell them to Sheba, and to a nation far away. For the L-rd G-d has spoken.”*

I will sell your sons: Based upon what they had done, in selling the Jewish people, G-d was going to do to them (Matthew 7:2)

Verse 9: *“Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Sanctify for war!’ Stir up the mighty ones, let them approach, let them go up.”*

Proclaim: This is a commandment.

Sanctify: Be ready, prepare themselves. If we want to be obedient to G-d then this is what we need to do.

War: Prophetically there is going to be war in Israel. Not just one war, but many wars in the last days (Matthew 24:6-7)

Verse 10: *“Beat your shovels into swords, and your pruning shears into spears. And let the weak say: ‘I am mighty.’”*

I am mighty: This is very similar to what we read in Zechariah 12:8. G-d is going to make those who are weak, small or have no resources mighty and strong. Why? Because they rely upon Him and seek His will. Although we might be physically weak and have very limited physical resources, when we are committed to the promises of G-d and speak spiritual truth we are going to be anointed with power. Make no mistake about it: war is coming, and we need to be ready.

Verse 11: *“Do this and come. For all the nations round about are going to be gathered there. And the L-rd is going to bring down their mighty ones.”*

Do this: i.e get ready.

Bring down: G-d is going to position them to be defeated.

Verse 12: *“Wake up! Go up among the nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat. For there I will return for judgment of all the nations round about.”*

Valley of Jehoshaphat: The place of G-d's judgment.

Return: Dwell or sit.

Verse 13: *“Send forth the sickle, for ripe is the harvest. Let them come down. And let the fullness of the wine vat, the wineries, overflow. For abundance is their wrath.”*

Note: In Revelation, John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used the imagery found in this verse (Revelation 14:17-20, Revelation 19:15)

Ripe is the harvest: The time is at hand to judge.

Abundance is their wrath: G-d looks at the evilness and it is great. His wrath will fall, in judgement, on this wickedness.

Verse 14: *“Great multitudes, great multitudes will be in the valley of decision (decree)! For close is the day of the L-rd in the valley where it has been determined.”*

Great multitudes: **הַמִּוֹנִים** This word in Hebrew is written in the plural. A multitude (in the singular) already means a great number of people, so, by putting it into the plural, in good Hebrew the word would become redundant. The way it is written, therefore, emphasizes it. Not only that, but this word is written twice! Double emphasis.

Valley of decision (decree): There is an unexpected name change. “Jehoshaphat” is not mentioned here. The root of the word used here (**חָרַץ**) is found, in a slightly different form, in Daniel 9:27 (**נִחְרָצָה**) where it tells us that destruction has been determined/decreed. The use of this word in Joel, therefore, reveals to us that G-d has decreed, determined, chiselled out, set in stone that great multitudes are going to gather together in this place.

Close: Near

Verse 15: *“The sun and the moon they turn to darkness, and the stars gather up their light.”*

Note: This verse repeats what was said in Joel 2:10. This is in contrast to what we read in Joel 2:31 (or Joel 3:4 in the Hebrew Bible). These verses are instructing us about two completely different events. This verse (and Joel 2:10) speaks prophetically about what is going to happen, to the sun and moon, before the second coming of Yeshua. Joel 2:31 (3:4 in the Hebrew), on the other hand, speaks of what is going to happen, to this same sun and moon, before our Blessed Hope (the rapture, Titus 2:13, 1Corinthians 15:51-55) takes place.

They turn to darkness: At the time of Messiah’s second coming the sky is going to be completely and utterly dark (Matthew 24:29-30). Darkness is going to fall over the whole earth (Exodus 12:29, at midnight, in darkness, the Angel of Death went forth and visited every home in Egypt and Goshen. Every household experienced death – either the death of a lamb or the death of a firstborn). It is at this time of darkness that the Light of the World will enter, for the second time, this planet called “Earth” (Isaiah 60:1-3)

Verse 16: *“And the L-rd from Zion is going to roar. And from Jerusalem He will give His voice. The heavens and the earth will quake. And the L-rd will be a shelter for His people, and a stronghold for the children of Israel.”*

The L-rd: The Lion of Judah (Genesis 49:9-10). The rabbis understand that this verse is a Messianic prophecy.

His voice: His voice causes the heavens and the earth to quake!

A stronghold for the children of Israel: There is a time for the Gentiles, but that time comes to an end (Luke 21:24, Romans 11:25). It is after this time has ended that G-d is going to turn His attention back to the lost sheep of Israel. This does not mean, at this late stage, that there is no longer any hope for the Gentiles. During the 10 plagues in Egypt more and more of the Egyptians (and other people groups living in Egypt at that time) approached G-d. This resulted in a mixed multitude leaving Egypt - not only the Jewish people (Exodus 12:38).

Note: This verse is set up poetically, and, as such, it displays parallelism. "Shelter" and "stronghold" are similar and therefore parallel. In the same way "His people" is directly related to "the children of Israel". G-d's people are the children of Israel.

Verse 17: *"And you shall know that I am the L-rd your G-d who dwells in Zion, My Holy mountain. And there shall be in Jerusalem holiness. And no longer will any foreign (gods) pass through her."*

Note: G-d is saying that in His Holy mountain, in the place of worship, there are going to be no other deities - other than Himself.

Verse 18: *"And it shall come about on that day that the mountains will drip with new wine. And upon the hills will go forth milk. And in all the streams and all the rivers of Judah will go forth water. A spring of water, from the house of the L-rd, will go forth and will give water to the river of Acacias."*

It shall come about: This is G-d's promise.

On that day: בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא Whenever we see this phrase it reveals to us that we are receiving revelation about that final judgment day. Although judgment day will be a day of condemnation for some it is also going to be a day of vindication for others.

Mountains: The high places of worship -These will no longer be places of idolatry, but people will go up in order to worship G-d.

New wine: Older wine is not necessarily better wine. Certain types of wine are ready to be drunk immediately. This is what this verse is referring to. In Joel 1:5 we were told that the new wine was cut off (judged). Here we see G-d restoring it to His people. Wine is symbolic of joy and happiness.

Milk: Synonymous with sustenance. G-d is going to sustain the people with His joy (Nehemiah 8:10). When we feel powerless, helpless and weak the problem is that we do not have enough joy. We need to start worshipping G-d (be grateful and praise Him) and He will give us His power.

Water: Synonymous with blessing.

House: Temple

Acacias: The Ark of the Covenant was made from acacia wood (Exodus 25:10). Housed within the Ark were the tablets containing the commandments of G-d. These commandments are a reminder of life or death, blessing or curse. G-d took the death and the curse in order that we might have life and blessing.

Verse 19: *“Egypt will be a place of desolation, and Edom will become a desolate wilderness, because of the violence that they did to the children of Judah. They spilled innocent blood in the land.”*

Egypt: Reminds us that this is set within a redemption context.

Edom: This is the first mention we have of Edom in this book of Joel. This is significant. Edom takes its most significant place, not in the past, but in the future. When Messiah returns one of the places He is going to specifically go to, in order to judge, is a place called Bosrah, in Edom (Isaiah 63:1-6).

The people of Edom are connected (related) to Esau (Genesis 25:29, Malachi 1:2-5). Esau was uninterested in his birth right. He was not interested in being a blessing to others.

Violence: (חַמָּסָה - pronounced “hamas”): This kind of violence refers to being violent for the sake and love of committing violence. The motivation for the people who commit this kind of violence is to delight in seeing the pain and suffering of others. This kind of violence is always satanic in nature.

Spilled: Shed

Verse 20: *“But Judah forever will dwell, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.”*

But: This is a word of contrast. Judah and Jerusalem are contrasted with Edom and Egypt.

Note: This is G-d’s promise.

Verse 21: *“I will cleanse them of their bloodguilt, whom I have not cleansed. The L-rd dwells in Zion.”*

Cleanse: Acquit or pardon.

Blood: In this context it speaks of shame and of impurity.

Cleanse them ...not cleansed: G-d gives two options here: He will either clean or He will not clean. In Egypt, through many signs, G-d gave all the people an opportunity to either be cleansed and forgiven or not to be cleansed and (therefore) not to be forgiven. This acquittal or “not acquittal” hinged on whether the people kept the Passover or not – whether they sought redemption or not.

This is how Joel's prophecy ends: Do you want to be cleansed? Choose redemption (the Lamb of G-d). Do you not want to be cleansed? Reject the Lamb of G-d. It’s that simple.