

THE STRUCTURE OF JOEL

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The book of Joel presents the student of the OT with difficult historical, critical and interpretive problems. The date of the book's composition, which will not concern us here, remains in doubt. Moreover, OT scholars have questioned the unity of Joel ever since doubts were raised by M. Vernes (1872), J. W. Rothstein (1896) and Bernhard Duhm (1911).¹ Scholars generally divided the work at the end of 2:27 and thus considered 1:1-2:27 to be Joel's account of a locust plague and 3:1-4:21 (2:28-3:21 English)² to be a later apocalyptic work. Some scholars—e.g., Soggin—continue to accept this analysis without question.³ Duhm considered Joel to be the author of the work only up to 2:17, and like other scholars he claimed to have discovered interpolations at various points in the book. 4:4-8 is widely regarded as an interpolation. Today, some scholars continue to regard Joel as two originally separate works in spite of the opposition of many to the bifurcation of the book.⁴ In particular H. W. Wolff has written a masterful defense of the unity of the book.⁵ But Brevard Childs, who appreciates and interacts with Wolff's work, accepts the critical division of Joel and regards its apparent unity as redactional rather than original.⁶

Another major problem in the book is interpretive. Specifically, does 2:1-11 (and 2:20) continue the description begun in chap. 1 of an historical locust plague, or does it shift to a description of an apocalyptic or human army that invades Judah on the "day of Yahweh"? Here, too, opinion is deeply divided. Calvin interpreted 2:1-11 as a description of a human enemy army.⁷ Keil, however, regarded it as a further treatment of the locust plague,⁸ and for the

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¹For an excellent survey of the history of this problem see L. C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 25-28.

²Henceforth all citations are to the versification of the Hebrew text.

³J. A. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 352.

⁴See Allen's summary (*Books* 26) and W. H. Schmidt, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1984) 283-284, and G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965) 428-429, as examples of scholars who hesitate to divide the text.

⁵H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 6-8.

⁶B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 389.

⁷J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 2. 43-55.

⁸C. F. Keil, *Joel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 189-196.

last hundred years scholars have generally concurred.⁹ Some view 2:1–11 as somehow transcending a simple account of a locust invasion since it heavily invokes traditional language about the day of Yahweh.¹⁰ Among recent commentators, Wolff is notable for his strong insistence that the passage describes a human army in apocalyptic terms.¹¹ Allen, however, interprets the text strictly as a locust invasion. Allen believes that Joel has used traditional eschatological terminology merely to add urgency to his message.¹²

Therefore the major critical and interpretive problems of this book are (1) whether the book is a unity or contains two separate works (and if the latter, where the book should be divided—at 2:17 or at 2:27), and (2) whether 2:1–11 should be regarded as a description of the locust plague of chap. 1 or of an invading army. As I will subsequently demonstrate, these two problems are interrelated.

As mentioned above, Wolff has defended the unity of the book. First, he proceeds from the assumption that chap. 2, although its language is inspired by the locust plague of chap. 1, has moved beyond that event and describes the invasion of an apocalyptic army. Thus to argue that chaps. 1–2 and chaps. 3–4 speak from fundamentally different viewpoints (the former historical, the latter apocalyptic) misses the movement in chap. 2 toward an apocalyptic day of Yahweh. Wolff sees a symmetry in the book in that the lament of 1:4–20 is answered by the promise of 2:21–27, the attack on Jerusalem (2:1–11) is balanced by the promises of 4:1–3 and 4:9–17, and the call to repentance (2:12–17) is balanced by the outpouring of the Spirit (chap. 3). Wolff has also identified a list of important catchwords that link chaps. 1 and 2 with chaps. 3 and 4. Like many others, Wolff regards 4:4–8 (as well as 4:18–21) as interpolative.¹³

Childs, as stated above, considers this structural unity to be redactional rather than evidence of a single author. Using his “canonical” approach, however, Childs is still able to interpret the book as a unity and relate the message of chaps. 1–2 to that of chaps. 3–4.¹⁴ This approach, it must be said, is open to criticism. For example, Goldingay finds fault with Childs for obscuring the historical contexts, discovered by source criticism, of OT passages. These very contexts, he says, allow us to hear the prophetic *kerygma*.¹⁵ Indeed, Childs

⁹E.g. J. A. Bewer, *Joel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1911) 92–104; O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper, 1965) 392; J. A. Thompson, “Joel,” in *IB*, 6. 743–747; “Joel’s Locusts in the Light of Near Eastern Parallels,” *JNES* 14 (January 1955) 52–55; W. Neil, “The Book of Joel,” in *IDB*, 2. 927; D. Fleer, “Exegesis of Joel 2:1–11,” *Restoration Quarterly* 26 (1983) 149–160.

¹⁰E.g. S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, reprint 1972) 308; Fohrer, *Introduction* 426–427; Schmidt, *Introduction* 285.

¹¹Wolff, *Joel* 41 ff.

¹²Allen, *Books* 64 ff.

¹³Wolff, *Joel* 6–8.

¹⁴Childs, *Introduction* 389–392.

¹⁵J. Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981) 130.

appears to be trying to have it both ways. If Joel 3–4 has come from a later hand and a separate historical context, then it must be interpreted separately from chaps. 1–2. Childs' contention that Joel 1:3 is a statement of "canonical intent" that a later editor should fashion and supplement the original text¹⁶ is highly doubtful. One cannot maintain the unity of the message of Joel while dividing the text itself.

Joel possesses a structural unity, however, more profound than that described by Wolff—which strongly argues against dividing the text. But before this structural unity can be described one must resolve the question of the meaning of 2:1–11.

As mentioned above, many scholars consider chap. 2 to be strictly an account of a locust invasion. There are several reasons for this, the most obvious being that it follows directly upon chap. 1 (which certainly concerns a real locust plague) and that 2:21–27 clearly concerns the healing of the land after the locust plague. In addition, various aspects of 2:1–11, 20 strongly resemble a locust plague. Scholars note that when locusts ravage a land they leave it looking as though it has been burned with fire (v 3),¹⁷ that the head of a locust looks like a horse's head (v 4),¹⁸ and that the noise of advancing locusts is similar to that of a cavalry charge or crackling flame (vv 4–5).¹⁹ These commentators have also noted how an advancing horde of locusts will scale walls, spread through a city, and enter houses like an invading army (vv 5–9).²⁰ They also cite Jerome's observation of the stench produced by a dead locust swarm (v 20).²¹ In addition, as H. G. M. Williamson says, "the invaders are compared to an attacking army, which suggests that they are not one in fact."²² Thus chap. 2 is interpreted simply as a real locust plague, a continuation of that described in chap. 1.

Nevertheless, we must regard this interpretation as inadequate and recognize that what we have in 2:1–11 is a human invading army described in terms of the apocalyptic day of Yahweh. A number of factors immediately call into doubt the notion that the enemy in 2:1–11, 20 is the locust swarm of chap. 1. Wolff has pointed out that the enemy of 2:1–11 is still approaching (note the predominance of imperfects in 2:4–5) whereas that of chap. 1, described by perfect-tense verbs, has already come. He also notes that locusts are not mentioned explicitly in 2:1–11 and that the prayer in 2:17 is for salvation from their low and weak position among the nations, not for deliverance from lo-

¹⁶Childs, *Introduction* 391.

¹⁷Bewer, *Joel* 96–97.

¹⁸Keil, *Joel* 192; Bewer, *Joel* 98.

¹⁹Bewer, *Joel* 98–99.

²⁰Allen, *Books* 71–73; Keil, *Joel* 193–194; Bewer, *Joel* 99–100.

²¹Allen, *Books* 89; Bewer, *Joel* 113.

²²H. G. M. Williamson, "Joel," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982), 2. 1079.

custs.²³ The very intensity of the apocalyptic language of this section (cf. 2:1–2, 10–11) moves beyond an historical locust invasion.

Several other important factors merit consideration as well. Verse 8 describes the Judahites trying to stop this enemy with ordinary weapons (*šelah*, meaning swords, spears, arrows and the like),²⁴ an absurd thing to do in the face of a locust swarm. Allen deals with this problem by translating v 8b: “They press headlong through the aqueduct without halting their course.”²⁵ With Rudolf, he says that *šelah* is here, as in Neh 3:15, not “weapon” but “Siloam.”²⁶ In that text, however, the word is clearly qualified by the construct *brkt*, “pool of.” There is no reason to assume that in Joel 2:8 *šlh* alone would be recognized as “Siloam” and not the more common “weapon.” In any case it is perfectly reasonable to interpret *wb’d hšlh yplw* (“They fall through the weapons”) as a picture of an attacking army plunging headlong through enemy fire. But it is scarcely natural to imagine a massive locust swarm, in moving on Jerusalem, advancing through the (underground) Siloam aqueduct.

Another important point is that in 2:20 a reason given for the destruction of this army is its great pride: “For it assailed to do great things.” Allen rightly compares this to God’s judgment on the Assyrians, “the rod of his anger,” who were themselves destroyed for their pride (Isa 10:5–11): “Let those whom God uses beware lest they turn their service into a platform for egotism!”²⁷ But even granting poetic license, we cannot imagine that Joel attributed such sins of the heart to locusts. Moreover, this same verse calls the army “the northerner.” Aside from the fact that locust plagues almost always came from the south and not the north, the “northerner” surely carries a special, apocalyptic meaning. The Assyrians were out of the north (Isa 14:31; Zeph 2:13), as were the Babylonians (Jer 6:1, 22). Sometimes the exact source of an enemy invader is not specified; they are simply said to be from the north (e.g. Jer 1:14–15). More importantly, the apocalyptic army of Gog is said to be from the north (Ezek 38:6, 15). To call a locust swarm “the northerner” simply goes beyond the rational limits of poetic or metaphoric language in that it could not but have confused the audience who naturally would have regarded “the northerner” to be a human army. It is as though a modern rabbi had used the word “fascist”: Such a term could only be used of a human, not a natural, enemy. Indeed, Bewer finds “northerner” to be “such an unusual and improbable term for a real locust swarm” that he can only excise it as the work of an interpolator.²⁸

Furthermore, the fact that much of the language of 2:4–9 strongly resembles what happens in a real locust invasion (a fact freely admitted here) in no

²³Wolff, *Joel* 41–42.

²⁴Cf. Job 33:18; 36:12; Neh 4:17; 2 Chr 23:10; 32:5.

²⁵Allen, *Books* 66.

²⁶Ibid., p. 72 n. 47.

²⁷Ibid., p. 90.

²⁸Bewer, *Joel* 51.

way invalidates interpreting the passage as a prediction of an apocalyptic army. The locust event has informed and shaped the language and imagery of 2:1–11. The locusts are the type corresponding to the apocalyptic antitype that will come on the day of Yahweh. Joel could not but describe the second invader in terms of the locust plague that he and his people had just experienced. To do otherwise would obscure the typological link existing between the two. OT typology is the seeing in one historical event (usually an event contemporary with the prophet) a pattern of God's way of working in history, so that in the contemporary event there is an image of another more terrible or more important work to come. Joel sees in the terror of a locust plague an image of an even more terrible enemy. Looking upon locusts, he sees ravenous locust-like men scaling the walls of his city. Wolff correctly sees here an anticipation of Rev 9:2–11.²⁹

Also, it is saying too much to claim that since the invader of 2:1–11 is said to be "like" (*kē-*) an army, it therefore is not one. The particle *kē-* has a meaning that BDB says older grammarians called the *Kaph veritatis*, which expresses a thing's "correspondence with the idea which it ought to realize."³⁰ Joel uses *kē-* in this way in 1:15, where "like destruction from the Almighty" can only mean that this is the "veritable, or ideal, destruction from Shaddai."³¹ The same usage is found in Num 11:1 and, more to the point, Ezek 26:10, which says that the Babylonian army will enter the breached city of Tyre "as (*kē-*) men enter a breached city," and Zech 14:3, which says that Yahweh will fight the nations "as (*kē-*) on a day when he fights." Also, since he has just seen the locust plague and used that as his typological descriptive basis for the coming, greater day of Yahweh, it is not unusual that Joel would describe this later army with the particle *kē-*. It is not going too far to say that while much of the description in 2:1–11 may be a description of the locust plague, the topic of the message is a future apocalyptic army.

This interpretation is confirmed by the sequence of events of 2:1–11. In contrast to chap. 1, which exclusively deals with the havoc wrought by the locusts on the agricultural economy and its effect on the lives of the people, the enemy of 2:1–11 comes over the hills, consumes, burns, or otherwise destroys all the crops in its path, advances in ranks upon the city, scales the wall, and so breaches the defenses of the city. The climax comes as the enemy rushes to and fro in the city and breaks into private homes. Although having swarms of the insects in the streets and homes was an irksome and horrible experience, what really mattered in an actual locust plague was the destruction of crops in the fields and vineyards. In 2:1–11, however, the taking of the city and the terrorizing of the citizens climaxes the passage and is in fact the goal of the

²⁹Wolff, *Joel* 42.

³⁰BDB 454.

³¹*Ibid.*

army. As 2:17 says, this army's objective is to rule.³²

Finally, if chap. 2 deals only with a locust plague, then chap. 4, in which the apocalyptic destruction of the nations is foretold, is scarcely intelligible. Why should the nations suffer such apocalyptic fury just because Judah had experienced a locust plague, an event they had nothing to do with? Is it simply because Judah became a byword? What link is there at all between chaps. 1–2 and chaps. 3–4? Is Joel such a zealous nationalist that the suffering of his people under any and every circumstance excites him to proclaim the wholesale destruction of nations who in no way caused their suffering? Aside from its unattractiveness this interpretation obscures the universalism present in 3:5, a text that is clearly part of the universalistic tradition of Isa 11:10–11; Mic 4:1–5. Therefore the interpretation of 2:1–11 as an apocalyptic army not only suits the passage itself but is the only reasonable interpretation in the context of the whole book.

Having established the interpretation of 2:1–11, 20, we can now approach the problem of the structure of the book. This problem is compounded by the fact that the text seems to have two centers—that is, it appears to be bifurcated at two separate places, viz. 2:17/18 and 2:27/3:1. In 2:18 an oracular response from Yahweh is introduced, and from that point on (in contrast to 1:1–2:17) the Judahites receive only God's favor. Thus one may say that 1:1–2:17 describes the woes that befall the Judahites and their repentance and that 2:18–4:21 is an oracle of forgiveness and grace from Yahweh.³³ On the other hand, at 2:27, with Yahweh's promise of the healing of the land, the discussion of the locust plague is concluded, and 3:1–4:21 deals only with the apocalyptic themes of the outpouring of the Spirit and judgment on the nations, leading some scholars to divide the text there.³⁴

³²So interpreting *limšol bām gōyim* with LXX, Vg, Syr, Tg in its natural sense: "that the nations should rule over them." Bewer, *Joel* 118, obtains the translation "a byword among the peoples" by emending the text. Allen, *Books* 77 n. 4, attempts to justify a translation similar to Bewer's without an emendation. He appeals to the meaning "against" for the preposition *bē-*. In the examples Allen cites, however, *bē-* is used with verbs, not with the noun *māšāl*. Allen's arguments do not stand. A literal translation of v 17c, treating *limšāl* as the noun *māšāl* and *bē-* as meaning "against," produces the unintelligible "Do not make your possession become a reproach, a byword against them—nations." It is absurd to say that Judah "became a byword against them," whoever "them" might refer to, and there is no justification for inserting "among the" before "nations" as Allen would do.

³³Thus Keil, *Joel* 171; Wolff, *Joel* 7; Driver, *Introduction* 307. Allen, *Books* 39–43, has developed this theory in great detail in an attempt to show that the strophic division of 1:2–20 parallels that of 2:1–17 and that, similarly, 2:18–3:5 parallels 4:1–21. Allen has made a number of significant contributions here (e.g. his analysis of the strophic division of 2:1–11), but at several points his theory is forced. For example, there is no convincing reason for dividing chap. 4 at the end of v 12 into two major sections. Allen, *Books* 107, says that the phrase "valley of Jehoshaphat" (vv 2, 12) marks off the limits of the first section, but this is most unlikely, especially since the "valley of the verdict" (v 14) is certainly the same valley. Verses 9–16 clearly belong together (they can of course be subdivided into smaller strophes), and the other major sections of chap. 4 are vv 1–3, 4–8, 17–21 (v 17 may belong with vv 9–16). Obviously Allen has divided chap. 4 where he has simply in order that it fit his theory that it parallels 2:18–3:5.

³⁴Thus Schmidt, *Introduction* 283; Soggin, *Introduction* 352; Thompson in *IB*, 6. 729; Neil in *IDB*, 2. 927. Bewer, *Joel* 49–56, also divides the text here, but he finds many apocalyptic interpolations in chaps. 1–2.

It is possible, however, to demonstrate a structure to the book of Joel that incorporates both "centers" as follows. Chapter 1 describes the locust plague that befell the Judahites. The prophet considers this to be the wrath of the day of Yahweh (1:15), but only in a limited sense, inasmuch as he here does not employ traditional apocalyptic terminology. In 2:1–11, however, he speaks of a greater, more terrible day of wrath to come, when the land is invaded by an apocalyptic army. Here he makes great use of apocalyptic language (2:1–2, 10–11). The transitional passage of the book, 2:12–17, follows. As mentioned above, 1:1–2:11 describes only God's fury against the Judahites, but 2:18 ff. is an oracular response from Yahweh in which they receive only favor and forgiveness. Thus 2:12–17 is transitional in that it is a call to repentance. This theme is anticipated in 1:5, 8, 11, 13–14, 19–20, but 2:12–17 is distinct in that here the possibility of forgiveness and salvation is extended on the basis of Yahweh's merciful character. In chap. 1, however, the people are only told to initiate cultic lamentation, no assurance being given that God will hear them.

Yahweh's oracular response appears in vv 18–19 with the words: "Then Yahweh became jealous for his land." Verse 19 also proleptically forecasts the healing of the land ("Behold, I am sending you grain") and salvation from the nations ("I will no longer make you to be scorned among the nations").

Verse 20 then describes the fate of the apocalyptic army, here called "the northerner." Just as a dead locust swarm produces a stench, so the corpses of this army will foul the land. A new section (vv 21–27), introduced by "Do not fear, land," tells of Yahweh's healing of the land after the locust plague. As such, the text has an obvious chiasmic structure to this point:

- A (chap. 1): Punishment: The locust plague
- B (2:1–11): Punishment: The apocalyptic army
- C (2:12–19): Transition: Repentance and (vv 18–19) introduction to Yahweh's oracular response
- B' (2:20): Forgiveness: The apocalyptic army destroyed
- A' (2:21–27): Forgiveness: The locust-ravaged land restored

Although one might object that 2:18–19 intrudes on the chiasm, these verses, as the introduction to an oracle that goes on to the end of the book, can hardly be expected to be part of the chiasmic scheme,³⁵ and the proleptic statement of God's merciful acts to come (2:19) is not unnatural. That 2:21–27 answers not to the entirety of 1:1–2:17 but only to chap. 1 is confirmed by the way 2:21–27, in abbreviated form, reverses the sequence of chap. 1. Thus 2:21–22, in which the parched condition of the land, the suffering of the animals, and the barrenness of the trees are healed, generally reverses the sequence of 1:18–20. Also 2:23–24 answers 1:5–17 (shortage of wine, oil and grain, and general scarcity produced by drought) in reverse order (cf. especially 2:23–24a to 1:11–12, 16–17; 2:24b to 1:5, 7, 10), and 2:25 exactly corresponds to 1:4. A benediction (2:26–27) answers the introductory lament-cry (1:2–3).

³⁵Cf. F. I. Andersen's analysis of the chiasmic structure of Gen 7:6–17, in which the critical line of v 16b ("the Lord shut the door") stands outside the chiasmic structure; *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 124–125.

The theme of the "day of Yahweh" is the typological catchword that binds the description of the locust plague of Joel's generation to the vision of the invading army. The prophet understands the locust plague neither as a natural calamity nor as an isolated work of God. The event is no less than the coming of the terrible day of Yahweh (1:15). However, the day of Yahweh is not an isolated day or event but a process that includes Jerusalem's suffering at the hands of a terrible invader (2:1 ff.), a universal prophetism, the outpouring of the Spirit of Yahweh on all his people (3:1-4; cf. Num 11:29), and the final judgment on God's enemies (4:14).

The last two major divisions of the book are chap. 3, in which the day of Yahweh is again described, yet not as a time of wrath but of salvation, the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit on all flesh, and chap. 4, in which the day of Yahweh (v 14) is God's day of vengeance on his enemies. A second chiasmic pattern thus emerges, one that interlocks with the first chiasm:

Introduction to Yahweh's response (2:18-19)

- A (2:20): Judgment: The apocalyptic army destroyed
 B (2:21-27): Grace: The land restored
 B' (3:1-5): Grace: The Spirit poured out
 A' (4:1-21): Judgment: The nations destroyed

Just as the first chiasm ends at the second "center" of the book (2:27/3:1), so the second chiasm begins after the first "center" (2:17/18-19). As such the two chiasms interlock.

The thematic link between 2:20 and 4:1-21 is obvious:³⁶ In both, the judgment on an enemy nation is described. There is also a link between the material prosperity of a bountiful harvest (2:21-27) and the spiritual benefits of the presence of the Spirit and the word of the Lord (3:1-5). Similarly, Amos describes the absence of the word of Yahweh as a famine and contrasts that condition to a future bounty (Amos 8:11-12; 9:13-15). A typological progression is evident from 2:21-27 to 3:1-5. The outpouring of the Spirit (3:1-2) answers the sending of rain in 2:23, and the cosmic display of Yahweh's power (3:3-4) corresponds to his mighty act of saving the Judahites from the locusts (2:25-26). Observe also how the nationalistic benediction of 2:27 is enlarged into a universalistic offer of salvation in 3:5.³⁷ Joel sees the healing of his land as a type of a distant, greater day of salvation for all who come to Yahweh.

The interlocking chiasmic construction of the book naturally has an impor-

³⁶One may object that the length of A (a single verse) does not correspond to that of A' (an entire chapter), but length is of no consequence. The situation is rather similar to that encountered in the form criticism of the Psalms where, for example, within a given psalm of lament or of thanksgiving certain formal elements may be only one verse or less while others may be much longer. Moreover the prophet seems to have wanted to conclude the book with a climactic account of God's judgment on the nations. It would have been awkward and premature to develop the theme at A, the beginning of the chiasm.

³⁷Rom 10:12-13. Allen, *Books* 104, and Wolff, *Joel* 69-70, incorrectly insist that Joel could not have foreseen this promise being extended to the Gentiles. Cf. the Zion song of Mic 4:1-5; see also Keil, *Joel* 215.

tant bearing on the question of its unity and history of composition. Moreover the consistent typological progression evident throughout the book also gives evidence for the book's integrity (the locusts typify the apocalyptic army; the healing of the land typifies the pouring out of the Spirit; the destruction of the "northerner," itself described in terms that recall the stench of a dead locust swarm, typifies the judgment on all nations; etc.). Structurally bound together by the interlocking chiasms and theologically bound together by the theme of the day of Yahweh typologically conceived of as coming about in several stages, the text does not readily yield itself to any theory of bifurcation. When these observations are combined with the linguistic evidence brought to light by Wolff, one can hardly continue to insist that this unity is only redactional.

There remains the question of whether 4:4-8 is original or, as many believe, is a later interpolation.³⁸ The chiasmic structure of the book has no bearing on this question. Nevertheless these verses do not constitute the severe aberration from Joel's normal theological literary method that some suppose they do. As mentioned above, Joel's theology is intensely typological. He does not perceive any present act of Yahweh's judgment or salvation as being unique and unrelated thematically to a later, ultimate work of Yahweh. Nor does he perceive of any future work as being without contemporary precedents. The day of Yahweh may come many times, but each one moves closer to the final consummation. So it is with 4:4-8. The crimes of Tyre, Sidon and the Philistines, and their punishments, are not isolated incidents but are examples of the hostility of the nations toward God's people. God's retribution toward these city-states and his final gathering of all nations at the valley of Jehoshaphat are inter-related, and as such there is no need to excise 4:4-8.

The book of Joel is a tightly bound theological unit. Yahweh's judgment, both in its present and apocalyptic forms, is transformed into salvation when his people accept his offer of grace and return to him with torn hearts and not just torn clothing (2:13). God not only meets his people's material needs (2:21-27) but gives his very self as well (3:1-5). He opens to all the security of Zion. This is the message of Joel.

³⁸E.g. Fohrer, *Introduction* 428; Schmidt, *Introduction* 284; Bewer, *Joel* 130.