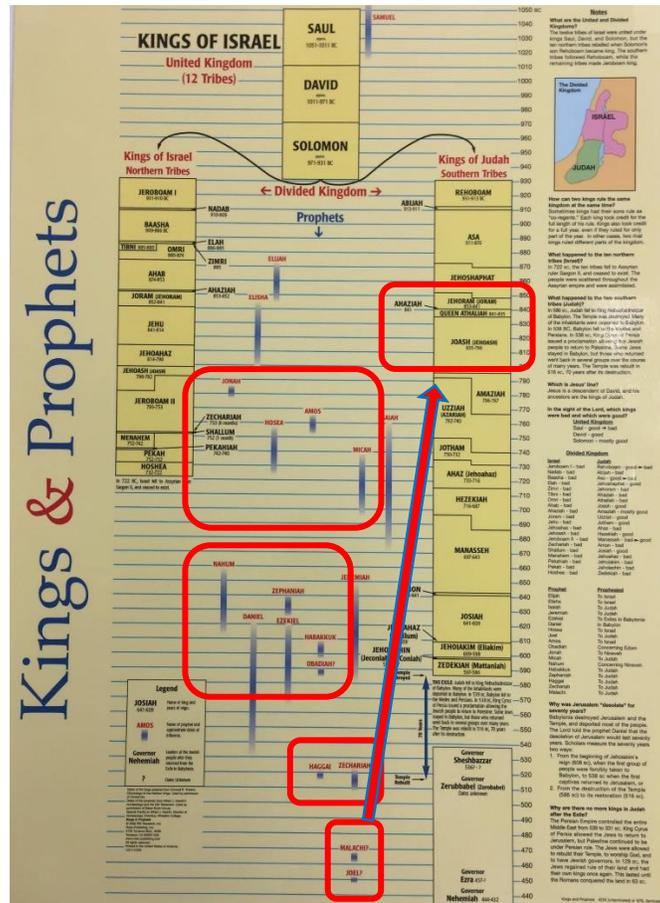


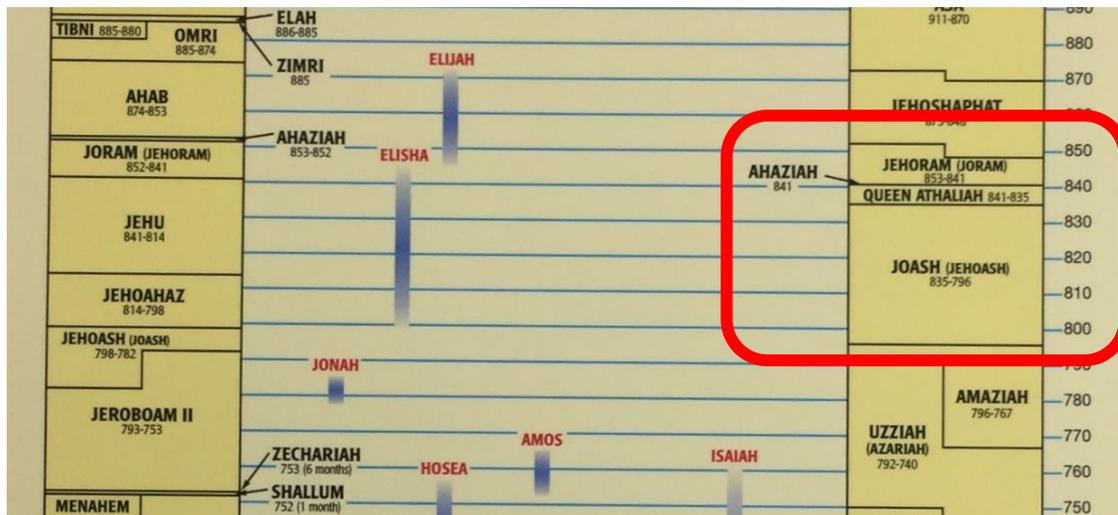
Book of Joel

Chapter 1:1-20

1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

Swindoll > Dating the writing of the book of Joel remains one of the most difficult tasks for Old Testament scholars because unlike most prophetic writers, Joel gave no explicit indication of his time period. In particular, Joel refrained from mentioning the current ruling kings. One of the most compelling arguments for dating the writing of the book of Joel explains this omission by suggesting the prophecy occurred in the aftermath of Judah's only ruling queen, Athaliah (d. 835 BC). Her young grandson, Joash, succeeded Athaliah upon her death. But because Joash was too young to rule, the priest Jehoida ruled in his place until he came of age. So if Joel prophesied during this caretaking period, it would make sense that he mentioned no official king. The book of Joel also makes ample mention of priests, temple rituals, and nations, such as Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom, that were prominent in the late ninth century BC. All of this points to a date of approximately 835 BC or soon after, making Joel one of the earliest writing prophets, as well as a contemporary of the prophet Elisha.





Guzik > 835 B.C. was a time of turmoil and transition in Judah, at the end of the reign of the Queen Mother Athaliah and the beginning of the reign of King Joash. Athaliah seized power at the sudden death in battle of her son Ahaziah, who only reigned one year (2 Kings 8:26, 2 Kings 11:1). Athaliah killed all her son's heirs, except for one who was hidden in the temple and escaped—one-year-old Josiah (2 Kings 11:3). Her six-year reign of terror ended in 835 B.C. when the High Priest Jehoiada overthrew Athaliah and set the seven-year-old Josiah on the throne (2 Kings 11:4–21). During her six years as queen over Judah, Athaliah reigned wickedly ... Athaliah raised her son Ahaziah to reign in the wicked pattern of Ahab, and even brought in Ahab's counselors to advise him (2 Chronicles 22:2–4).

Barnes > The symbolic blessing, which Amos takes from Joel at the close of his prophecy "the mountains shall drop with new wine, is found in these two prophets alone; and the language is the bolder and more peculiar, because the word "drop" is used of dropping from above, not of flowing down.

Drip > (Strong's) a primitive root; to ooze, i.e. distil gradually; by implication, to fall in drops; figuratively, to speak by inspiration

From Joel 3:18 > *And on that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine,*

From Amos 9:13 > *When the mountains will drip grape juice,*

² **Hear** this, you elders, and **listen**, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days, or in your fathers' days?

Hear ... Listen > (Utley) These two imperatives are often used together (cf. Gen. 4:23; Num. 23:18; Isa. 1:2; 32:9). They imply a hearing that results in action.

Tarnov > And since this existing calamity, caused by the insects named, has lasted longer and pressed more heavily than usual, he admonishes them to carry their memory back to the former days, and see whether anything of the kind ever happened naturally before; and if no example can be found, the prophet's advice is, that they should recognize this as the hand of God from heaven.

Wiersbe divides the book into three subsets:

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|------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. The Immediate “Day of the Lord” | The Locusts | Joel 1:1-20 (Today’s lesson) |
| 2. The Imminent “Day of the Lord” | The Invading Army | Joel 2:1-27 |
| 3. The Ultimate “Day of the Lord” | The Future | Jo3l 2:28 – 3:21 |

³ *Tell your sons about it, and have your sons tell their sons, and their sons the next generation.*

Barnes > points us to **Psalm 78:5-7** > *For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they were to teach them to their children, ⁶ So that the generation to come would know, the children yet to be born, that they would arise and tell them to their children, ⁷ So that they would put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but comply with His commandments,*

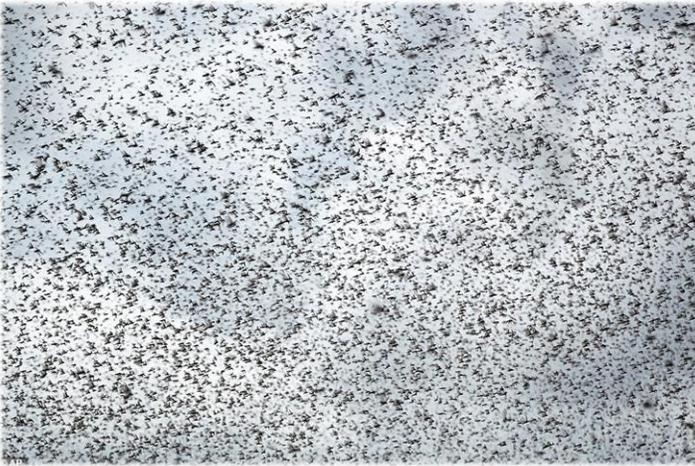
⁴ *What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; and what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; and what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.*

Constable > These words have led some interpreters to conclude that four types of locust are in view or that locusts in four stages of their maturity are. It seems better, however, to view the locusts as coming in waves, gnawing, swarming, creeping, and stripping as they devoured the vegetation.

J Vernon McGee > It is true that four different words are used here—the palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar. There are those who believe that this refers to four different types of insects, but there really is no basis for that. The palmerworm means “to gnaw off.” The word for locust in Hebrew is *arbeh* and it suggests that there are many of them and they are migratory—they move as a great swarm. The *cankercworm* means “to lick off,” and the *caterpillar* means “to devour or to consume.” These four words describe the locust and what he does.

Phillips > The English language cannot adequately convey the force of the original idioms, but they can be expressed as follows:

- Gnawer's remnant, swarmer eats
- Swarmer's remnant, devourer eats
- Devourer's remnant, consumer eats



⁵ ***Awake***, you heavy drinkers, and ***weep***; and ***wail***, all you wine drinkers, because of the ***sweet wine***, for it has been ***eliminated*** from your mouth.

Clarke > It is well known that the ruin among the vines by locusts prevents the vintage for several years after.

Awake ... Weep ... Wail > (Utley) The foolish people of the land are addressed in three imperatives

Precept Austin > *Wail* is a verb that means to howl with loud crying and shrill shouting sounds of sorrow, with a wailing tone. This verb is found only in the prophets and most often in the context of divine judgment, especially the coming *Day of the Lord*. Thus, it is not surprising that this verb is often used as an expression of mourning, distress or dismay! Joel uses this verb 3 times in this book (all in Joel 1) commanding wailing from the drunkards, the vine dressers and the priests.

Sweet wine > (Hubbard) *Sweet wine (asis)* was made by drying the grapes in the sun for a short time and then allowing the juice to ferment for five to seven days instead of the more usual nine.

MacArthur > As if building toward a crescendo, the prophet noted in the first stanza that the luxuries of life were withdrawn. In the second, the elements needed to worship were interrupted. In the third, the essentials for living were snatched away. To lose the enjoyment of wine was one thing; to no longer be able to outwardly worship God was another; but to have nothing to eat was the sentence of death!

Eliminated > (Strong's) to cut (off, down or asunder)

⁶ *For a nation has invaded my land, mighty and without number; **its teeth are the teeth of a lion**, and it has the jaws of a lioness.*

Its teeth are the teeth of a lion > Barnes relays some comments made by travelers who have seen the swarms > Whose teeth are the teeth of a lion - The teeth of the locust are said to be "*harder than stone.*" : "They appear to be created for a scourge; since to strength incredible for so small a creature, they add saw-like teeth admirably calculated to "eat up all the herbs in the land." Some near the Senegal, are described as "*quite brown, of the thickness and length of a finger, and armed with two jaws, toothed like a saw, and very powerful.*"

⁷ ***It has made my vine a waste and my fig tree a stump.** It has stripped them bare and hurled them away; their branches have become white.*

It has made my vine a waste and my fig tree a stump > (Humanity Development Library)

- They eat a wide range of food.
- Each one eats its own weight of food every day. This increases gradually from the small hoppers to the adults and reaches a maximum two or three weeks after fledging. Young swarms of this age cause the most severe damage.
- There are often so many of them together. We know that there can be at least 40 million and sometimes as many as 80 million in each square kilometre of swarm.
- One ton of locusts (a very small part of an average swarm) eats as much food in one day as about 10 elephants or 25 camels, or 2500 people.
- Locusts do ***damage by eating the leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, bark and growing points***, and also by breaking down trees because of their weight when they settle in masses, and sometimes even by spoiling plants with their excrete.
- An analysis of 2000 records of Desert Locust damage shows that:
 - **8%** of the damage is done by hoppers,
 - **69%** by immature and maturing swarms and
 - **23%** by mature swarms.

The **Septuagint** translates this verse as > *He has ruined my vine, and utterly broken my fig-trees: he has utterly searched my vine and cast it down; he has peeled its branches.*

⁸ *Wail like a virgin clothed with sackcloth for the groom of her youth.*

Wail > (Precept Austin) *Wail* is a verb meaning to lament or wail and is used only in Joel 1:8 in the Bible. Unlike the more general term for weeping found in Joel 1:5 (*bakah*), the verb *alah* specifically denotes crying born of deep sorrow.

Net Notes > The verb is feminine singular, raising a question concerning its intended antecedent. A plural verb would be expected here, the idea being that all the inhabitants of the land should grieve. Perhaps Joel is thinking specifically of the city of Jerusalem, albeit in a representative sense. The choice of the feminine singular verb form has probably been influenced to some extent by the allusion to the young widow in the simile of v. 8. Heb “*the husband of her youth.*” The woman described here may already be married, so the reference is to the death of a husband rather than a fiancé (a husband-to-be).

Virgin > (Clarke) *Virgin* is a very improper version here. The original is בתולה *bethulah*, which signifies a young woman or bride not a virgin, the proper Hebrew for which is עלמה *almah*.

⁹ *The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests mourn, the ministers of the LORD.*

Barnes > The meat offering and drink offering were part of every sacrifice. If the materials for these, the grain and wine, ceased, through locusts or drought or the wastings of war, the sacrifice must become mangled and imperfect.

The priests were to mourn for the defects of the sacrifice; they lost also their own subsistence, since the altar was, to them, in place of all other inheritance.

¹⁰ *The field is ruined, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine has dried up, fresh oil has failed.*

Keil and Delitzsch > The reason for this anxiety was the devastation of the field and land; 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.

Ruined > (Precept Austin) *ruined* means to spoil, to deal violently with, despoil, devastate, ruin, ravage, oppress, assault, lay waste. This verb is not found in the Pentateuch but predominantly in the prophets especially Jeremiah. (The author then relays multiple times the word is used to describe its usage as an evidence of the punishment of the Lord.)

¹¹ Be *ashamed*, you farm workers, *wail*, you vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

Ashamed > (Strong's) A primitive root; properly, to pale, i.e. By implication to be ashamed; also (by implication) to be disappointed or delayed

Wail > (Strong's) A primitive root; to howl (with a wailing tone) or yell (with a boisterous one)

¹² The vine has dried up and the fig tree has withered; the pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, all the trees of the field have dried up. Indeed, joy has dried up from the sons of mankind.

The vine has dried up and the fig tree has withered ... > (Keil and Delitzsch) The vine-growers had to mourn over the destruction of the vine and the choice fruit-trees (Joel 1:12), 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).

¹³ Put on sackcloth and mourn, you priests; wail, you ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God, for the grain offering and the drink offering have been withheld from the house of your God. Starvation and Drought

¹⁴ Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.

Put on sackcloth and mourn, you priests ... > (Barnes) 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.

Put on sackcloth ... Wail ... Come ... Spend ... Consecrate ... Proclaim ... Gather ... Cry out > (Precept Austin) Are all commands not suggestions. These repeated commands repeat earlier calls to other groups to mourn and wail. Joel is building from individuals to the priests and ultimately to the entire nation (v14) to be mourning and crying out to Jehovah. They call not for external actions but for internal contrition, confession and repentance. Here we reach the heart of the matter, for it was because of sin that God was punishing the nation.

Patterson > Hosea lamented that the people of the northern kingdom did not cry to the Lord from the heart in their assemblies but instead gathered themselves together only for the sake of their grain and new wine (Hos 7:14). Joel's observation is the same. The prophet is concerned that the people give a fervent cry for repentance and call on God for forgiveness, lest greater judgment descend on them

Hosea 7:14 > *And they do not cry to Me from their heart when they wail on their beds; for the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves,*

¹⁵ **Woe for the day!** For the **day of the LORD** is **near**, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Woe for the day > (Benson) The time in which God will inflict on us the punishments we have long deserved is now near; and if they be not averted by our repentance, they will fall upon us in an irresistible manner, and will end in our utter destruction, as coming from a God who is infinite in power, and terrible in his judgments.

The **Septuagint** translates the opening of this verse with > *Alas, Alas, Alas for the day!*

MacArthur > This is the first occurrence of the theme. Later in the book, the Day of the Lord (the occasion when God pours out His wrath on man) results in blessing and exoneration for God's people and judgment toward Gentiles, but here Joel directs the warning toward his own people.

Near > (Strong's) from *qarab*; near (in place, kindred or time) -- allied, approach, at hand,

¹⁶ *Has food not been cut off before our eyes, and joy and rejoicing from the house of our God?* ¹⁷ *The seeds have dried up under their shovels; the storehouses have become desolate, the grain silos are ruined, because the grain has dried up.* ¹⁸ *How the animals have groaned! The herds of cattle have wandered aimlessly because there is no pasture for them; even the flocks of sheep have suffered.*

Constable > Joel described the effects of the recent locust plague to encourage his hearers to gather for prayer and fasting. He suggested that similar conditions would accompany the day of the Lord that he had just predicted. The people's food supply and, therefore, their occasion for rejoicing, had disappeared. Drought had followed the denuding of the land by the locusts. Seeds were not germinating due to the lack of moisture. Barns and silos had become empty and had fallen into disrepair, and domesticated animals were starving. Grazing cattle wandered aimlessly looking for vegetation, and even the sheep, which require less grass, were going hungry.

¹⁹ To You, LORD, I ***cry out***; for fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame has burned up all the trees of the field. ²⁰ ***Even the animals of the field pant for You***; for the stream beds of water are dried up, And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Cry out > (Strong's) A primitive root (rather identical with *qara'* through the idea of accosting a person met); to call out to

Even the animals of the field pant for You > The **Septuagint** translation of this phrase can bring tears to your eyes > *And the cattle of the field have looked up (long for) to thee*

Pant > (Strong's) A primitive root; to long for ←

Patterson > (This Hebrew word) occurs in the OT only here and twice in Psalm 42:1[2], where also the idea of “ascending” is probably to be understood. This rare word is related to the Ethiopic word for “to ascend”. The full idea in the OT seems to be that of ascending with longing desire and strong impulse.