

UMJC Tikkun Leil Shavuot 2025
Joel 3: The Promise of the Father

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*Moreover, [Yeshua] has been exalted to the right hand of God;
has received from the Father what he promised, namely, the Ruach HaKodesh;
and has poured out this gift, which you are both seeing and hearing.
(Acts 2:33)*

**NOTE: In Christian Bibles, there is a different numbering of the verses (2:28-32).*

I. JOEL IN RELATION TO ACTS

- a. In Acts 2, Peter cites Joel 3 as a fulfillment of what they are experiencing: “No, this is what was spoken about through the prophet Yo’el ... (Acts 2:16).”
- b. Luke (Acts) quotes almost the entire chapter of Joel 3 (which is only 5 verses long).
 - i. Acts quotes Joel 3:1-5a

II. CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

- a. Joel is a short prophetic book.
 - i. Only 4 chapters long (3 chapters in Christian bibles).
- b. Joel is one of the 12 “minor prophets”
- c. The prophet Joel is unknown.
 - i. The book is not written as autobiographical (e.g., Jer.1:4: “*The word of the Lord came to me, saying ...*”)
- d. Lacks the usual setting in a particular era, or a reference to the reign of a particular king.
- e. Before launching into the prophecy, it simply begins with the words:

דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶלְיוֹאֵל בְּרַפְּתוֹאֵל:
The word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Petu’el. (Joel 1:1)

- f. Lacks other historic specificity to link it to any particular era.
- g. The prophetic word seems directed to Judah.
 - i. Multiple references to the Temple and priesthood.
- h. Most scholars date the Book of Joel to the Persian period (539-332 BCE), and most likely to c.400-350.
 - i. The reference to *Ionians* (Greeks) in 4:6, along with other reasons, support dating Joel to the Persian period.
 - ii. Joel also seems to show apocalyptic concerns, perhaps representing a transitional or hybrid work between prophetic and apocalyptic writings.

III. THEMES OF JOEL

- a. Two distinct themes:
 - i. 1:1-2:17 - The threat of Judgement (*The Day of the LORD*, יוֹם־יְהוָה)
 - ii. 2:18-4:21 - The promise of Restoration

IV. JOEL CHAPTER 3

- a. Keep in mind, the books of the Bible were not written with chapter and verse breaks. Those do not appear until the Middle Ages. So, you always have to consider the broader context.
 - i. This is especially important with short books. The shorter they are, the harder it becomes to break them up contextually.
- b. Joel 3 takes place within the broader context of Restoration and Renewal.
- c. Chapter 3 is a continuation of Chapter 2.

d. Joel 3:1-2

וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵיכֶן אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר וְנָבְאוּ בְנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיכֶם
זָקְנֵיכֶם חֲלֻמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוּן בְּחֻזֵּיכֶם חֲזִיּוֹת יֵרְאוּ:

*After that, I will pour out My spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy;
Your old men shall dream dreams,
And your young men shall see visions.¹*

וְגַם עַל־הָעֲבָדִים וְעַל־הַשִּׁפְחֹת בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ אֶת־רוּחִי:

*I will even pour out My spirit
Upon male and female slaves in those days.*

- i. “*After that, וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵיכֶן*” – meaning, “when the previous judgement and actions have taken pace,” meaning the “Day of the LORD” and the judgement of the earth.
 1. Can also be understood as “*In the End of Days*” = Messianic Era (Is.2:2; Micah 4:1).
- ii. “*I will pour out My spirit on all flesh*” – The promise of spiritual renewal is a common promise within the Israel’s restoration in biblical prophecy. For example, consider Ezekiel 39:29: “... *for I have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel,*” says Adonai ELOHIM.”
 1. “*My Spirit*” – meaning, prophetic ecstasy (as in Num.11:25; 1 Sam.10:6).²
- iii. *Sons, daughters, old men, young men, slaves* – Emphasizes that the Spirit will be poured out upon everyone.
 1. The fact that free people along with slaves will experience the same privilege is a social commentary that is remarkable in ancient times (=social equality).
- iv. *Prophecy, dreams, and visions* – The three recognized ways God communicates with humanity.
 1. God will reveal Himself to all in an intimate way.

¹ JPS, 1985 with my own slight modifications of the English translation in vv.2 and 5.

² A. Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets*. Soncino Books of the Bible. (London: Soncino Press, 1961), 72.

e. Joel 3:3

וְנִתְּתִי מִוִּפְתֵּי שָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ דָּם וָאֵשׁ וְתִמְרוֹת עָשָׁן:

I will show wonders in the sky and on earth:

Blood and fire and pillars of smoke;

- i. “*Blood and fire and pillars of smoke*” – Recalls the language of the plagues prior to the Exodus and the presence of the LORD that accompanied Israel in its desert wanderings (Ex.7-11 and 13:21).
 1. Why in the Passover Haggadah, prior to reciting the 10 Plagues: “I will set portents in the sky and on the earth; blood, fire and pillars of smoke.”³
 2. Abraham Cohen: “The approaching day of judgement will be heralded by apocalyptic portents. After the outpouring of the Divine spirit, blood will flow on the earth, accompanied by fire and columns of smoke – the ravages of war.”⁴

f. Joel 3:4

הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לְחֹשֶׁךְ וְהַיָּרֵחַ לְדָם
לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא:

The sun shall turn into darkness and the moon into blood,

Before the great and terrible Day of the LORD comes.

- i. Judgement of God upon the entire created order.
- ii. “*Before the great and terrible Day of the LORD*” – also in Malachi 3:23.

g. Joel 3:5

וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִמָּלֵט
כִּי בְהֶרֶץ-צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּהְיֶה פְּלִיטָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה
וּבְשָׂרִידִים אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה קָרָא:

But everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD shall escape.

*For there shall be a remnant on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, as the LORD promised;
among the survivors will be those whom the LORD has called.*

- i. “*those whom the LORD has called.*” – A. Cohen: “It would appear that the prophet has in mind the battles of Gog and Magog which, it was believed, would precede the advent of the Messiah. The picture of ‘the latter days’ is continued in the continuing chapter of the Book.”⁵
- ii. Acts 2 does not include the second part of v.5:
For there shall be a remnant on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, as the LORD promised; among the survivors will be those whom the LORD has called.

³ Ehud Ben Zvi, “Joel” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1161.

⁴ Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets*, 73.

⁵ Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets*, 73.

V. MIDRASH TEHILLIM 4.3

ר' יודן אמר לגרמיה. אמר בשר ודם יש לו פטרון, אם הגיע לו עת צרה, אינו נכנס לפניו פתאום, אלא בא ועומד על פתח פטרונו, וקורא לעבדו או לבן ביתו, והן אומרים לו פלוני עומד על הפתח. אבל הקב"ה אינו כן, הגיע לאדם עת צרה, לא יהי קורא לא למיכאל ולא לגבריאל, אלא קורא אותי ואני עונה, הדא הוא דכתיב (יואל ג ה) כל אשר יקרא בשם ה' ימלט:⁶

Rabbi Yudan now offered his own way of explaining the verse: *For what great nation is there that has a god so near to them as is the LORD our God whenever we call upon Him?* (Deut. 7:7) A person may have a patron,⁷ but when a time of trouble befalls him, he cannot just suddenly show up unannounced to his patron. Instead, he comes and stands at the patron's door and calls to a servant, or a member of his household, and they will tell him (the patron), "So-and-so is standing at the door." However, this is not how it is with the Holy One, blessed be He, "Whenever a time of trouble befalls a person, he does not need to call out to Michael nor to Gabriel, rather, let him call out to Me and I will answer him,"⁸ as it is written: *Whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered* (Joel 3:5).⁹

VI. CONCLUSION

- a. Joel 3 must be read within the context of Divine punishment and restoration.
- b. In Acts 2, Peter is specifically drawing upon the promise of restoration, and declares that it is being fulfilled by the events in Acts 2.
- c. Spiritual Renewal is for everyone.

⁶ Hebrew is based on: Solomon Buber, *Midrash Tehillim* (Jerusalem: Vagshal, 1977), 41.

⁷ Someone who gives financial or other support to a person, organization, cause, or activity.

⁸ Recalls Psalm 91:15 and, perhaps, Jeremiah 33:3.

⁹ Translation mine based on Buber's 1891 edition.