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**TOVA GANZEL,  
THE SHATTERED DREAM  
THE PROPHECIES OF JOEL: A BRIDGE BETWEEN  
EZEKIEL AND HAGGAI?**

## THE SHATTERED DREAM THE PROPHECIES OF JOEL: A BRIDGE BETWEEN EZEKIEL AND HAGGAI?

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### INTRODUCTION

The observation by Abraham ibn Ezra that “we have no way of establishing to which generation he [Joel] belonged and, according to the plain meaning, he is not the son of Samuel,”<sup>1</sup> perhaps encapsulates Ibn Ezra’s understanding that this prophet deliberately hid his era so as to make his prophecy timeless. But for modern scholarship, the inability to unequivocally determine the date or historical background of these oracles hampers comprehension of their prophetic message. Moreover, as evidenced by the widely varying proposals and suggested methods, dating Joel is no simple matter.

This article seeks to contribute to this challenging undertaking, notwithstanding the inherent critical difficulties. Many scholars assign Joel’s prophecies to the post-destruction period, mainly on the grounds of (a) the absence of references to a king ruling Judea, a priestly leadership, or the northern kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia; (b) the language of the book, including its use of earlier prophecies; (c) the denunciation of the slave trade; and (d) the punishments predicted for Egypt and Edom.<sup>2</sup> Within this general frame, this article proposes a dating that is usually ruled out by the assumption that “a functioning cult in Jerusalem excludes the period from 586 to 516, from the destruction of the temple by the Babylonian army to its restoration under the prophetic leadership of Haggai and Zechariah.”<sup>3</sup> This article proposes that the oracles in

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\* It is my pleasure to thank Professor Mark J. Boda both for his generosity in reading a draft of this article and for his incisive comments. I thank Dena Ordan not only for translating the article but also for her assistance in clarifying the argument. All the dates in this article are B.C.E. Where chapter and verse numbers appear without attribution to a specific work, they refer to Joel.

<sup>1</sup> Uriel Simon, *Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Two Commentaries on the Minor Prophets: An Annotated Critical Edition* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1989), 1:135 (Hebrew). See also Abarbanel’s commentary on Joel (Tel Aviv: Torah va-Da’at, 1960), 65.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, James L. Crenshaw, *Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 24C; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 21–29.

<sup>3</sup> Crenshaw, *Joel*, 25.

the book of Joel were uttered during the early restoration period in Judah, and more specifically, during the seventeen-year period between Cyrus's decree (538–537 BCE) and the prophecies of Haggai (520 BCE), in year two to Darius, before the dedication of the Second Temple.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this study views the book of Joel as partly filling the lacuna in prophetic literature between the latest prophecies of Ezekiel, dated to 570 BCE (Ezek 29:17), and the earliest prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, dated to year two of Darius (Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1). The scholarly proposal closest to this one assigns the book of Joel to the time of Haggai and Zechariah (separate from Malachi), ca. 520 BCE, based on the similarities between Joel and Haggai and Zechariah and their distance from Malachi, who is later.<sup>5</sup> A dating of Joel to these years is consistent with the linguistic criteria that guide most scholars to assign this book to the postexilic period.

The sole biblical description of the early restoration period, which recounts the building of the altar and the laying of the foundations of the temple, is the retrospective one in Ezra 1–4. The dating of the events described in these chapters is difficult, however. Thus the return described in Ezra 2–3 under the leadership of Zerubabel and Jeshua can be viewed as the immediate continuation of the return of Sheshbazzar (1:11), the chiefs of the clans of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites (1:5) just after the issuing of Cyrus's proclamation (Ezra 1). Alternately, it can be understood as testifying to a later wave of return, perhaps during Darius's reign. This raises additional questions: Was the temple founded and the altar dedicated between the initial return and the second return during the reign of Darius, or did these years pass without any initiation of building? In the latter instance, the events described in Ezra 3 took place at an even later date.<sup>6</sup> In either case, the returning priests, who had hoped to resume the sacrificial rites and the rebuilding of the temple, confronted a harsh reality and disappointment at the circumstances so far from their original expectations. Although it is not necessary to argue that the descriptions in

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<sup>4</sup> My working assumption is of the unity of the book of Joel. For a discussion of the unity of the text, see John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 5–14.

<sup>5</sup> See Jacob M. Myers, "Some Considerations Bearing on the Date of Joel," *ZAW* 74 (1962), 177–95.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the dating of these events in Ezra, see Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah Memoir and Its Earliest Readers* (BZAW, 348; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 301–3; H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC, 16; Waco, Texas: Word, 1985), 44–45; Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra Nehemiah* (AB, 14; New York: Doubleday, 1965), xxiv–xxvii. For a recent discussion of the redaction of Ezra and Nehemiah, see Mark J. Boda and Paul L. Redditt (eds.), *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric and Reader* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 17; Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2008).

Joel reflect a functioning altar in order to date him to the early restoration period, in my opinion this was indeed the case. The historical context for Joel proposed here contributes to the resolution of many puzzling elements in this book and highlights the close affinity between prophecy and its accompanying historical circumstances.

The many proposals for dating Joel's prophecies span five centuries<sup>7</sup>—ranging from the mid-ninth century, during the reign of Jehoram ben Ahab, to the rise of the Greeks in the fourth century BCE<sup>8</sup>—and testify to the lack of a single, agreed upon criterion

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<sup>7</sup> For discussions of the progressive interrelationships in the book that indicate its unity, see Willem S. Prinsloo, "The Unity of the Book of Joel," *ZAW* 104 (1992), 66–81; and more recently, Ernst R. Wendland, "Dramatic Rhetoric, Metaphoric Imagery, and Discourse Structure in Joel," *Journal for Semitics* 18 (2009), 205–39. For a synchronic reading of Joel, see James R. Linville, "The Day of Yahweh and the Mourning of Priests in Joel," Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis (eds.), *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets* (JSOTSup, 408; London: T & T Clark, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive survey of the possibilities for dating Joel by biblical scholars until 1974, see John Alexander Thompson, "The Date of Joel," Howard N. Bream, Ralph D. Heim, and Carey A. Moore (eds.), *A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers* (Gettysburg Theological Studies, 4; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 453–64. I cite in addition examples of rabbinic approaches, Hebrew studies, and several studies published after Thompson's article, and note some articles particularly relevant to my proposal.

For a mid-ninth century dating of Joel, during the reign of Yehoram ben Ahab, see Rashi (in addition to his identification of Joel as the "son of the prophet Samuel"), *Miqra'ot gedolot ha-ma'or: Nevi'im u-ketuvim* (Jerusalem: Hamaor Institute, 2000), 120; and Rabbi David Kimhi, *ibid.*, 121. The eighth-century dating, during the reign of Uzziah and Jeroboam ben Joash, relies on this book's placement between Hosea and Amos in the Minor Prophets, and see the recent article by Aaron Scharf, "The First Section of the Book of the Twelve Prophets: Hosea-Joel-Amos," *Interpretation* 61 (2007), 138–52. For attribution to the seventh century, during the reign of Manasseh, see Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, trans., *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology* (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1998), 176–78, n. 7; or during Manasseh's early reign or even at the end of Sennacherib's reign, see Yehezkel Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-emunah ba-yisra'elit* (Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik, 1960), 3:331–39; and recently, Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel* (New American Commentary, 19A; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 286–94. For a sixth-century dating, close to the time of the destruction, see in addition to Maries (n. 44 below), Ben Zion Luria, "The Date of Joel 4," *Bet Mikra* 32 (1986/87), 345–49 (in Hebrew). See also *Pesiq. Rab Kab.: Nabamu* 128b [Braude-Kapstein ed., 295], which includes Joel among the eight prophets who prophesied after the destruction of the Temple. Most scholars date Joel's oracles to the fifth or fourth centuries, based on linguistic links to other biblical texts assigned to this period. See, for example, Benjamin Uffenheimer, "Qavim le-ofi ha-sifrutu u-le-reqa ha-

for determining the date of this book. However, the weight of scholarly opinion assigns Joel's oracles to the post-exilic period, and my proposal is in line with this premise. Previous discussions that placed Joel in the Second Temple period have relied largely on analysis of the linguistic affinities between Joel and Ezekiel and between Joel and Haggai. Based on the outcome of their linguistic arguments,<sup>9</sup> the present discussion draws more heavily on topical affinities in order to suggest a closer dating for the book of Joel. Part of the difficulty in unequivocally establishing the date and background of Joel derives from the text itself and its remarkable lack of clarity.

I suggest that serious consideration be given to the possibility that Joel was among the returning exiles, or if he remained in the land of Israel that he was exposed to the oracles delivered by Ezekiel in Babylonia.<sup>10</sup> Placement of Joel in the early restoration period—between the setting up of the altar but before the rebuilding of the temple—has the ability to explain much of the problematic content of the oracles in Joel 1–2. One question relates to identification of what reality underlies the description of the priests performing the altar service as engaging in mourning customs; also, what prevented the offering of the grain and libation sacrifices? Certainly, if viewed against the background of actual difficulties the returnees confronted, this description has a heightened effect. Another question is the unusual absence of moral or social upbraiding in the call for repentance and of any rationale to which to attribute the people's fate. Furthermore, I wish to suggest that the difficult, future-directed apocalyptic oracles of Joel 3–4, which also call for immediate, radical change, perhaps reflect a narrow time slot, during which—in the context of the return of the exiles, their desire to sacrifice on an active altar, and to realize the license to rebuild the temple—there were expectations for fulfillment of the

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histori shel Yoel 1–2,” H. Gevanyahu, B. Z. Luria, and Y. Melman (eds.), *Sefer Biram: Ma'amarim be-heqer ha-tanakh* (Pirumei ha-hevrah le-heqer hamiqra be-yisrael, 2; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1946), 108–15, who dates Joel after the destruction and before the fifth-century expulsion of the Edomites. For a dating to the late sixth century, after the rebuilding and dedication of the Temple (516), during the reign of Darius but before Ezra (458), see Mordechai Cogan, *Joel* (Mikra le-yisra'el; Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1994), 10; and Myers, “Date of Joel,” 177–95; and in his wake Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 19–25, among many others. For a fifth-century dating, during Ezra and Nehemiah's day but before the rise of the Greeks, see Crenshaw, *Joel*, 21–29. For the late fourth century (400 the earliest), see John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 14–18. Barton concludes that the second part of Joel is later than the first and is a secondary addition.

<sup>9</sup> See n. 45 below.

<sup>10</sup> See n. 44 below.

unique restoration prophecies delivered by Ezekiel in Babylonia, hopes abandoned with the rebuilding of the temple in Haggai and Zechariah's day. In the context of an article, and given Joel's textual complexity, this understanding cannot be applied to specific verses but to broader issues alone.

**THE EARLY RESTORATION PERIOD: BETWEEN THE  
ERECTION OF THE ALTAR (537 BCE) AND THE  
BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE (520 BCE)**

If correct, the dating of Joel suggested here provides a modicum of missing data regarding a period for which few biblical sources exist for the history of the Jews in either Judea or Babylonia. The sole extant prophecies that can be specifically dated to the post-destruction era, but before the completion of the Second Temple, are found in Ezek 29:17 (570 BCE), Jer 52:31–34 (561 BCE), Hag 1:1–14 (520 BCE), in addition to 2 Chr 36:22–23 and the retrospective description of events after Cyrus' decree in Ezra 1–4, 6.<sup>11</sup> Nor are there significant finds from extrabiblical sources;<sup>12</sup> there is no inscriptional evidence and only one document dated to the fifth year of Cambyses' reign has been discovered in Israel, at Tel Mikhmoret.<sup>13</sup> For Babylonia, we have a collection of economic documents, which shed scant light on the situation of the Jews living in the Āl-Yahudu ("Town of Judah").<sup>14</sup> The sole description of this period is the retrospective one in Ezra 1–3, which includes:

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<sup>11</sup> This is in addition to Deutero-Isaiah's oracles (which many scholars also date to the post-fall years and before the restoration), Lamentations, and some psalms (125, 137).

<sup>12</sup> On archeological finds in Jerusalem and its environs, see, among others, Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup, 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 134–62.

<sup>13</sup> I thank Hanan Eshel for bringing this to my attention. See Yosef Porath, Samuel M. Paley, and Robert R. Stieglitz, "Mikhmoret, Tel," *NEAEHL* 3:1044.

<sup>14</sup> On the socio-economic situation of the Jews of Babylonia under Babylonian and Persian rule in light of Akkadian and cuneiform legal-economic documents, see Ran Zadok, *The Jews in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods according to the Babylonian Sources* (Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel, 3; Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1979); idem, *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia* (Publications of the Diaspora Research Institute, 151; Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research Institute, Tel Aviv University, 2002). For their familial setting and acclimation to Babylonian culture in light of two Akkadian documents from Āl-Yahudu, see K. Abraham, "An Inheritance Division among Judeans in Babylonia from the Early Persian Period," M. Lubetski (ed.), *New Seals and Inscriptions, Hebrew, Idumean, and Cuneiform* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 206–21.

Cyrus's decree (1:1–5); a description of the returnees (1:5–6); the goods they brought with them (1:7–11); the list of returnees (2:1–70); the setting up of the altar, the offering of sacrifices, and celebration of Sukkot (3:1–7), the appointment of Levites, the laying of the foundations of the temple;<sup>15</sup> and finally the rejoicing mixed with the tears of the elderly when the cornerstone was laid (3:8–13).<sup>16</sup>

What delayed the building of the temple for fifteen years is not entirely clear; the extant sources ascribe it mainly to the interference of the “adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” (Ezra 4:1–5) and to the people’s preference for staying at home in face of the many difficulties (Hag 1:2, 9). The cessation of building after the erection of the altar and the laying of the temple’s foundations created a new reality in Judea—a reality that sparked the returnees to question whether God’s presence was among them.<sup>17</sup> We can perhaps also identify echoes of this complex reality in the oracles of Haggai and Zechariah which describe the period preceding the completion of the building of the temple, during which sacrifices were offered without a temple (Hag 2:4; Zech 7:3). Note that, in light of the present discussion, these verses are seen as describing the situation after the erection of the altar and not the cultic situation during the fifty years after the destruction of the First Temple.<sup>18</sup> A late echo of this complex situation appears in *b. Zebah*. 62a: “Three prophets went up with them from the Exile: one testified to them about [the dimensions of] the altar, another testified to them about the site of the altar; and the third testified to them that they could sacrifice even though there was no temple.”

Neither archeological finds nor literary sources provide a precise picture of the situation in Judea for the interim period between

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<sup>15</sup> As noted earlier, a first group of returnees, which included priests and Levites, came back immediately following the proclamation of Cyrus under the leadership of Sheshbazzar. It is impossible to determine the year of the return under the leadership of Zerubabel and Jeshua. As Jacob M. Myers notes, “The year of the writer’s seventh month [Ezra 3:1] is not specified” (*Ezra Nehemiah* [AB, 14; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965], 26).

<sup>16</sup> To this we can perhaps add Ezra 4:1–6. On the reliability of the description in Ezra, see Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century BCE* (Studies in Biblical Literature; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 120–22 and n. 249 there. On the historicity of the description in Ezra 1–3 in light of the correspondence and scroll found in Darius’ library in Ezra 5–6, see Sarah Japhet, “The Temple in the Restoration Period: Reality and Ideology,” *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah: Collected Studies on the Restoration Period* (Winona Lake: Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 183–214.

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the returnees’ sense of misery and perception that the divine presence was absent from their efforts (Ezra 3:7) was heightened by the fact that it was through Cyrus’s agency that they undertook their activity in Jerusalem.

<sup>18</sup> See Japhet, “The Temple in the Restoration Period,” 217–18.

the initial return under Cyrus and later between the setting up of the altar and the building of the temple, and little is known of the immediate historical reality the returnees encountered on their return.<sup>19</sup> We can speak in general terms only of the situation in the sixth century BCE, from the destruction of the temple to recovery under Persian rule. After the Babylonian army devastated Judea, its much-reduced population underwent socio-cultural disintegration,<sup>20</sup> as attested by the description in Jer 43:2–6, which receives backing from archeological evidence<sup>21</sup> and from the absence of Greek ceramics in Judea during that period.

While the local pottery cannot...be securely dated to the period under discussion, there is Greek pottery that is traditionally dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century with great precision. This pottery, however, is practically absent from the Land of Israel, even along the coast. This seems to be of importance both to the reality “on the ground” at the time discussed and to the dating of local pottery.... The lack of imports seems to show that the region was insignificant in the prospering 6<sup>th</sup> century maritime trade. When compared with the situation in other parts of the Mediterranean, and especially in the Phoenician colonies in the west, the disappearance of imported pottery from the southern Levant is indicative not only of the devastation of the region, but also of the Babylonian policy and economic interests in the region.<sup>22</sup>

Judean autonomy was restricted under Persian rule,<sup>23</sup> and the population did not increase significantly.<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding scho-

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<sup>19</sup> On the Persian regime and its corollaries based on extrabiblical sources, including the granting of the right to the Judeans to return to their land and build a temple during that period, see Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 112–25 and the bibliography there, 112–13.

<sup>20</sup> Recently, the question of the population of Judea has been the subject of widespread discussion. See Avraham Faust, “Social and Cultural Changes in Judah during the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE,” *UF* 36 (2004), 157–76; Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 152–54. I lean toward Faust’s stance that the entire land was devastated, including the territory of Benjamin, and that the population was greatly reduced.

<sup>21</sup> This description of historical reality is in harmony with the opinion that the destruction sparked an overall crisis for the Judeans who remained behind. See the recent treatment by Avraham Faust, “Judah in the Sixth Century BCE: Continuity or Break?” *Eretz-Israel* 29 (2009), 339–47 (Hebrew).

<sup>22</sup> Avraham Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Desolation* (forthcoming). I thank him for allowing me access to this material prior to its publication.

<sup>23</sup> See John W. Betlyon, “Neo-Babylonian Operations Other than War,” Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans*



larly disagreement regarding the scope of settlement during those years, it was undoubtedly small;<sup>25</sup> those who remained in Judea saw themselves as a leaderless remnant (Jer 44) and underwent the “rapid social disintegration, so typical of post collapse societies.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, we must take into account that the new settlement was slow in gaining stability and that, even after its recovery during the Persian period, Judea never returned to its pre-destruction dimensions. The period has been characterized as “one of great settlement decline.”<sup>27</sup> Little is known of the identity of the returnees,<sup>28</sup> or of the authority granted the Jewish leadership by the Persian regime (even though we know their names).<sup>29</sup> Nor do the biblical sources provide a clear picture of this period; the biblical data which cover the destruction period and, later, that of Haggai and Zechariah, leave the early restoration period in obscurity.

### JOEL 1–2 AS A REFLECTION OF HISTORICAL REALITY

Nonetheless, the available data suggest that the reality confronted by the returnees was difficult. The terrible drought noted in Haggai (1:6), with its concomitant lack of livelihood and economic straits, was no transient event. Precipitating causes for lack of livelihood are not just low rainfall but also the failure to cultivate crops. If Joel belonged to the early restoration period, his prophecies yield some missing data for this period; the harsh disappointment of the returnees and the severe drought and locust invasion<sup>30</sup> that de-

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*in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 263–83.

<sup>24</sup> See Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 25B; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), xxxvi; and more recently, Avraham Faust, “Settlement Dynamics and Demographic Fluctuations in Judah from the Late Iron Age to the Hellenistic Period and the Archaeology of Persian-Period Yehud,” Yigal Levin (ed.), *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbors in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (Library of Second Temple Studies, 65; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 34–46.

<sup>25</sup> Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup, 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 134ff. and the bibliography there.

<sup>26</sup> Faust, “Settlement Dynamics,” 43–46; idem, “Social and Cultural Changes in Judah,” 170.

<sup>27</sup> Faust, “Settlement Dynamics,” 44–51.

<sup>28</sup> See John Kessler, “Persia’s Loyal Yahwists: Power Identity and Ethnicity in Achaemenid Yehud,” Oded Lipschitz and Manfred Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 91–121.

<sup>29</sup> See Joel Weinberg, *The Citizen-Temple Community* (trans. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher; JSOTSup, 151; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> On the question of whether the descriptions of the locusts are to be understood as referring to real locusts, as symbolizing the enemy forces, or as apocalyptic imagery signifying the day of the Lord, see Ronald A.

stroyed the crops and perhaps took place close to the uttering of the oracle (chs. 1–2).<sup>31</sup> Joel’s references to animal husbandry are not surprising, notwithstanding the lack of pasturage (1:18) and water (1:20) to which Joel refers. This because the returnees reportedly brought many animals with them (Ezra 2:66–67); and, second, because animal husbandry, which requires more land per family than crops, often expands when the population is sparse and more profitable avenues cannot be exploited. Also, as animal husbandry requires less water than crops, it is suitable for drought periods.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Joel’s descriptions of the drought and other natural forces that destroy crops but not animals complement Haggai’s descriptions of the situation a decade later.

As the returning exiles interpreted it, this difficult situation was a sign that God was not with them (Joel 2:17; Hag 1:13; 2:5); he therefore neither sends rain nor blesses the crops. This gave rise in turn to feelings of ambivalence among the returnees, especially against the background of the choice many made not to return but to settle in Babylonia (Ezra 1:6). Thus the description in Ezra (3:8–13) especially, “Many of the priests and Levites and the chiefs of the clans, the old men who had seen the first house, wept loudly at the sight of the founding of this house. Many others shouted joyously at the top of their voices” (v. 12), supplements Joel’s portrayal of the disappointment and sorrow of the priests who cry, notwithstanding the spark of hope inherent in this situation (1:13–20, 2:12–18). Perhaps this is also the source of the uncertainty regarding the question of whether “YHWH’s day” had arrived,<sup>33</sup> as

Simkins, “God, History, and the Natural World in the Book of Joel,” *CBQ* 55 (1993), 435–52. For the opinion that they reflect reality, see Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 298–301. The question of to what extent this prophecy reflects reality has implications for our understanding of the verses; thus, for example, some interpret the mention of a “wall” in 2:7, 9 as evidence that the book is late, dating to Nehemiah’s day, when the wall was built around Jerusalem. See Thompson, “Date of Joel,” 459. I find it likely that the description relates to a real locust invasion that took place shortly before Joel uttered his prophecy.

<sup>31</sup> An interesting parallel, which indicates that this was a known cyclical reality, comes from letters found in Afghanistan and published by Shaul Shaked, *La satrape de Bactriane et son gouverneur: Documents araméens du *ix* s. avant notre ère provenant de Bactriane*, Pierre Briant (ed.), Conférence données au Collège de France, 14 et 21 mai 2003; Paris: De Boccard, 2004), 15–27. There the locust invasion caused delays to the extent that they were forced to ask for an extension of the building permit granted by the Persian ruler—perhaps something similar occurred in ancient Israel. This finding is in addition to those listed by Crenshaw, *Joel*, 91–94.

<sup>32</sup> See Avraham Faust, “Judah, Philistia, and the Mediterranean World: Reconstructing the Economic System of the Seventh Century B.C.E.,” *BASOR* 338 (2005), 76–77.

<sup>33</sup> James L. Crenshaw, “Freeing the Imagination: The Conclusion to the Book of Joel,” Yehoshua Gitay (ed.), *Prophecy and the Prophets: The*

Crenshaw aptly sums up: “Experience failed to confirm traditional belief. Faced with discontinuity between confessional statements about divine compassion and the circumstances confronting Judeans in his day, Joel strove valiantly to hold together competing views of YHWH’s nature.”<sup>34</sup>

The presence of a sanctified precinct in Jerusalem in the early restoration period is pivotal to this proposal, as it testifies to the ramifications of the difficult situation in Judea during the years in question. On the one hand, there were priests and Levites among the returnees,<sup>35</sup> and the returnees subsequently erected the altar; apparently, daily sacrifices were reinstated even though the temple had not yet been rebuilt. In the wake of Cyrus’s proclamation, the returnees had high hopes for the swift completion of its building. But the reality was far removed from their dream,<sup>36</sup> both because of the severe drought (Joel 1:20; Hag 1:10–11) and locust invasion (Joel 1:1–8) that devoured all the crops (1:11–12), and later because of the interference of the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin and the people of the land (Ezra 4:1–5). The lack of crops impacted directly on the cult, preventing the offering of plant sacrifices: “The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of YHWH. The priests mourn[,] the ministers of YHWH” (1:9), even though those who minister to the altar and the altar are ready to receive these offerings (1:13). The stress on the grain and drink offerings is not fortuitous. Animal sacrifices perhaps continued to be offered on the altar, because the returnees brought cattle (Ezra 1:6) and other animals with them (Ezra 2:66–67), whereas the components of the grain and drink offerings—grain (1:4, 11), grapes (1:5, 12), and oil (1:10)—were unavailable locally. That is why the ministering priests, who stood in the holiest precinct in the temple, wept at its disgrace and sought to obviate the shame of an altar without the grain and drink offerings and of a temple<sup>37</sup> whose building was interrupted: “Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep,<sup>38</sup> Let them say, ‘Spare

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*Diversity of Contemporary Issues in Scholarship* (SemeiaSt; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 134.

<sup>34</sup>James L. Crenshaw, “Who Knows What YHWH Will Do? The Character of God in the Book of Joel,” Astrid B. Beck, et al. (eds.), *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 196.

<sup>35</sup>For the identity and actions of the returnees after Cyrus’ proclamation, see above.

<sup>36</sup>Sacrifices are mentioned in 1:13, 2:14 does not imply that they were offered daily. See Barton, *Joel and Obadiab*, 15 and n. 31 there.

<sup>37</sup>The place where the priests stood is called *בית ה'* in 1:10, 13, 14, which is similar to Jer 41:5, in which the site of the destroyed temple is also called *בית ה'*.

<sup>38</sup>According to the prevailing explanation, the specification of place—“between the vestibule and the altar” implies that the vestibule is standing.

your people, YHWH, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations” (2:17).<sup>39</sup>

A reality in which there is a functioning altar but no grain or drink offerings because of crop unavailability also sheds light on the subsequent proclamation of mourning customs by the priests and elders: “Put on sackcloth and lament, priests; wail, ministers of the altar. Come, pass the night in sackcloth, ministers of my God! For grain and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. Sanctify a fast, call an assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of YHWH your God, and cry out to YHWH” (1:13–14). This appeal to God and the call for a fast by the priests (1:13–14) and the people (2:12) is the outcome of the loss of the joyous hope with which they initiated the building of the house of God (Ezra 3:11) given the halting of construction and the inability to offer certain sacrifices: “Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God?” (1:16). Joel requests of God that the current situation not remain in force (2:14), that there be pasturage and water for animals (1:17–20).<sup>40</sup> The divine response promises agricultural bounty—granaries filled with grain, vats with wine and oil—and rejoicing by the people of Zion (2:18–27). Wine, oil, and grain (in that order) are the main crops in this region and their production requires a self-supporting agricultural society.<sup>41</sup> Thus, as interpreted here, Joel 1–2 reflects the difficult conditions the returnees faced and the promised divine rectification of their situation through assurances of agricultural bounty.<sup>42</sup>

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It is also possible that this marked the coordinates for the place where the priests stood and does not necessarily imply that the vestibule has been constructed, but rather that its foundations have been laid and perhaps somewhat more. Cf. Ezek 8:16: “Then he brought me to the inner court of the house of YHWH, and there at the entrance of YHWH’s temple, between the porch and the altar,” which indicates the importance of this locus, the site of the most heinous idolatry in the most sacred spot in the courtyard. Although the Temple was still standing when Ezekiel uttered this oracle, it is perhaps not by chance that the priests in Joel chose the very spot that, some fifty years earlier, Ezekiel had identified as the one where the acts that caused the destruction were carried out.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of this verse’s paronomasia and its centrality to an understanding of Joel’s prophetic message, see James R. Linville, “Letting the ‘Bi-word’ Rule in Joel 2:17,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 5 (2004–5), available at <http://www.jhsonline.org> and reprinted in E. Ben Zvi (ed.), *Perspectives in Hebrew Scriptures II: Comprising the Contents of Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, vol. 5* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 13–24.

<sup>40</sup> There is perhaps affinity between the mules in Ezra 2:66 and the פִּרְדוֹת in Joel 1:17.

<sup>41</sup> Faust, “Judah, Philistia, and the Mediterranean World,” 77.

<sup>42</sup> On the uniqueness of the appeal to God in Joel and the divine response in Joel 1–2, see Katherine M. Hayes, “When None Repents, Earth Laments: The Chorus of Lament in Jeremiah and Joel,” Mark J. Boda,

**JOEL 3–4: BETWEEN EZEKIEL AND HAGGAI<sup>43</sup>**

If the opening chapters of Joel reflect the historical-economic circumstances of the returnees, the oracles concentrated mainly in chapters 3–4 are future oriented. Despite their complexity, consideration of their content shows that some are unique. At the same time, their affinities to Ezekiel’s prophecies can support my proposed placement of Joel in the restoration period, in line with Maries’ earlier suggestion on this basis that Joel prophesied immediately post-destruction to the remnant in Jerusalem that was not exiled to Babylonia.<sup>44</sup>

As noted, others have studied the linguistic and stylistic similarities between Joel and Ezekiel, and between Joel and Haggai.<sup>45</sup> Before continuing to a thematic treatment, I first note some of these lexical affinities: (1) the abbreviated expression נשא (Hag 2:19, instead of עשה or נתן) appears only there and in Ezekiel (17:8; 36:8) and Joel (2:22); (2) the description of YHWH’s day in Joel and Haggai, which exhibits a unique linguistic affinity: Joel’s remarks וְרָעְשׁוּ שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ וְהָיָה מִחֶסֶד לְעַמּוֹ (4:16) are in harmony with Haggai’s וְאֵי מִרְעִישׁ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ . . . וּבִמְקוֹם הַזֶּה אֶתֵּן שְׁלוֹם (2:6, 9); and (3) the shared expressions אכול ושבוע (Hag 1:6; Joel 2:26), and אדמה, דגן, תירוש, יצהר (Joel 1:10; Hag 1:11).

In subjecting their prophecies to a thematic examination, I again propose reconsideration of the possibility that Joel’s oracles can be understood as reflecting the narrow timespan during which, despite their tribulations, hope remained that the Second Temple would incorporate aspects of the restoration oracles delivered by Ezekiel in Babylonia during the post-destruction years (Ezek 34–48). Perhaps the historical developments that gradually destroyed the hope of immediate realization of these oracles (as reflected in

Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline (eds.), *Seeking the Favor of God* (SBLEJL, 21; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 1:134–37.

<sup>43</sup> Recent important studies have examined the Minor Prophets as a whole. See, for example, James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (SBLSymS, 15; Atlanta: SBL, 2000). Nogalski even identifies Joel as “a ‘literary anchor’ for the book of the Twelve” (ibid., 91–109) and notes additional links between Joel and Haggai (ibid., 102–3). Although Nogalski’s discussion is mainly synchronic in nature, my proposed dating for Joel, which belongs to the range to which the Twelve are usually assigned—from the eighth-century Assyrian period into the postexilic Persian period—perhaps adds a diachronic dimension to his discussion.

<sup>44</sup> L. Maries, “Propos de recentes études sur Joel,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 37 (1950), 121–24.

<sup>45</sup> For a comprehensive study of Joel in the broad biblical context, see, for example, Judah Jungman, *Yoel ben Petu’el: Iyyun sifrutî bi-nevu’otav* (Jerusalem: Avivim, 1991), 76–77, 104–7. Regarding linguistic affinities between Joel and Haggai, the restricted corpora of these books (38 verses in Haggai and 73 in Joel) make it difficult to reach definitive conclusions.

Hag 1–2)<sup>46</sup> over the space of a few years contributed to the more reserved nature of Joel’s oracles of a better future.<sup>47</sup> Thematically, what unites these three prophets are the returnees’ aspirations for the building of the Second Temple, especially their desire to perceive the divine presence in their midst. As it appears in these three prophets, this vision has five shared features: the outpouring of the divine spirit on the people; YHWH’s day; the spring that will issue from the house of the Lord; the distancing of foreigners from the divine dwelling place; and, finally, the prophecy that God will dwell in God’s city.<sup>48</sup> Although the discussion here focuses on comparison of the expectations for restoration in these prophets, there are, however, additional thematic affinities: descriptions of YHWH’s day—for Israel in Joel 4:16, for Egypt in Ezek 30:2; the reference to the contents of the temple using **מחמדי/מחמד עיניים הטובים** (Joel 4:5; Ezek 24:25); and apocalyptic descriptions (Joel 1:16, 3:3; Ezek 30:2–3, 38:22).<sup>49</sup>

The possibility of evaluating evidence of textual links has been the subject of much study. Leonard proposes the following principles as methodological guidelines: (1) shared language; (2) shared language that is rare or distinctive; (3) shared language in similar contexts; (4) shared phrases; and (5) the accumulation of shared language. He notes in addition that shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology or a shared form. When texts meet these shared criteria, we can presume a textual relationship.<sup>50</sup> In the case of the texts considered here, the first two themes exhibit strong linguistic as well as thematic links between the three prophets, and for the first theme, even share a unique, rare combination. The motif of water emerging from the temple is not found in other prophets, and finally the themes of the distancing of foreigners and God’s return to the city are shared. Although the strongest links, according to these suggested criteria, are found only

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<sup>46</sup> While there is also room for comparison of the oracles of the future in Joel and Haggai with those of Zechariah this is not the place for a comprehensive discussion.

<sup>47</sup> On the restrained character of Joel’s oracles of the future as compared to other prophets, see Crenshaw, “Freeing the Imagination,” 137–43.

<sup>48</sup> A similar trend is reflected in Mark Boda’s diachronic comparison of Zech 11:4–16 to Ezek 34 and 37 (“Reading between the Lines: Zechariah 11.4–16 in its Literary Contexts,” Mark J. Boda and Michael H. Floyd (eds.), *Bringing Out the Treasure: Innerbiblical Allusion in Zechariah 9–14* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 284–88.

<sup>49</sup> For the dating of Ezekiel’s post-destruction prophecies, see Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 22; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 12–17.

<sup>50</sup> For a recent study of textual links, see Jeffery M. Leonard, “Identifying Inner-biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case,” *JBL* 127 (2008), 241–65.

for the first two examples, it appears that taken as a whole it can be argued that these prophetic texts exhibit textual links.

#### **OUTPOURING OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT ON THE PEOPLE**

One feature of post-exilic oracles is the expectation of the absence of prophets as intermediaries of the divine word. In Joel, this is reflected by the unique shift predicted following Joel's oracle on agricultural plenty, which says, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh (אֲשַׁפּוּד אֶת רוּחִי עַל כָּל בָּשָׂר); your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions; and even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit (אֲשַׁפּוּד אֶת רוּחִי)" (3:1–2). These verses detailing the future outpouring of the divine spirit on the entire people, so that all will be prophets, indirectly explain the absence of prophets as future intermediaries between the people and the divine word; the people as a whole are granted the gift of prophecy.<sup>51</sup>

Although not explicitly found elsewhere in prophetic literature, the seeds of this promise can be identified in the conclusion of Ezekiel's restoration oracles, prior to his vision of the future temple: "I will never again hide my face from them, for I will pour out My spirit upon the House of Israel (שִׁפְכֵתִי אֶת רוּחִי עַל בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל)—declares the Lord God" (Ezek 39:29). In a certain sense then the starting point for Joel's oracle of the future is where Ezekiel's left off—in his prophecy Joel affirms and even elaborates on the pouring out of the divine spirit found in Ezekiel's oracle and the two prophets share the use of the unique, rare combination of the words שִׁפְכַת הַרוּחַ. In Haggai's oracles, on the other hand, God affirms the existence of the divine presence in the midst of God's people; in this passage, however, the divine spirit is not poured out on the people, but stands among them: "'And be strong, all you people of the land.'—Oracle of Yahweh. 'Indeed I will be with you.'—Oracle of Yahweh of Hosts... 'My spirit is standing in your midst (וְרוּחִי עֹמֵד בְּתוֹכְכֶם); do not fear'" (Hag 2:4–5).<sup>52</sup>

Another possible echo of the premise that prophetic abilities will be bestowed on the entire people comes from the fact that Ezra, like Joel, nowhere mentions contemporary prophets as intermediaries for conveying the word of God.<sup>53</sup> This is grounded in the assumption that the leadership function of Zerubabel and Joshua differed from that of the First Temple prophets. In Ezra,

<sup>51</sup> See Crenshaw, *Joel*, 165–66; Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 94–96.

<sup>52</sup> Elie Assis, "A Disputed Temple (Haggai 2,1–9)," *ZAW* 120 (2008), 590–91. The continuation of the verse "the word/covenant I made with you when you came out of Egypt" requires separate discussion of the relationship between Haggai and Exodus.

<sup>53</sup> Note that Ezra uses similar terminology to describe those who returned to Judea in the wake of Cyrus's decree: "all whose spirit had been roused by God" (Ezra 1:5).

priests and Levites preside over the temple dedication ceremony and approach God through musical instruments and praise (Ezra 3:8–11). In Joel as well, the priests and elders appeal to God directly (1:13–14). To this we must add the absence of explicit mention of “king” in the verses treating the future leader, which serves to date the book. As in Ezra 1–3 the functionaries include the elders (Joel 1:2, 14) and the inhabitants of the land (Joel 1:2), and the priests, the ministers of God (Joel 1:9, 13; 2:17).<sup>54</sup> In Ezekiel as well the post of the king as a leader is missing.<sup>55</sup> In the context of the proposed, narrow timeframe for their prophecies this could be interpreted as proof of the expected imminent realization of these oracles.<sup>56</sup>

### YHWH'S DAY

Another feature found in Joel, Ezekiel, and Haggai are the literary parallels between the descriptions of the upheavals that accompany YHWH's day, a motif shared by many prophets. Thus, in the context of the punishment of the nations and the granting of peace to Israel,<sup>57</sup> both Joel and Haggai mention the shaking of the earth and the heavens, using similar terminology: לְפָנָיו רָגְזָה אֶרֶץ רָעְשׂוּ שָׁמַיִם (2:10); (2:10); רָעְשׂוּ שָׁמַיִם וְאֶרֶץ וְהָיָה מַחְסָה לְעַמּוֹ (4:16). Compare to Haggai's וְאֲנִי מְרַעֵשׂ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ ... וּבְמִקּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶתֵּן שְׁלוֹם (Hag 2:6, 21). It is possible to discern a link between these oracles and Ezekiel's, also apocalyptic in nature. Others have noted Joel's reliance on Ezekiel—Zimmerli, for example, who writes, “The book of Joel, which, alongside the Ezekiel oracles of the Day of Yahweh (Ezekiel 7.30) and of the description of the temple stream (Ezekiel 47), clearly makes quite specific use of Ezekiel 38f.”<sup>58</sup> In Ezekiel, Joel, and Haggai the above-mentioned upheavals are the result of direct divine intervention and herald the Day of the Lord: “each by the sword of his brother” (Hag 2:22; cf. Ezek 38:21), after which the longed-for peace comes: “and in this place will I grant well-being” (Hag 2:9 as in Ezek 34:25, 37:26).<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See Hag 2:22; Zech 3:8, 6:12–13; and Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 288–89.

<sup>55</sup> On the absence of a king in Ezekiel's restoration oracles, see Tova Ganzel, “The Status of Functionaries in the Future Temple of Exekiel,” *Shnaton* 19 (2009), 13–17 (Hebrew).

<sup>56</sup> Zechariah already stresses the absence of a human king by applying the epithet “king” to God (Zech 14:9, 17).

<sup>57</sup> Rimon Kasher, “Haggai and Ezekiel: The Complicated Relations between the Two Prophets,” *VT* 59 (2009), 556–82.

<sup>58</sup> Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, James D. Martin (trans.); Paul D. Hanson with Leonard Jay Greenspoon (eds.), (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 321; Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 172–80.

<sup>59</sup> On the significance of Hag 2:9, see Assis, “Disputed Temple,” 593–94.



***WATER/A SPRING ISSUING FROM THE TEMPLE***

Ezekiel contains an unusual prophecy of water issuing from the temple: “and I found that water was issuing from below the platform of the Temple...because the water...from them flows from the Temple. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing” (Ezek 47:1–12). Here too Zimmerli finds that Joel’s prophecy, which says, “And it shall happen on that day: that the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall run with milk, and all the watercourses of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of YHWH and water the Wadi Shittim (וּמִטְּוֵן מִבֵּית ה' יֵצֵא וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת נַחַל הַשְּׁטִים) (4:18) echoes that of Ezekiel.<sup>60</sup> No similar prophecy is found in Haggai. Zechariah’s eschatological oracles, however, contain a comparable feature: “In that day, fresh water shall flow from Jerusalem, part of it to the Eastern Sea and part to the Western Sea, throughout the summer and winter” (Zech 14:8).<sup>61</sup> An intriguing proposal has been made that these three prophecies reflect a reality: “the flow of water that emerges from the Temple Mount and is discovered in the valley, north of the Shallecheth gate.”<sup>62</sup> Although as found in these texts this theme does not share strong linguistic affinities, the motif of water flowing from the temple is absent from other prophets.

There are, in addition, two other shared motifs, which, although not definitive, do not contradict a link between the book of Joel and the specific historical context proposed here. They are the distancing of foreigners from the temple and God’s return to the city.

***MAINTAINING THE SANCTITY OF THE TEMPLE REQUIRES THE DISTANCING OF FOREIGNERS***

Both Ezekiel and Joel (but not Haggai) call for the distancing of aliens from the temple, something that was not taken for granted in the early days of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kgs 8:40–43).<sup>63</sup> Joel predicts that aliens will not enter Jerusalem: “So you shall know that I,

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<sup>60</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 515.

<sup>61</sup> The inclusion of Zechariah would certainly enhance the argument in this article. However, this requires separate discussion of the dating of the book of Zechariah. See Mark J. Boda, “Zechariah: Master Mason or Penitential Prophet?” Bob Becking and Rainer Albertz (eds.), *Yahwism After the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era* (Studies in Theology and Religion, 5; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003), 49–69. On the unique link between Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Joel regarding this topic, see Crenshaw, “Freeing the Imagination,” 143, which he attributes to “a priestly preference of the author responsible for Joel 4:17–21.”

<sup>62</sup> Ben-Zion Luria, “‘U-ma‘ayan mi-bet ha-shem yetse...’ (Joel 4:18),” *Bet Mikra* 16 (1970), 6.

<sup>63</sup> This is perhaps a partial continuation of the approach found in Ezra and Nehemiah; see Crenshaw, *Joel*, 198.

YHWH your God, dwell in Zion, my holy mountain. *And Jerusalem shall be a sanctuary and strangers shall never again pass through it*" (4:17). In Ezekiel we find the presence of foreigners in the temple listed among the causes of the destruction: "Let no alien, uncircumcised in spirit and flesh, enter My Sanctuary—no alien whatsoever among the people of Israel" (Ezek 44:9). This theme clearly belongs to Ezekiel's vision of the future temple and the preservation of its sanctity.

#### **THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN ZION**

As Crenshaw observes, the concluding verse of Joel, "for YHWH dwells in Zion" (4:21),<sup>64</sup> expresses hopes for the realization of the final verse of Ezekiel: "the name of the city from that day on shall be 'The Lord Is There'" (Ezek 48:35): "This author believed that Yahweh's abode in Jerusalem guarantees security for those who take refuge there. In a very real sense, this inclusion corresponds to the ecstatic shout with which Ezekiel concludes: 'Yahweh is there!' Where Yahweh resides, one need not fear."<sup>65</sup>

There is another dimension to these remarks, namely, the difficult historical circumstances these prophets faced. Ezekiel prophesied in a generation that, contrary to its expectations, saw the divine presence depart from the temple; his oracles therefore conclude with its promised return to Jerusalem. If my proposal is correct, Joel, on the other hand, confronted the dashing of first returnees' expectation of a palpable divine presence among them; accordingly, Joel's oracles also end with a promise that the divine presence will dwell in Zion. But because the situation in Jerusalem continued to be difficult in the coming years, Haggai's oracles as well emphasize that the divine presence will dwell in the temple, whose construction he encourages the people to resume.

This comparison of the themes shared by Joel with Ezekiel and by Haggai and Joel supports my hypothesis that Joel's oracles were uttered some thirty years after Ezekiel's last prophecies, immediately following Cyrus's decree and the initial return of the exiles to Judea. I suggest that this period fits his oracles because, in my view, it embodied great hope that, alongside the building of the Second Temple and the renewal of the temple service by the priests, the prophetic vision of redemption would be realized. In a sense, the unusual historical reality of an altar without a functioning temple, and perhaps without the divine presence, parallels the pre-destruction years during which Ezekiel prophesied. In his oracles Ezekiel reiterated that, even though the temple still stood, God had departed from the temple (Ezek 10). Thus, the returnees—of whom I have already suggested that Joel was a member—who

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<sup>64</sup> On the uniqueness of the concluding unit of Joel (4:17-21), see Crenshaw, "Freeing the Imagination," 129-47.

<sup>65</sup> Crenshaw, "Freeing the Imagination," 143.

heard Ezekiel's oracles in Babylonia were cognizant of the possibility that the setting up of the altar did not necessarily mean the return of the divine presence and their ambivalent attitude toward their situation must be seen in this light.<sup>66</sup>

### WHY DID JOEL NOT ASK THE PEOPLE TO BUILD THE TEMPLE?

As noted earlier, we cannot rule out the possibility that Joel's oracles reflect a somewhat functioning temple.<sup>67</sup> I propose, however, that the descriptions that ostensibly demonstrate the temple's existence only indicate that the altar was functioning.<sup>68</sup> One often-asked question is why the restoration of the Second Temple did not take place immediately after Cyrus's decree but was delayed until the early reign of Darius I.<sup>69</sup> We must also inquire, why, if indeed Joel prophesied during this period, did he not call for the rebuilding of the temple?

Although we can reach no definitive conclusion regarding the above question, a possible answer lies in the proposed attribution to Joel as a link in a chain between Ezekiel and Haggai. Whereas the focus of Haggai's prophetic activity lies in his demand that the people rebuild the temple (Hag 1:3–11; 2:1–5), nowhere does Ezekiel turn to the people to rebuild the temple,<sup>70</sup> and it appears that

<sup>66</sup> Another point of comparison is the attitude toward the Edomites manifested in the conclusion of Joel (4:19), which is consistent with Judean anger at the Edomites for participating in the Babylonian devastation of the land (cf. Ezek 25:12–14; Obad 1:11–14, and the commentators ad loc.). Conceptually and theologically we find enmity toward the Edomites in Ezek 35 as well.

<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the fact that no biblical books are explicitly dated to 586–516 also contributed to the failure to seriously consider dating Joel to this period.

<sup>68</sup> On the conceptual significance of the temple, priesthood, and ritual in Joel, see Linville, "Day of Yahweh," 98–114. I accept his conclusions but differ as to his dating of Joel.

<sup>69</sup> A common answer to this question is that seventy years had not yet passed since the destruction. See, for example, Hayim Tadmor, "The Appointed Time Has Not Yet Arrived: The Historical Background of Haggai 1:2," Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (eds.), *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 401–8.

<sup>70</sup> See Kasher, "Haggai and Ezekiel," 556–82, who follows P. R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (JSJSup, 65; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 82; see also *ibid.*, 265n170. On the motif of divine building of the Temple in the Bible and the ancient Near East, see Victor A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTSSS, 115/JSOT/ASOR Monograph Series, 5; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 332–34.

this was not his intention.<sup>71</sup> In that, I suggest that Joel is apparently closer to, and continues, Ezekiel's prophetic doctrine. Because he saw the building of the temple as a divine, not human, task, he is satisfied with assigning the people a role that includes prayer and mourning customs.<sup>72</sup> Somewhat later Haggai diverged from Ezekiel's view and demanded that the people themselves undertake to rebuild the temple, although divinely inspired to do so. Yet, I propose that what was seemingly an obvious demand for Haggai and Zechariah is—for ideological reasons—missing from Joel. This may also explain why Joel issues no admonitions regarding socio-religious sin, in this following in Ezekiel's wake as well.<sup>73</sup> Although Joel asks the people to return to God (2:12–13) this is not a call for repentance but rather a request to come closer to God through renewed and heightened devotion and to honor him through acts of mourning.<sup>74</sup> If in Joel, the people pray and observe mourning customs, Haggai demands that they actively resume the building of the temple. But, in none of these three prophets is the hoped for change dependent on the people's moral behavior.<sup>75</sup>

### CONCLUSION: THE SHATTERED DREAM

Immediately upon their return, the former exiles found themselves confronting not only the dream but also its dissipation.<sup>76</sup> As I read them, the shared motifs in Ezekiel, Joel, and Haggai all respond to a common exigency: the absence of the temple. Ezekiel's oracles to the Babylonian exiles generated the dream of a Second Temple, which would by its very essence correct what brought the First Temple down. At a later date, with the returnees' arrival in Judea, we learn—through Joel's prophecies—of the harsh and disappointing historical circumstances they faced. I propose that his oracles reflect an attempt to confront this situation, when hopes for the

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<sup>71</sup> See Walther Zimmerli, "Plans for Rebuilding after the Catastrophe of 586," *I Am Yahweh*, Douglas W. Stott (trans.); Walter Brueggeman (ed.) (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 115–16.

<sup>72</sup> That Ezekiel saw the building of the Temple as a divine task emerges from Ezek. 40:2–4 and the absence of verses calling on the people to rebuild the Temple.

<sup>73</sup> On the absence of moral admonitions in Ezekiel, see Baruch J. Schwartz, "Ezekiel's Dim View of Israel's Restoration," Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (eds.), *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Symposium Series, 9; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 43–67.

<sup>74</sup> Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 133–39; Ronald A. Simkins, "'Return to Yahweh': Honor and Shame in Joel," *Semeia* 68 (1994), 41–54.

<sup>75</sup> This differs, however, from Zechariah. See Boda, "Zechariah," 52–54.

<sup>76</sup> The group here denoted returnees (השבים) evidently included some Judeans who had not been exiled, but this is not the place for further discussion of this point. See John Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (SVT, 91; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 141–42.

realization of the restoration prophecies in the book of Ezekiel still resonated. A mere decade or so later, and as a result of their continued tribulations and the apperception that God was not in their midst, there was another turning point, manifested in the oracles of Haggai. We can perhaps attribute the features these prophets share to a specific historical reality: The post-destruction reality (Ezekiel), the initial return to Judea (Joel), and the situation ten years later (Haggai).

I conclude by drawing upon Rimon Kasher's postulation of a link between Ezekiel and Haggai,<sup>77</sup> based on the specific circumstances each experienced. To his analysis, I suggest that a two-way link between each of these prophets and Joel can be added. First of all, Ezekiel, Joel, and Haggai share a worldview that foresees an imminent, radical deliverance; moreover, all three deal with the theological conundrum of the status of the God of Israel. Haggai, who was active in the early restoration period, calls for an imminent realization of his eschatological goals. Ezekiel, who witnessed the destruction, introduced divine, rather than human mechanisms to his picture of the near future, the means by which to prevent another collapse and profanation of the divine name. Joel, who may have prophesied in the twilight zone between the two, tries to realize this vision and incorporates many of its motifs in his oracles.

If Haggai urged to people to rebuild the temple and expected the restoration of the monarchy, Ezekiel makes the forthcoming restoration depend on God alone. Joel, for his part, places his hope in God, but also calls for deeds to be carried out by the priests, God's servants who minister to the altar. There are also contrasts between the three regarding the process of redemption. If human beings are passive in the process of redemption and restoration as Ezekiel describes it, Haggai's theocentricity leaves room for human effort to take steps to end the economic crisis from which the people suffer. He expects humans to resolve the crisis; for him, laying the foundations of the temple is the start of redemption. I suggest that, Joel, like Ezekiel, ascribes a more passive role to the people in the process of redemption; nowhere does he call for them to actively begin rebuilding the temple.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the dating of Joel to the early restoration period proposed here has the potential to shed light both on the historical background portrayed in this book and on its theological and ideological viewpoint, seen as mediating between the prophecies of Ezekiel and Haggai. It is against this setting that his unique treatment of the difficulties of his day can perhaps best be understood. From this

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<sup>77</sup> Kasher, "Haggai and Ezekiel," 556–82.

<sup>78</sup> Kasher, "Haggai and Ezekiel," 556–82.

perspective, his oracles contributed significantly to the creation of a positive turning point that promised peace and security for Jerusalem and God's future presence there.