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James R. Linville, Letting the “Bi-word” “Rule” in Joel 2:17

Letting the “Bi-word” “Rule” in Joel 2:17

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I Introduction

Joel 2:17 contains a prayer recommended to the priests as a liturgical response to a massive crisis: ואל-תתן נחלתך לחרפה למשל-בם גוים. Scholars disagree as to which Hebrew root is represented by term משל in the verse.¹ The KJV reads: “Give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them” and has considerable modern support in identifying משל II, “to rule”.² Alternatively, משל I is often proposed. NRSV recognizes a noun, “byword”: “Do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations”, and some commentators follow suit.³ Others, however, find an infinitive, as vocalized in the MT (למשל-): “to tell proverbs” or, “to mock” as in Crenshaw’s “Do not surrender your property to reproach, nations mocking them”.⁴ Some interpreters recognize the potential for a double entendre between the two roots but defend one or another as most plausible.⁵ Garrett says that only “to rule” is possible but adds that Joel permitted a paronomasia with the homonym “byword”, given the presence of “reproach”.⁶ Sweeney is less hesitant about a possible word-play, but he does not develop his thought much in this regard.⁷

A close examination of the various arguments reveals that, while some of the root I proposals are unlikely, “byword among the nations” remains very plausible. On the other hand, the simple grammar of “to rule” is persuasive while the contextual arguments often raised against it are not particularly weighty. The solution is to recognize a deliberate ambiguity here. A lengthy examination of the situation is instructive beyond merely cataloguing another example of biblical polysemy. First, it shows the need for careful analysis of difficult terms in their immediate literary context. Secondly, it shows that Joel 2:17 employs a somewhat irregular figure of speech found in a number of other biblical passages. Third, the contextual associations of the other “humiliation formulae”, as I

label them, not only supports polysemy in Joel 2:17, but also suggests that perhaps the larger context of Joel is itself ambiguous regarding the circumstances of Judah's depicted plight. The exact nature of the polysemy in Joel 2:17 is, however, indeterminate. There may be a simple double entendre. Alternatively, מִשַּׁל may function as a "pivot" word, one meaning corresponding to the preceding text, the other to the following words. As I will describe in closing, this creative use of language plays into other aspects of the book's complex imagery.

II The case for מִשַּׁל II: "To Rule over them"

The vocalization of לְמִשַּׁל־בָּם implies an infinitive construct linked to a preposition and pronoun combination. There are some fifty cases in the Hebrew Bible in which מִשַּׁל II and an adversative ב construction indicates "rule over x". In the debated expression in Joel 2:17 the final word, "nations", can easily serve as identifying the "ruler". There are no clear biblical instances of מִשַּׁל I and an adversative ב ("to tell a proverb about x") and this is convincing evidence to many scholars that Joel should read "to rule".⁸ On the other hand, many scholars regard the military imagery in Joel 1:4-2:11 as metaphors of natural disasters. They therefore think "to rule" is out of place contextually as there is no obvious mention of foreign armies threatening the land and people in Joel 1-2.⁹ Crenshaw also points out that 2:19, 27 speak of "reproach" and "shame" but not military subjugation.¹⁰ This is countered with arguments that at least some of Joel 1:4-2:11 refers to a human or semi-divine army assaulting Judah. References to drought, fire and locusts may then be seen as metaphorical descriptions of these forces.¹¹ Both sides appeal to Joel's use of traditional and generic forms of speech.¹² The situation is further complicated by some diachronic analyses which hold the latter half of the book to be secondary.¹³ It can be objected, however, that since foreign domination is recalled and vengeance promised in Joel 4:2-14 it is not unthinkable that 2:17 was included or at least edited to anticipate the current ending of the book. In sum, positive arguments for "to rule" carry considerable weight, but contextual objections against it are not decisive.

III Failure “To Rule” Out Alternatives

Despite the strong case for the “to rule” reading, attempts to defend this reading as the only possible one are far less convincing. The variety of מַשַׁל I root solutions (verb or a noun) is not generally recognized while the preposition בַּ may be construed as adversative or locative. Even if no other example of that root and an adversative בַּ appears in the Hebrew Bible, other combinations may remain possible. Critics sometimes also fail to notice the role of the verb נָתַן vis-à-vis the proposed מַשַׁל I root, a combination which does find a few other instances in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴ For instance, Garrett challenges the NIV’s “byword among the nations” claiming that the normal understanding of מַשַׁל בַּ is “to rule” which also fits contextually in Joel. Garrett also complains that some scholars are overly-impressed with the collocation of מַשַׁל לְ and לְחַרְפָּה and considers any proposed adversative preposition attached to מַשַׁל I anomalous, citing a few verses in which בַּ is employed with a different sense, including Ezek. 12:23 and 18:3.¹⁵ In those verses, however, a locative preposition is combined with מַשַׁל I and that is just what NIV offers. Some 19th century scholars claimed that had מַשַׁל been employed to speak of the denigration of Judah by foreigners, any one of a number of verbs, including נָתַן, should have been present, but they maintain that such a word is lacking in 2:17. So focused were they on the combination of מַשַׁל בָּם and the pointing of מַשַׁל as a verb that they neglected to look at the start of the line: וְאֵל־תִּתֵּן, and to question the Masoretic pointing.¹⁶ Ahlström and Bergler hold that if Joel wanted to say that a byword was directed against Judah, the construction employed would have been מַשַׁל + עַל and not an adversative בַּ, citing Isa. 14:4 and Mic. 2:4.¹⁷ Micah 2:4 reads “he will lift against you a byword” יִשָּׂא עֲלֵיכֶם מַשַׁל. A comparable construction is also found in Hab. 2:4.¹⁸ The writer of Joel 2:17 could have easily written, “Do not allow the nations to lift נִשָּׂא reproach and a byword against עַל your possession”, had he meant to refer to the directing of an insulting epithet “against” Judah. Yet, the “byword against” proposal portrays those people becoming a “reproach [and] a byword among [the nations]”. Altogether, מַשַׁל I (noun or verb) and adversative בַּ are a highly dubious combination.¹⁹

Yet the “byword among” reading has not been demonstrated to be contrary to normal Hebrew usage.

IV The משל I Solutions: The Case for the Noun “byword”

In view of the above discussion a nominal form of משל I is far more likely in Joel 2:17 than the infinitive, despite MT’s vocalization. The pointing is a relatively late feature and should not be considered decisive.²⁰ Jeremiah 24:9 provides the strongest evidence for “byword among”.

- a ונתתם לזעוה לרעה I will make them a terror, an evil [thing]²¹
- b לכל ממלכות הארץ to all the kingdoms of the earth,
- c לחרפה ולמשל לשנינה ולקללה a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a vilification
- d בכל-המקומות אשר-אדיחם שם in every place I will banish them.

The same verb as in Joel 2:17 appears in v. 9a, but it clearly governs the two series of ל- prefixed nouns. The second series (v. 9c) has four members, including the two terms from Joel. Here משל should be understood as “byword”, given that the rest of the terms are related nouns. A locative ב construction is found in v. 9d. Holladay comments how, in this verse, the Judeans *become* the words of ridicule, rather than just the victims of insults.²² Oddly, some commentators who defend the “byword among” reading in Joel, such as Barton, only notice the collocation of משל and חרפה and not the other similar features.²³

There is, however, a syntactical problem that remains with this reading: that of the redundant pronoun suffix on the preposition: בם גוים: “among them, nations”. Barton does not comment on the difficulty, while others propose emendations.²⁴ One may, however, be able to meet the challenge. Williams identifies a rare construction he calls “anticipative apposition” in which a pronoun suffix appears before the noun. He provides three examples, albeit with the pronoun attached to verbs, not prepositions.²⁵

Exod. 2:6	וּתְרָאָהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד	“She saw (him) the child”
Ezek. 10:3	בְּבֹאֹ הָאִישׁ	“When (he) the man entered”
1 Kgs 21:13	וַיַּעֲדֵהוּ אֲנָשֵׁי הַבְּלִיעַל אֶת־נָבוֹת	“The worthless men testified against (him) Naboth”.

It is possible, therefore, to regard **בם** in Joel 2:17 as being in apposition to “nations”.

Some lingering suspicions about this solution being a little forced could remain, but given the presence of Jer. 24:9 (and other verses, discussed below) the “byword among” reading remains very plausible.

V Against the **משל** I verb

If a verb is identified in Joel 2:17, the difficulty with **בם גוים** only grows. “Nations” would have to refer to those who “tell proverbs” or “mock”, while the preposition **ב** needs to be an otherwise unattested adversative: “against them”. Allen’s argument that an adversative **ב** marks the targets of other verbs of denigration (e.g., in 2 Kgs 2:23 and 2 Chr. 30:10) is of very little weight.²⁶ Rudolph and Marti both offer “über sie spotten” and prefer **משל** I on contextual grounds while Crenshaw has a comparable “nations mocking them.” Rudolph simply says that there is no reason why the **ב** in Joel 2:17 cannot be adversative. Marti cites Ezek 18:3 for the adversative preposition but Crenshaw rightly objects that the **ב** in Ezek 18:3 is locative.²⁷ All three scholars refer to the collocation of **משל** and **חרפה** in Jer. 24:9 to further establish a **משל** I root in Joel but then ignore the other comparative features of the Jeremiah passage which suggest that the root in Joel should be understood as a noun with a locative preposition.²⁸

VI A Humiliation Formula in Jeremiah

Jeremiah 24:9 is one of a number of relevant verses in Jeremiah which employ a loose form of an expression I characterize as a “humiliation formula”. What links these passages together with Joel 2:17 are a number of features:

- (a) מַשַּׁל, חֲרָפָה and/or related terms which appear in a series.
- (b) These terms are prefixed by the preposition לְ.
- (c) The terms are objects of a verb which casts the ridiculed party as objects of insults or, metaphorically, as the insult itself.
- (d) A locative בְּ construction identifying where or among whom the humiliation will take place, typically foreign nations.

Not all of these features are present in each case below. In some the word מַשַּׁל itself is not to be found, although חֲרָפָה appears frequently. Besides Jer. 24:9, the latter part of Jer. 29:18 is relevant:

וְנָתַתִּים לְזִעּוּה לְכָל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ לְאֵלָה וּלְשִׁמָּה וּלְשָׂרָקָה וּלְחֲרָפָה בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־הִדַּחְתִּים שָׁם
I will make them a terror to every kingdom of the Earth, an execration, an appalling thing, a hissing and a reproach in every nation where I have driven them.

Of our Joel terms only חֲרָפָה appears here while the same verb נָתַן is also found. A list of four humiliation terms: לְאֵלָה וּלְשִׁמָּה וּלְשָׂרָקָה וּלְחֲרָפָה (preceded by similar verbal forms of הָיָה) appears in Jer. 42:18, which are obviously interrelated.²⁹ The Egypt-bound Judean refugees will become “an execration and an appalling thing and a vilification and reproach.” This verb is not the one employed in Joel 2:17 and Jer. 24:9, but, in context, it carries much the same meaning. Neither is a locative בְּ expression found, but the place of disgrace is clear from the larger context. In a similar context, Jer. 44:8 features only “vilification” and “reproach” appear with הָיָה while a locative בְּ phrase, “in every nation of the earth” is found. In these Jeremiah verses “execration”, “hissing”, “vilification” and “reproach” indicate the metaphorical transformation of the Judeans into their enemies’ derisions. Also note how military defeat forms the backdrop to the international disgrace. A similar pattern emerges in Jer. 49:13 in which Bozrah is the victim:

לְשִׁמָּה לְחֲרָפָה לְחָרָב וּלְקַלְלָה תִּהְיֶה “An appalling thing, a reproach, a desolation, a vilification Bozrah will become.”

VII Other Humiliation Formulae

Solomon’s vision of Yahweh in 1 Kgs 9:7 has all the features of a humiliation formula. Impious Israelites will become a “byword and a taunt among all the peoples”:

והיה ישראל למשל ולשנינה בכל העמים. 2 Chron. 7:20 says the temple itself will become the proverbial example of divine wrath. In both cases, however, international disgrace is linked to military defeat. Perhaps the writer of Kings was influenced by Deut. 28:37 (and cf. v. 25):

והיית לשמה למשל ולשנינה בכל העמים אשר ינהיגך יהוה שמה
You will become an appalling thing, a byword, and a taunt
Among all the peoples to whom Yahweh will drive you.

Here foreign dominion and ridicule are to be the fate of a disobedient Israel. Exile and defeat are again envisioned in vv. 41, 43-44. On the other hand, Deuteronomy 28 also has numerous references to natural disasters as punishment. Verses 23-24 speak of nature turning against the Israelites. Verse 38 has locust infestations: ארבה (cf. Joel 1:4, 2:25), while different insects appear in v. 42. On the whole, this chapter's conflation of famine, infestation and domination suggests that in Joel 1:2-2:11 a similar mix of catastrophe may be in view. Moreover, a number of other biblical passages, including Ezek. 14:8, add to the list of reference to someone becoming a byword or an insult.³⁰ Of that Ezekiel verse, Polk finds that למשל, governed by the verb שים "to place or set", refers to the people as "not the thing signified but the signifier itself. They have themselves been made a sort of speech-act, a metaphor, a parable".³¹ A similar sense of transformation should be seen in Joel 2:17.

VIII Two Double Readings

It appears that Joel 2:17 is closely related to a number of other biblical passages which denote metaphorical transformation of a party into its enemies' words of insult. Even so, in a number of cases this loose formula is used in a context in which foreign domination is either explicitly stated or implied. The "to rule" reading, therefore, should not be discounted especially as it has absolutely no linguistic anomalies and foreshadows the closing of the book. Since both readings can be defended, it is best to regard Joel 2:17 as embracing a double reading, or better, two of them simultaneously. The first route to polysemy is to find a simple double entendre:

Do not make your possession a reproach, a byword among [them] nations.
... a reproach, to nations ruling over them.

On formal grounds readers should expect that they have encountered a humiliation formula complete with its series of nouns and a locative clause, however oddly constructed. Yet, the contexts evoked by the other attestations and the somewhat anomalous grammar suggest an alternative reading as an abridged humiliation reference and a comment on the foreign domination of Judah, anticipating, as it does, the closing of the book.³²

On the other hand, one can see מִשַׁל as a “pivot” in 2:17, shifting from “byword” to “to rule”. In this sense, one might understand the line as technically requiring מִשַׁל to be written twice, instead of just once. Given considerations of word order, it is hard to reproduce in English.

Do not allow your possession to be a reproach,
[and] a byword / to rule
over them, [the nations]

Pivot patterns have been recognized in a number of other biblical and ancient near eastern texts.³³ If one is identified here, the full association between this verse and the so-called humiliation formula is lost, since בִּם גִּיִּים is not the expected “among the nations”. The pivot on מִשַׁל, however, solves the grammatical problem of בִּם גִּיִּים, since those words do not need to be reconciled with “byword” at all. They need only relate to מִשַׁל II “to rule” and this they can do without difficulty. Even if the latter proposal is accepted, it does not prevent the fuller humiliation formula to be evoked by the text following מִשַׁל. In reality, I do not see the value in choosing between the two proposed word-plays. The first combines the structure of the humiliation formula and clear grammar in the complimentary second meaning. The “pivot” has no grammatical difficulties and employs a recognized literary device. Perhaps it is best to posit that the writer was building on the two מִשַׁל roots, but was not exploiting them in only one particular fashion.³⁴

IX The Significance of Joel's Ambiguity

The frequent and creative use of paronomasia in the Hebrew Bible is now very widely recognized, so saying that 2:17 is yet another example is hardly ground-breaking. Yet, this particular case plays into an extremely complex debate that is central to the interpretation of the book as a whole: determining the external circumstances which led to the book's creation (invasion, locusts and / or drought). Whereas many scholars appeal to their understanding on these matters to determine a single meaning for מִשַּׁל, it is worthwhile to consider the reverse: the ambiguous מִשַּׁל construction suggests that the rest of Joel 1-2's references to disaster and calamity may be ultimately indeterminate. Formally, one expects in 2:17 a humiliation formula, yet, such formula are often predictions of a fate at the hands of an enemy: something that is avenged at the end of Joel. It is very plausible, therefore, that in the opening chapter and a half of Joel one encounters a complex imagery intended to allow any kind of major crisis to evoke the book's call for a communal liturgy in response. While this issue cannot be discussed any further here, some additional comments can be made about our mysterious מִשַּׁל.

The polysemy in Joel 2:17 does seem to extend beyond a simple merging of two contextually appropriate meanings. The prophetic voice is advising priests how to pray to alleviate terrible suffering. Here God is the target of a dramatic rhetorical ploy. The closing words of the recommended prayer are, "Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"³⁵ Oddly, there is not even a narrative describing that the priests actually performed the recommended prayer, but God does have compassion for his people in 2:18.³⁶ On the level of the story-world, one may take this text as describing (and hence legitimizing) a pattern of crisis-ritual: what to do to win divine favour when even the sacrificial rites must be abandoned. Yet, on the discursive level of the book as a whole, there is something more that is going on.

As noted above, to make people a "reproach" or a "byword" is to reduce them to someone else's spoken words. Their own identity is effaced as they become a weapon in an enemy's verbal arsenal: God's own "possession" נַחֲלָה is threatened with becoming a byword. One can find this "byword" anticipated in the question God fears the nations will

ask. God's possession becomes a **משל** which declares the deity's own absence or impotence. To add injury to insult, with the shift from "byword" to "rule over them", his "possession" is usurped by the nations. Although insinuating that God's honour can be threatened in v. 17, the writer eventually preserves the divine inviolability by attributing the deity's actions to saving the people, and not himself directly, from disgrace.³⁷ God speaks in 2:19, vowing not to allow his people to become the nations' reproach (נתן + חרפה; Judah's "shame" **בוש** is overturned in 2: 26, 27). Judah, then, does not become an international laughingstock. Fittingly, the duplicitous term **משל** is not found again in the book: God's possession never does become the nations "byword". The foreigners' **משל**, therefore, ultimately remains unvoiced. God has regained possession over his people and, it must be added, over words: his voice "roars" from Zion (Joel 4:16). It is certainly worth pointing out how the polyvalence of Joel 2:17 revolves around a word that can otherwise be used of the making of "proverbs" of the wise.³⁸ There is no prediction in Joel that Judah will learn wise, pious proverbs although there remains a promise of future interaction with divine speech. But this is the spontaneous inspiration of prophecy, dreams and vision (Joel 3), and that is perhaps even more mysterious.

Notes

- ¹ Using the root-numbers from G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, H.-J. Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. 9 (trans. D. E. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 64-71 (*TDOT*). Earlier philological work identified three roots: cf. F. Brown, S.R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, *The New Brown—Driver—Briggs—Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1979), p. 605: I = "represent, be like"; II = "use a proverb" / "proverb/parable"; III "to rule". As in the case of *TDOT*, it is now commonplace to regard BDB I and II as a single root: cf. A. R. Johnson, "**מָשַׁל**" in M. Noth, D.W. Thomas (eds.), *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (SVT, 3; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1955), pp. 162-69; W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, based upon the lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 219.
- ² E.g., D. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel* (New American Commentary, 19a; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), p. 349; H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (trans. W. Janzen, S.D. McBride Jr.,

C.A. Muenchow; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 39; P. R. Andiañach, “The Locusts in the Message of Joel”, *VT* 42 (1992), pp. 433-41 (437). ¶

- ³ New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989). See too, J. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. 83; O. Loretz, *Regenritual und Jahwetag im Joelbuch. Kanaanäischer Hintergrund, Kolometrie, Aufbau und Symbolik eines Prophetenbuches* (Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur, 4; Altenberge: CIS-Verlag, 1986), p. 31.
- ⁴ J. L. Crenshaw, *Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 24; Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1995), p. 133.
- ⁵ Crenshaw, *Joel*, pp. 142-43; R. Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity in History and Nature in the Book of Joel* (Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies, 10; Lewiston / Queenston / Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991) pp. 173-74, n 6. Both prefer “to mock”. On the other hand, M. Bič, *Das Buch Joel* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960), p. 61, prefers “to rule” but acknowledges that the verse may read “to mock”.
- ⁶ Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, p. 349, n. 20.
- ⁷ M. A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*. Vol. I. *Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah* (Berit Olam; Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), p. 169.
- ⁸ Garrett, *Hosea-Joel*, p. 349, n. 64, lists Gen. 1:18; 3:16; 4:7; 37:8; 45:26; Deut 15:6; Josh. 12:5; Jud. 8:22-23; 9:2; 14:4; 15:11; 2 Sam. 23:3; 1 Kgs 5:1; Isa. 3:4; 19:4; 63:19; Jer. 22:30; Mic. 5:1; Hab. 1:14; Pss. 19:14; 22:29; 105:21 106:41; Prov. 16:32; Ecc. 9:17; Dan. 11:43. See also Andiañach, p. 437; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 248; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, pp. 39, 52. Wolff also notes that the Greek has κατάρξαι and the Vulgate has “dominentur”, while Rashi preferred the reading “to mock”. ¶
- ⁹ Crenshaw, *Joel*: pp. 142-43; Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, pp. 82-83; See too, L. C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 77. Cf. 1:6, 2:2-11, invaders/locusts are considered a nation and a mighty people, while comparisons to horses, chariotry and soldiers are also made.
- ¹⁰ Crenshaw, *Joel*, pp. 142-43.
- ¹¹ For the vision of an apocalyptic army (Joel 2) inspired by real locusts and drought (Joel 1), see Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 52. For human armies throughout, see Andiañach, “Locusts”; D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC, 31; Waco TX: Word Books, 1987), pp. 232-233; G. S. Ogden, “Joel” in G.S. Ogden and R.R. Deutsch, *A Promise of Hope—A Call to Obedience. A Commentary on the Books of Joel and Malachi* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 11-14; G. S. Ogden, “Joel 4 and Prophetic Responses to National Laments” *JSOT* 26 (1983), pp. 97-106.

- ¹² Cf. the lament setting identified by Ogden, “Joel 4”, and the theophanic language found by Barton, *Joel and Amos*, pp. 72-73. A few scholars do not think there is a “real-life” disaster behind the text or think it is irrecoverable: Deist, F. E., “Parallels and Reinterpretation in the Book of Joel: A Theology of the Yom Yahweh” in W. Classen, ed. *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham* (JSOTSup, 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), pp. 63-79; R. J. Coggins, *Joel and Amos* (New Century Bible Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 29, 42.
- ¹³ E.g., Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, p. 7, coining the phrase “Deutero-Joel” for 2:28-3:31. See R. Coggins, “Joel” *CBR* 2 (2003), pp. 85-103, for a survey of scholarly work on the book.
- ¹⁴ As I will describe below, these kinds of oversights are also made by proponents of מִשַׁל I.
- ¹⁵ Garrett, *Hosea-Joel*, pp. 348-49, n. 19, referring to Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 248; and Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 52. Garrett objects that מִשַׁל I as a verb means “to use a proverb” and not “to mock” as Crenshaw, *Joel*, p. 133, would have it. This is not a fatal objection given the context.
- ¹⁶ E. Henderson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets: Translated from the Original Hebrew with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, repr. 1980), p. 108; E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets: A Commentary* Vol. I. *Hosea, Joel Amos Obadiah and Jonah* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, reprint, 1980), p. 154.
- ¹⁷ S. Bergler, *Joel als Schriftsinterpret* (Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums, 16; Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1987), p. 86, n. 85. He says מִשַׁל + אֵל is possible, too. G. W. Ahlström, *Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem* (VTSup, 21; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), pp. 20-21. Ahlström supports מִשַׁל II by claiming that the so-called covenant term נְחֻלָּה in 2:17 implies that Yahweh is the true ruler. This, however, is taking a too narrow approach to the passage.
- ¹⁸ Cf. the different construction in Ezek. 16:44; 18:2.
- ¹⁹ Garrett, *Hosea-Joel*, p. 349 n. 20, offers the hypothetical translation, “Do not let your inheritance become a reproach, a byword against them—nations” which further highlights the dubiousness of the noun and adversative ו combination.
- ²⁰ The lack of a conjunction between “reproach” and the proposed “byword” is also not a serious obstacle: cf. Jer. 24:9a, c below.
- ²¹ R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 482, translates MT here as “a horror for evil” and provides some text-critical data.
- ²² W. Holladay, *Jeremiah I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1—25* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 660.

- 23 Barton, *Joel and Amos*, pp. 82-83. More curiously, S. R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos. With Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), p. 57, supports “to make proverbs of” in Joel by reference to Jer. 24:9.
- 24 Barton, *Joel and Amos*, pp. 82-83. J. A. Bewer, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Obadiah and Joel” in J.M.P. Smith, W.H. Ward, J.A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911), p. 118, proposes בְּנוֹיִם.
- 25 R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2nd ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), pp. 15-16.
- 26 Allen, *Hosea, Joel*, p. 77, n. 64. His translation is idiosyncratic: “Do not permit your possession to be ridiculed, a swear word bandied about by the nations.” חֲרַפָּה is an infinitive and מָשַׁל a “denominative verb” from “byword”. What happens with the proposed adversative בְּ is not apparent.
- 27 Ezek. 18:2 has “proverb concerning the land” with עַל, so v. 3’s בִּישְׂרָאֵל should be differentiated in meaning. Context strongly suggests a locative sense, and that is supported in the LXX. Cf. Ezek 12:22-23.
- 28 W. Rudolph, *Joel-Amos-Obadiah-Jona* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Gütersloh: Süttersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971), p. 51, 53. K. Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton* (KHCAT, 13; Tübingen: Verlag von J.C. B. Mohr / Paul Siebeck, 1904), p. 130; Crenshaw, *Joel*, pp. 142-43.
- 29 Jer. 42:18 is in the second person, 44:12 in the third. The conjunction on לְשִׁמָּה is not present in the latter verse.
- 30 Some other relevant verses are Pss. 44:15; 69:12 with מָשַׁל, and Ps. 79:4; Ezek. 5:15; 22:4; Mic. 6:16 with חֲרַפָּה; Job 17:6.
- 31 T. Polk, “Paradigms, Parables, and *Məšālīm*: On Reading the *Māšāl* in Scripture” *CBQ* 45 (1983), pp. 564-583 (577)
- 32 For the difficult grammar as suggestive of attempts to reconcile two alternative readings, I am indebted to E. Ben Zvi (personal communication).
- 33 See D. Sivan and S. Yona, “Pivot Words or Expressions in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic Poetry”, *VT* 48 (1998), pp. 399-400, and the bibliography there. Also see P. Auffret, “‘Pivot Pattern’: Nouveaux Exemples (Jon. ii 10; Ps xxxi 13; Is. xxiii 7), *VT* 28 (1978), pp. 103-10.
- 34 One might also find other kinds of word plays on מָשַׁל I / II in Isa. 14:4-5 and 28:14. The latter uses both roots in close proximity while the latter may be a double entendre.
- 35 Cf. Ps. 79:9-10.

- ³⁶ Bewer, “Joel”, pp. 107-10, construed the relevant verbs of 2:15-17 as perfects instead of imperatives, thus producing a narrative of a fast, assembly and prayer of which v. 18 was the logical continuation.
- ³⁷ D. A. Glatt-Gilad, “Yahweh’s Honor at Stake: A Divine Conundrum”, *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 63-74 (68-69).
- ³⁸ Cf. the Book of Proverbs, מַשְׁלִים. The full range of meanings for the noun is very wide: see the discussions in TDOT above and in Polk, “Paradigms”, D. W. Suter, “MAŠAL in the Similitudes of Enoch”, *JBL* 100 (1981), pp. 193-212.¶