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**An Historical and Exegetical Study
of the "day of the Lord" in the Old Testament
with special reference to the Book of Joel**



being a thesis presented
by Elizabeth Gales Medd to the
University of St. Andrews in application
for the degree of M.Th.

Declaration.

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by me, that the thesis is my own composition, and that it has not previously been presented for a higher degree. The research was carried out in St. Mary's College, the University of St. Andrews, under the supervision of Professor Wm. McKane, to whom I owe grateful thanks.

Certificate.

I certify that Elizabeth Gales Medd has spent four terms in research work at St. Mary's College, the University of St. Andrews, that she has fulfilled the conditions of University Ordinance No. LXI, and that she is qualified to submit the following thesis in application for the degree of M.Th.

Table of Contents.

	Foreword.	p. vi
I.	Theories concerning the origin of the concept of the day of Yahweh.	p. 1
	A. H. Gressmann	p. 1
	B. S. Mowinckel	p. 4
	C. G. von Rad	p. 9
II.	Exegesis of those passages in the book of Amos which appear to have some bearing on the concept of the day of Yahweh.	p. 20
III.	Exegesis of Joel i in the light of the concept of the day of Yahweh.	p. 33
IV.	Exegesis of Joel ii in the light of the concept of the day of Yahweh.	p. 61
V.	Exegesis of Joel iii in the light of the concept of the day of Yahweh.	p. 81
VI.	Exegesis of Joel iv in the light of the concept of the day of Yahweh.	p. 94
VII.	Conclusion.	p. 122
	Bibliography.	p. 137

Foreword.

The purpose of this foreword is to survey the contents of the following thesis in order that the reader will be the more prepared for what follows. In the first chapter I have explained the theories of Gressmann, Mowinckel and von Rad concerning the origin of the concept of the day of Yahweh as they appear to me, with relatively brief criticisms. They are taken up again in the conclusion and criticised more extensively with reference to what has been discovered in the preceding chapters. The second chapter contains a discussion of several Amos passages (v:18-20; ii:13-16; viii:2b-3; viii:9ff.; ix:11-12) which apparently deal with the day of Yahweh. There is a brief comparison drawn between Amos' ideas concerning the day and those of Ezekiel as they appear in Ezek. vii. An indication of the line I then follow in the chapters on Joel is given by contrasting the two prophets' premises and ideas. The next four chapters are a detailed exegesis of the whole of the book of Joel.

Alongside the ideas about the day of Yahweh which are suggested by Joel's attitude to the disasters which caused him to come forward with his message, I have also found that the problems presented by the book - the relation of the references to the day of Yahweh in chs. i and ii to their context, and the relation of chs. iii and iv to chs. i and ii - are resolved when considered in the light of his concept of the Day.

Theories concerning the origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh.

A. HUGO GRESSMANN

Hugo Gressmann's Ursprünge der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie (1905) represents the first attempt to tackle systematically the problem of the origin of the Day of Yahweh. It was Gunkel who first suggested that the origin of eschatology was to be found in the oldest stock of Mesopotamian mythology which described a cosmic disaster - the annihilation of this world and the appearance of the new. These conceptions were common to all the religions of the ancient Near East. Gressmann accepted this mythological origin of eschatology, and also followed Gunkel in the belief that Hebrew eschatology was of foreign origin. Gressmann did suggest, however, that the eschatological ideas originating from the ancient oriental myths came into Palestine in two influxes, the first occurring before the time of the prophets, and the second after the Exile.

Gressmann's most strikingly original contribution was his suggestion that the eschatological ideas which filtered into Canaan in pre-Israelite times were only part of a vast ordered eschatological structure which was extant in Mesopotamia. The

ideas comprising this system were appropriated by Israel in fragmentary form only, so that in the prophetic books it is only partial elements of this original coherent complex which can be collected. To Gressmann, this fragmentary form of Israelite eschatology is evidence of its foreign origin.

Gressmann also supposed that this old pre-prophetic mythical eschatology existed in two contrary aspects, viz.: as a woe eschatology and as a weal eschatology. To the popular mind the Day of Yahweh, as suggested by Amos v:18-20, was part of the weal eschatology. The mass of the people expected that a day was coming when Yahweh would manifest his power and destroy Israel's enemies in some kind of catastrophe.

In the prophetic descriptions the Day of Yahweh is characterised in a variety of ways. In Amos v:18-20, Ezek. xxx:3, Joel ii:2, Zeph. i:15, it is a day of darkness and clouds. The concept of doom is explicitly brought out in Ezek. vii:7. Wailing accompanies the day in Amos viii:10, Isa. xiii:6, Ezek. vii:18. It brings fear in its train (Amos ii:14-16, Isa. xiii:8, Ezek. vii:17). In Isa. xxxiv the desolation of the day is emphasised by the appearance of wild beasts. Cosmic disturbances are part of the events of the day (Amos viii:9,10, Isa. xiii:10,13, Joel ii:10) and in Amos ii:14-16, Isa. xiii:4, xxii:5, Ezek. vii:14, Joel ii:4-9 military imagery plays a part in the descriptions of the day.

In view of the number of ideas used to represent Yahweh's day

and its accompanying phenomena, Gressmann thinks that we cannot identify the Day merely with a day of battle or a day of storm. Nor can the phrase be explained as meaning one or more days sacred to Yahweh, and even the possibility of a festival day of Yahweh must be rejected. Rather is it necessary to formulate a general definition which can include all these differing descriptions of the Day of Yahweh. Gressmann suggests that such a general definition is provided by the following: 'it is a day in which Yahweh revealed himself in some way, on which he acted in some way, and which is characterised by him in some manner.'¹ Originally there may have existed many days of Yahweh, but it is not to any of Yahweh's single great deeds in either the past or the present that the phrase could be applied. Gressmann's contention is that wherever it occurs the phrase is always connected with the future, i.e. it has already in pre-prophetic times become an eschatological term, a part of the popular eschatology which flourished before the prophets.

One of the main criticisms of Gressmann's work is that he fundamentally ignores the essential problem concerning the origin of biblical eschatology. Certainly he has established the origin of the particular ideas which comprise the eschatological complex. But the problem is not to know from where these particular elements took their origin and by which method they have become inserted into the eschatological complex. The essential problem

1. H. Gressmann, op.cit., p.144.

which demands an explanation is how Israel - alone among the ancient Semites - has developed an eschatology which represents a vital religious fact and forms an essential part of the popular religion.

B. SIGMUND MOWINCKEL.

Whenever the name of Sigmund Mowinckel is mentioned, it invariably suggests the hypothesis of an enthronement festival. He has traced the origins of biblical eschatology in general, and the concept of the Day of Yahweh in particular, to the cultic content of this festival. The starting-point for all those who hold that an eschatology existed in pre-prophetic times is the saying of Amos:

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!
Why would you have the day of the Lord?
It is darkness, and not light.
(Amos v:18).

Mowinckel¹ proposes, however, that there is here no reference to an eschatological day at some indefinite point in the future. The expression still has its contemporary connexion with the cult and with cultic experience. The phrase 'Day of Yahweh' originally meant the day of Yahweh's manifestation in the cult at the New Year festival, and this connexion with the cult of the festival is still quite clear from the context in which the saying is found in Amos.

1. S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh, 1956, p.132f.

Here Mowinckel differs radically from von Rad¹ who feels that the saying here was isolated in its context and was 'in thematic respects' in no way related to v.20ff. Mowinckel, on the other hand, states that 'the connexion between the Day of Yahweh and the cult is sufficiently clearly indicated by the sequel, v.20ff., the denunciation of the festivals. This denunciation is the chief point in the passage, and it is in this connexion that Amos speaks of the 'Day of Yahweh'.²

On every day of Yahweh in the festival the people experienced his coming, which guaranteed victory over enemies, deliverance from distress, and the realization of peace, good fortune and favourable conditions; thus, whenever the people were in distress, they would long for the coming days of Yahweh which would bring the change of fortune. And in so far as the term might denote any appearance of Yahweh to save and bless, it is possible to speak of the beginning of the separation of the idea from the cultic festival. But in no circumstances could this be called a developed future hope, or an eschatology with a definite content. Mowinckel uses Isa. ii:12 to clarify his meaning here:

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1. G. von Rad, 'The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh', Journal of Semitic Studies, 1959, p.105.
 2. S. Mowinckel, op.cit., p.132.

For the Lord of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up and high.

The indefinite expression, יוֹם, shows that here the phrase has not yet become an eschatological term. Isaiah goes still further in the same direction as Amos, reversing the customary meaning of the Day: since Yahweh is a holy god who upholds justice, His day means a retributive settlement with Israel itself - Israel is Yahweh's enemy.

Mowinckel finds the seeds of all Hebrew eschatology in the phrase 'Day of Yahweh'. Its original meaning is really the day of his manifestation or epiphany, the day of his festival, and especially the day of festival which was also the day of his enthronement, the day when, as king, he came and wrought salvation for his people. While the cult maintained its hold on men's thinking, eschatological thought could not arise. In Israel, the cultic claims of Yahweh's universal rule and of his complete victory over the nations were accepted unquestioningly as long as the cult maintained itself; but when, in the later monarchy, the discrepancy between what faith proclaimed and what experience encountered became too great, then men took refuge in projecting Yahweh's victory into the future. Thus whenever the people were in distress or oppressed by misfortune they looked forward to a glorious day of Yahweh when he

would remember his covenant and, appearing as the mighty King and Deliverer, would bring a day on his own and his people's enemies, condemning them to destruction, and 'acquitting' and 'executing justice' for his own people.

In the future hope, and later in eschatology, the Day of Yahweh, or 'that day', becomes the term which sums up the great transformation, when Yahweh will come and restore his people, and assume kingly rule over the world. Arising out of the idea in the enthronement festival that all the hostile powers will gather together in order to destroy Jerusalem, but will be annihilated by Yahweh outside the city walls, eschatology also believes that in the last days the heathen will gather with hostile arrogance for a similar final onslaught, or that their hearts will be hardened by Yahweh so that they conceive this presumptuous plan, in order that he might destroy them at one blow.

Mowinckel agrees with Gressmann in his suggestion that the Day of Yahweh, both cultic and eschatological, has a strongly mythical flavour. The cultic enthronement of the god, from which the Israelite festival was derived, is not Israelite in origin, but belongs to the mythical religious background of the ancient Near East. But while the elements composing the festival were originally mythical and extra-Israelite, they have been so

incorporated into the framework of Yahweh's historical dealings with Israel, and have been so assimilated and transformed that they constitute a distinct cultic and ideological complex.

It is Mowinckel's cultic emphasis which differentiates his position from that of Gressmann. Mowinckel's criticism of Gressmann seems to be that he is too vague - while he explains the origins of the imagery in which eschatology in general and the concept of the Day of Yahweh in particular is clothed, he does not explain how the concept could have fastened upon the minds of the people and exercised such a hold on their lives. This is Mowinckel's primary concern. He seeks to explain the influential character of the concept of the Day of Yahweh in terms of its rootedness in an institution in which the people were able to participate. The essential part of his case is then that he provides an institutional embodiment for the Day of Yahweh and endeavours thereby to demonstrate in what circumstances it entered into the life of the people and exercised so tenacious a hold on them. The eschatological significance of the Day of Yahweh is to be understood as a development from its earlier anchorage in the Israelite cult. In this way Mowinckel can suggest that the concept of the Day of Yahweh is essentially Israelite in origin.

C. GERHARD VON RAD.

Gerhard von Rad has recently argued that the origins of the Day of Yahweh are to be sought in the traditions of the Holy War. His concern is to attach prophecy to the ancient institutions and historical traditions of Israel. The thoughts of the prophets have been formed in and influenced by an environment which is itself impregnated with the concepts found in the ancient Yahwistic traditions - traditions about the Exodus, the encounter at Sinai, the entry into Canaan, all of which were so formative for Israel's faith. All the prophets drew to a large extent upon the traditions, as well as introducing an element of 'novelty' into their message. But this newness is not to be regarded as something original in the mind of each prophet; rather is it a newness which is already prefigured in the ancient traditions - the 'novelty' lies simply in the reapplication of the old to each fresh situation with which the prophets were faced.

Before he sets forth on any detailed exegesis of the concept of the Day of Yahweh, von Rad makes two fundamental observations on method:

1. Until now, the study of the day of Yahweh has adopted too wide a literary basis for its researches, and has brought into the discussion a large number of ideas whose relation to the concept

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in question still has to be proved. Von Rad thinks that it is necessary to limit research to those passages which mention the Day of Yahweh expressis verbis.

2. At the same time there is a tendency to separate the concept of the Day of Yahweh from the literary context in which it appears. Consequently research has neglected the traditional phraseology which is consistently attached to the concept as well as the particular circle of ideas which the phraseology contains. To counteract this tendency, von Rad proposes to study the concept from the point of view of form criticism and the history of the tradition. These 'have taught us that terms as important as these seldom appear alone, but are as a rule associated with a whole complex of ideas which have definite recurring themes of whose presence careful account must be taken. In this respect, therefore, we must adopt a broader exegetical basis than can be provided by an examination of the term itself, and must include the whole of the textual unit in which the term appears along with its constitutive concepts'.¹
- The majority of attempts to explain the concept begin with the mention of the Day of Yahweh in Amos vi:18-20. For von Rad,

1. G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. II, 1965, p.119f.

however, the appearance of the term here has a casual and incomplete character. It is not able to offer a point of departure or a solid enough basis for research into the concept. He refuses to accept the premise of unity between v:18-20 and v:21-27 and the resulting inference that the day of Yahweh was originally a festival, and that at the time of Amos it still had some connexion with the cult. He states quite categorically that there is no unity between the two passages, 'for the individual speech units are in thematic respects in no way attuned to one another'.¹ As far as von Rad is concerned, all that can be inferred from this Amos passage is that the prophet's contemporaries looked for a Day of Yahweh and that Amos saw part of his task as preparing them for its being 'darkness and not light'. Thus the passage is not deemed sufficiently unequivocal to be used as the starting point for the discussion.

Rather does von Rad seek contexts which are at once as large as can be found and whose boundaries are clearly demarcated. These he finds in Isa. xiii; xxxiv; Ezek. vii; and Joel ii. The poem of Isa. xiii is generally held to be an anonymous prophecy of the sixth century, and is a self-contained poetic unity. It begins with Yahweh's summons to his גְּבֻרָתִי , his מִקְדָּשָׁי , to assemble for

1. G. von Rad, 'The origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh', Journal of Semitic Studies, IV, 1959, p.105.

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battle. There is a tumult upon the mountains as they come from the farthest corners of the earth, in order that they might execute Yahweh's will of judgment. The sun, moon and stars will be darkened (v.10), and the earth and heavens will tremble (v.13), because of the 'wrath of the Lord of Hosts in the day of his fierce anger' - v.13. The conclusion of the oracle describes a world totally desolate and with this the circle of ideas in the prophecy is closed. It depicts a war beginning with the gathering of warriors and ending with a description of a depopulated and devastated land. This war is conceived on a cosmic scale. Von Rad suggests here that the prophet is thinking of a sacral war: the warriors are

קדשי - holy ones. While the army is being assembled, before it goes into battle, panic besets the enemy; this discouragement of the enemy is an important element in the conduct of holy war, cf. Exod. xv:14-16; xxiii:27f.; Josh. ii:9,24; vi:1; vii:5; xxiv:12. Thus, by the term Day of Yahweh, the prophecy appears to understand a day of battle which is to issue in the complete victory of Yahweh. This day is characterised by frightening events in the universe; here too, traditional motifs are recalled, for already in connexion with the ancient wars of Yahweh, such extraordinary happenings are recorded - Jos. xxiv:7; 1 Sam. vii:10; xiv:15.

Isa. xxxiv may also be used as evidence here, even though it

does not contain the phrase יום יהרה but speaks instead of יום נקם ליהרה (v.8). It begins with the announcement to the nations of Yahweh's great wrath which, in v.5, is seen to be directed against Edom. It describes the annihilation of that country, brought about by the sword of Yahweh, and it ends with a picture of the resultant desolation. Von Rad suggests that here, too, the thought of Yahweh's fight is in the foreground. The phrase החרימם נתנם לטבה (v.2) is significant. Delivering enemies to the ban, חרם, was a part of the ritual of holy war, cf. Jos. vi:17,21. In the course of the battle terrible changes occur in the sky -

All the host of heaven shall rot away,
 and the skies roll up like a scroll.
 All their host shall fall,
 as leaves fall from the vine,
 like leaves falling from the fig tree.
 (v.4)

Ezekiel's prophecy against Egypt (xxx:1-19) is a comprehensive yet self-contained poem. A lament over the Day of Yahweh at the beginning of the prophecy described the day as יום ענן . Egypt and her allies will fall by the sword and the land and its cities will be devastated. Von Rad thinks that 'although somewhat abbreviated, Ezek. xxx:1-19 is nevertheless clearly parallel to Isa. xiii and xxxiv so that one is inclined to ask whether or not

all three are dependent on a prescribed prophetic pattern'.¹

Von Rad suggests that the same conclusion can be drawn from Ezek. vii. He is unconcerned that here the expression Day of Yahweh does not occur expressis verbis, holding that in view of such phrases as קרוב היום (v.7) and הנה היום הנה באה (v.10) it is obvious that the prophecy is dealing with Yahweh's day. Ezek. vii:7 mentions the מהומה of the day; even if, as Zimmerli² suggests, the passage is an interpolation, it is still sufficiently characteristic, for מהומה was part of the stereotyped description of the ancient wars of Israel, cf. 1 Sam. v:9,11; xiv:20; Deut. vii:23; xxviii:20. In this passage the description of the battle begins at vii:14.

In the prophecies of the Book of Joel von Rad sees important confirmation of his theory concerning the origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh. He accepts the assumption that i:15 is a secondary interpolation in the text and thus omits it from his discussion. It is in Joel ii:1-11 that von Rad finds the evidence which he is seeking. In view of the centrality of the Book of Joel to this thesis, it is perhaps most wise to quote directly von Rad's opinions which he has expressed in this

1. G. von Rad, op.cit., p.100.

2. W. Zimmerli, Ezechiel, Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament, 1955, p.167.

connexion in his article on 'The origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh' (op.cit., p.101).

'That Joel ii:1-11 is concerned with an actual locust plague is now generally conceded. What is interesting is the prophet's conception of this event and above all his means of representing the distress. It is evident from the way in which Joel pictures the distress that he is dependent on traditional, that is, more or less conventional, prophetic concepts; that is, on concepts which he applies only secondarily to the actual locust plague. He compares the locusts to the hosts approaching the battle of the Day of Yahweh, and in this comparison he has at his disposal the whole phraseology of the battle events of the Day of Yahweh. Once this concept has been mentioned, the stereotyped images follow.'

The sound of the שופר warns the people of the coming of the Day; הריע , 'sound the alarm', recalls the battle-cry תרועה . Both שופר and תרועה are connected with the ritual of Israel's early wars. The description of the locusts in vv.4-9 uses explicit military imagery, and in v.11 the locusts are identified as Yahweh's היל . The darkening of the sun, moon and stars, and the trembling of the earth and heavens recalls Isa. xiii. It was already noted in connexion with this passage that these were traditional motifs in descriptions of the ancient wars of Yahweh.

In concluding his discussion of the prophecy von Rad sums up his evidence:

'Joel ii:1-11 is only part of a large liturgical composition. It is all the more striking how little the actual cause, the locust plague, and the summons to a fasting service, was

able to influence the traditional presentation of the course of events once the cue 'Day of Yahweh' had been used. Again we have the call to battle, the discouragement and the panic which befall the nations, the earthquake and the darkening of the sky, and even the voice of Yahweh resounds as he precedes his army.¹

Von Rad also feels that the prophecy of the Day of Yahweh in Zephaniah (i:14ff.) is dealing with war, and corresponds to that of Isa. xiii and xxxiv; Ezek. vii and Joel ii. Jeremiah's first oracle on Egypt (ch. xxxvi) also begins with a call to prepare for battle. Discouragement has seized hold of the enemy and all help is vain in face of the destruction which rages.

On the basis of these texts von Rad endeavours to reach certain conclusions. In the first place he feels that the Day of Yahweh can be said to incorporate a pure event of war: Yahweh's rise against his enemies, his battle and victory. Such examples as Ezek. xiii:5, Mal. iii:24, Ob. 15f., Joel iii:4, iv:14 provide very few details, but they still strengthen this hypothesis. Von Rad states categorically that 'there is no support whatever in these texts for the supposition that the enthronement of Yahweh, too, belongs to the concept of the Day of Yahweh.'²

The second conclusion von Rad feels justified in drawing is that the entire material for all this imagery surrounding the concept

1. G. von Rad, op.cit., p.102.

2. G. von Rad, op.cit., p.103.

of the Day of Yahweh is of ancient Israelite origin. It is derived from the tradition of the holy wars of Yahweh, during which he appears in person, to destroy his enemies. This is not to deny the possibility that any of the particular ideas can also be proved to have been extant among neighbouring peoples of the ancient Near East, but it must be emphasised that the prophets have taken up the concept of the Day of Yahweh from a tradition indigenous to Israel, and not from any foreign sources. This tradition was that of the holy wars, during which Israel experiences something like a theophany, a personal entry of Yahweh.

Thus, in this way the announcement of the prophets concerning the Day was an actualization of ancient Yahwistic ideas. They did not create a new idea. Originally the Day of Yahweh was associated for the prophets with the belief in the acts of salvation which Yahweh performed periodically to protect his people. Although some of the prophets did express the idea that in his day of battle Yahweh might also turn against Israel itself. But the introduction of this element of threat into the concept is something new; certainly the holy war traditions meant only victory and salvation for Israel. In his discussion von Rad does not appear to account for the somewhat radical transformation of a tradition of victory to one of threat, although he acknowledges that it did occur. Presumably it must be

laid at the door of prophetic re-interpretation.

In view of this hypothesis of the origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh in the tradition of holy war, von Rad points out that the day was not originally an eschatological concept. 'It could have become such if the prophet considered the events of the Day of Yahweh as Yahweh going beyond the ancient scheme of salvation, or if the event of the Day of Yahweh, be it in a negative or a positive sense, pointed beyond the hitherto existing relation between Yahweh and Israel.'¹ But even in comparatively late texts the Day is spoken of quite uneschatologically.

It was felt to be in accord with the meaning of the concept to describe in retrospect an event in history as a Day of Yahweh, i.e. an event of war caused directly by Yahweh. e.g. Lam. i:21, ii:22 and also Ezek. xiii:5 which speaks of the failure of the prophets on the Day of Yahweh, which in the context appears to be the conquest of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Von Rad also suggests that Isa. xxii:1f. should be brought as evidence here and he interprets it in the light of the catastrophe of 701 B.C.

Von Rad is aware of the problem which is posed by the fact that the prophets saw the events of the Day of Yahweh in greater dimensions than that pictured by tradition in the ancient wars. For the prophets these events extended to the universal, even the cosmic. But he is

1. G. von Rad, op.cit., p.106.

not keen to admit that this can be accounted for by an infiltration of mythological images. He prefers another explanation - 'The extension of the concept to the universal corresponded simply to the growing measure of political danger. The political tensions under which the Palestine of the sixth century existed were more serious and more universal than 'in the days of Shamgar' (Judg. v:6). Israel had actually lived in the arena of tension, of world historical commotions. The mythical elements of the concept - clouds, darkening of the stars, etc. - are present from the beginning, and, as far as we can see, have remained surprisingly unchanged in tradition up to late prophetic times.'¹

1. G. von Rad, op.cit., p.107.

Exegesis of those passages in the Book of Amos which appear to have some bearing on the concept of the Day of Yahweh.

In any discussion of the 'Day of Yahweh' Amos v:18-20 is a locus classicus:

Wee to you who desire the day of Yahweh!
 Why would you have the day of Yahweh?
 It is darkness and not light;
 as if a man fled from a lion,
 and a bear met him;
 or went into a house and leaned with his hand against the wall,
 and a serpent bit him.
 Is not the day of Yahweh darkness,
 and not light,
 and gloom with no brightness in it?

But controversy exists as to exactly where the passage should begin and end; its limits are so uncertainly demarcated that von Rad and Mowinckel can hold opposing opinions concerning them. Von Rad appears to think that the oracle is contained within vv.18-20, while Mowinckel prefers to extend it from v.18 up to v.23.

He proposes that there is in the passage no reference to an eschatological day at some indefinite point in the future, but that the expression still has its contemporary connexion with the cult and with cultic experience. He maintains that the phrase 'day of Yahweh'

originally meant the day of Yahweh's manifestation in the cult at the New Year festival, and that this connexion with the cult of the festival, is still quite clear from the context in which the saying is found in Amos: 'the connexion between the day of Yahweh and the cult is sufficiently clearly indicated by the sequel, v.20ff, the denunciation of the festivals. This denunciation is the chief point in the passage and it is in this connexion that Amos speaks of the day of Yahweh.'¹

Lindblom² supports Mowinckel's contention here, holding that it would be entirely out of accord with the methods of the collector of the sayings of Amos if vv.21-27 should be separated from vv.18-20. If the collector had regarded them as two independent utterances, he would doubtless have marked the end of the one and the beginning of the other by an oracle formula or some word or expression which he usually used to separate the different sayings from one another. Lindblom further suggests that the 'day of Yahweh' designates a cultic festival for the worship of Yahweh just as the 'days of Baal' in Hos. ii:15 denote cultic festivals for the worship of Baal.

Von Rad refuses to accept this premise of unity between vv.18-20 and vv. 21-27 with its resulting inference. He declares that there is no unity between the two passages "for the individual speech units are

1. S. Mowinckel, He that Cometh, 1956, p.132.

2. J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 1962, p.317.

in thematic respects in no way attuned to one another."¹ According to von Rad the context in which the phrase 'day of Yahweh' is here found is not sufficiently well-defined to make it a satisfactory point of departure for the study of the concept. All that he feels justified in inferring is that Amos' contemporaries looked for a day of Yahweh and that Amos saw part of his task as preparing them for its being darkness and not light.

This inference, however, is not negligible for the study of the concept. It allows that the idea of the day of Yahweh was extant in the eighth century B.C. in an optimistic form. It seems to have originated among the people as a nationalistic ideal based, not on any ethical principles, but in the crude and unformed religious beliefs concerning the effects of the covenant by which Yahweh was assumed to be bound to help his people simply because they were his people. From the evidence available to us Amos seems to have been the first to take up this concept into the circle of prophetic ideas and to release it from its nationalistic assumptions by his announcement that the day involved not the judgment of Israel's enemies, but the judgment of Yahweh's enemies - and this could mean Israel herself. H.E.W. Fosbroke² underlines this point in his exegesis of vv.18-20:

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1. G. von Rad, 'Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh', Journal of Semitic Studies, 1959, p.105.
 2. H.E.W. Fosbroke, 'The Book of Amos', Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VI, 1956, p.817.

" . . . whereas popular opinion held that this final coming of God in power would redound to the advantage of the nation in the overthrow of all its enemies and the decisive establishment of Israel's pre-eminence and privilege, the prophet knew that the vindication of the majesty of the righteous God must mean the destruction of a people who were not only oblivious of the pervasive evil in the national life that cried out for punishment, but in their self-centredness could conceive of the final manifestation of divine omnipotence in the terms of their own exaltation."

Amos thus incorporated the concept of the day of Yahweh into the theological framework of his message. His emphasis is on the ethical behaviour which Yahweh demands of his people. The relationship which existed between Yahweh and his people carried with it responsibility, not only on the part of Yahweh to exercise his power on behalf of his people, but also on the part of Israel to deal with every man justly:

וְיִגַּל כְּמַיִם מִשְׁפַּט וְצְדָקָה כְּנַחַל אֵיתָן - v:24. These terms מִשְׁפַּט

and צְדָקָה are used by Amos to characterise the behaviour which Yahweh expected from his people. Amos' attitude here provides a marked contrast to that of Joel. It will be noticed that in Joel's concept of the day of Yahweh the theological and ethical basis which is so fundamental for Amos is lacking, and that its application is controlled by theological assumptions of a different kind.

Amos' message was essentially one of judgment on a people who took no account of their responsibilities which were inevitably attached to their relationship with their God. Into this framework of judgment Amos incorporated the concept of the day of Yahweh, and in

so doing he transformed it from a 'popular' to a 'prophetic' concept. For Amos the day of Yahweh was Yahweh's day, when he would manifest himself as he was, a God desiring righteousness from his people and punishing them when they failed to fulfil their responsibilities. He thus saw the day of Yahweh as a day of mourning, not of rejoicing, a day of gloom, not of light.

It is interesting that in Amos v:16f., the passage immediately preceding that which mentions the day of Yahweh, Amos predicts the wailing of the people. This idea of lamentation is also found in Joel's prophecy, especially in i:8-15 where various classes of the community are called to mourning in view of the catastrophe which has befallen the land, and which Joel associated with the day of Yahweh. If Amos v:16f. can be seen as connected with vv.18-20 in the chain of ideas, the similarity with the Joel complex is significant. The farmers and vine-dressers who will weep in Amos are also called to weep in Joel. Both passages describe an entire people given over to mourning because of the desolation which is coming. The difference is that in Amos the desolation was seen as attendant upon God's coming in judgment upon his people, while in Joel it is seen as part of the woes which will herald God's coming in judgment, not upon Israel, but upon the nations.

In addition to the differences of opinion concerning which verses make up the oracle, there is also debate about the text of vv.18-20

themselves. Marti¹ proposes to treat v.18 as original and suggests that v.20a was introduced to resume the thought of v.18 after v.19, a proverb which has crept into the text from the margin, had been added. M. Weiss², however, does not accept that v.19 is of an extraneous character. He suggests that in v.19 Amos is explaining the darkness which he mentions in v.18, and that "one must assume . . . that this simile constitutes an organic element in this prophecy."

The concept of darkness which Amos introduced into the idea of the day of Yahweh remained a part of the imagery associated with it, cf. Joel ii:2; Zeph. i:15. While darkness had associations with theophany and with the enthronement festival, in the context of the day of Yahweh it played a different role: it tended to take on the character of the day it described and thus became symbolic of its aspects of judgment and threat. The association of the day of Yahweh and darkness in Amos must be understood along these lines.

This passage is the only one in Amos' prophecy which specifically mentions the day of Yahweh. There are, however, other passages in Amos which, while not using the precise term 'day of Yahweh', may be regarded as referring to it, and can thus extend our knowledge of the concept as it existed in the time of Amos. The first passage to be considered in this light is ii:13-16:

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1. D.K. Marti, Das Dodekapropheten, 1904, p.194.
 2. M. Weiss, 'The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord' - Reconsidered', Hebrew Union College Annual, Vol. xxxvii, 1966, p.38.

Behold, I will press you down
 as a cart full of sheaves presses down,
 and flight shall vanish from the swift,
 and the strong shall not be firm in his strength,
 nor shall the mighty warrior escape with his life.
 He who wields the bow shall not stand,
 and the swift of foot shall not escape,
 nor shall the horseman save his life.
 And the strong in heart among the mighty men
 shall flee away stripped naked in that day, says the Lord.

אֲנֹכִי הִנֵּה is here used for emphasis and in contrast with the suffix 'you' in תַּחַתֵּיכֶם, otherwise the more usual הִנְנִי would be used. Kittel suggests that תַּחַתֵּיכֶם be replaced by הָאָרֶץ metri causa. The participle מֵעֵיִן is here used of the immediate future, but the root עִרַק, which also occurs in the next clause in the hiphil imperfect (תֵּעִיִן), is of uncertain meaning. The most commonly accepted derivation is from the Aramaic צָרַק 'to press'; some scholars suggest that it is derived from the Arabic جَرَحَ, 'to creak, groan' and hence 'to tremble, totter'. This accords with the alteration of תַּחַתֵּיכֶם to הָאָרֶץ, and would give the translation:

I will cause the earth to tremble,
 as a cart full of sheaves trembles.

Other commentators solve the difficulty by changing the text: עִרַק becomes פָּרַק, 'to reel, totter'. This also accords with the above translation, provided that the alternative reading הָאָרֶץ is accepted. The remaining verses describe the fear which will overwhelm even the most fearless of men 'in that day'. This panic may have been envisaged as the consequence of an earthquake. But in any case, Amos

is here depicting the day of Yahweh in terms of an overwhelming disaster.

Amos viii:2b-3 may also be regarded as descriptive of the day of Yahweh:

Then the Lord said to me,
 The end has come upon my people Israel,
 I will not pass by them again.
 The singing women of the Temple shall wail
 in that day,
 says the Lord,
 there shall be many corpses,
 everywhere they shall cast them out,
 keep silent!

The occurrence of the formula **וְיִאמַר יְהוָה** has been thought to suggest that this prediction was not part of Amos' vision of the basket of summer fruit, but an oracle which once had independent currency; in view of the play on words involved in **קִיץ** and **קָץ** it seems unnecessary to divide the whole in this way. The RSV translates v.3a: 'the songs of the Temple shall become wailings', but since the verb is actually **וְהִלְלִילָן** - shall wail - a more literal translation is perhaps gained by the slight emendation of **שִׁירָתָן** to **שָׂרָתָן** - i.e. 'songs' to 'singing women'. The words **הַשְּׂרָתָן הֵם** are obscure and the text may be in disorder, but even as it stands it presents effectively the horrors of the aftermath of war.

Amos viii:9ff. record fully the events and effects of the day of Yahweh:

And it will happen on that day,,says the Lord,
 that I will cause the sun to go down at midday,

and cause the earth to become dark in the light of day.
 I will turn your feasts into mourning,
 and all your songs into dirges,
 I will bring upon all loins sackcloth,
 and upon all heads baldness.
 I will make it like mourning for an only son,
 and its end like a bitter day.

Marti¹ rejects the introductory formula יהיה ביום ההוא נאם אדני יהוה as a later addition, but there seems to be no valid reason for so doing. Amos had already proclaimed that the day of Yahweh would be a day of darkness and mourning - v:16-20. The wearing of sackcloth was a customary way of mourning for the dead - cf. 2 Sam. iii:31: Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, 'Rend your clothes and gird on sackcloth and mourn for Abner'. - as was also the shaving of the forepart of the head to produce artificial baldness. This was a widespread custom among many peoples (e.g. Jer. xlviii:37; Ezek. xxvii:31) and was forbidden in Israel in Deut. xiv:1:

You are the sons of the Lord your God;
 you shall not cut yourselves or make
 any baldness on your foreheads for the
 dead.

Mourning for an only son is described in Jer. vi:26 as 'most bitter lamentation'. גמלת יהוה - the suffix refers to the lamentation and sorrow of Israel on this dreadful day.

In the texts which have been discussed so far, we find a number of recurring ideas apparently surrounding the concept of the day of

1. D.K. Marti, op.cit., p.218.

Yahweh - darkness, gloom, wailing, panic, fear, mourning, destruction and cosmic disturbances. This imagery is also present throughout the book of Joel in connexion with the day of Yahweh, and Isa. xiii will also be seen to bear witness to the same circle of ideas. Indeed, throughout the Old Testament, wherever the day of Yahweh is referred to, all or part of this descriptive complex is associated with it.

It is interesting to compare the passages in Amos which appear to refer to the day of Yahweh with Ezek. vii. It is not important that in this chapter the expression 'day of Yahweh' does not occur in view of the exclamations 'near is the day', 'behold the day', 'the day draweth near'. Both prophets seem to be railing against the popular belief in a victorious day for Israel:

Your doom has come upon you, o inhabitant of the land; the time has come, the day is near, a day of tumult, and not a joyful shouting upon the mountains. Now I will pour out my wrath upon you, and spend my anger against you, and judge you according to your ways; and I will punish you for all your abominations.

Ezek. vii:7-8.

Again in Ezek. vii:10-13 can be seen Ezekiel's awareness that Yahweh demands right dealings of man with man which is such a focal point in Amos' teaching. The day of Yahweh is a day of judgment on those who avoid their social responsibilities:

Behold the day! Behold it comes! Your doom has come, injustice has blossomed, pride has budded.

Violence has grown up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, nor their abundance, nor their wealth; neither shall there be pre-eminence among them. The time has come, the day draws near. Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is upon all their multitude.

For the seller shall not return to what he has sold while they live. For wrath is upon all their multitude; it shall not turn back; and because of his iniquity none shall maintain his life.

With this compare Amos ii:6f., iii:9f., iv:1-3, v:10-13, vi:1-8.

There remains only to be considered the passage Amos ix:11-12:

In that day I will establish the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old.

That they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name unto them,

says the Lord.

It is doubtful that this is a "genuine" Amos passage. P.A. Munch¹ holds that vv.11-15 are a later addition, and he uses the passage as evidence that בִּלְךָ הַהֵרָא is an editorial connective:

"In v.11 we have got, anyway, a sort of rhythmic prose. But the first half line (v.11a) is out of all proportion long compared with the three half lines in v.11b, so it is presumable that בִּלְךָ הַהֵרָא is merely editorial. Anyway, it is meant to connect the addition with the preceding things. In the first place, all sinners shall be exterminated from the people. When Yahweh has done that, then (בִּלְךָ הַהֵרָא) he will 'raise up the hut of David that is fallen'".

1. P.A. Munch, 'The expression בִּלְךָ הַהֵרָא . Is it an eschatological terminus technicus?' Avhandlingar utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, 1936, p.47.

However one assesses this interpretation of בְּיִמֵּי הַיְהוָה , and Munch's hypothesis in general, it is certainly debatable whether or not these verses are a firm reference to the day of Yahweh. They might simply refer to the future in general. But if they are taken to refer to the day of Yahweh, they are witnesses to the original nationalistic interpretation of the day and derive from the circle of apparently Zionist tradition which does not accept the interpretation of the day as one of threat.

What, then, do these passages from the book of Amos add to our understanding of the concept of the day of Yahweh? Amos v:18-20 is a key passage because it shows that there existed a belief in the day of Yahweh early in Israel's history. The prophet used the phrase here in such a way that it must have been widely diffused in order for him to have been understood. It also shows that this popular belief was essentially optimistic and expected Israel's salvation to be accomplished on that day. This suggests that the idea of the judgment of Israel on Yahweh's day was a secondary development in the concept, and Amos stands forth as the initiator of this radical re-interpretation of the tradition. As such, he provides an interesting comparison with Joel, who, as we shall see, has reverted to the original optimistic and nationalistic form of the tradition. It cannot be inferred from any of the Amos passages that the concept had any eschatological significance at this period: while it looked to a future event, there

is no hint that this event would transgress terrestrial limits. In this respect, the tradition will be found not to have suffered any change by the time of Joel. These Amos passages which appear to deal with the day of Yahweh furnish evidence that the imagery which surrounds the concept did so from early on in its history.

**Exegesis of Joel i in the light of the concept
of the Day of Yahweh.**

It has been a subject for discussion since Duhm whether the passages pertaining to the Day of Yahweh in chs. i and ii of the Book of Joel should, in fact, be regarded as original. Many commentators, for example Eissfeldt¹, Sellin², Robinson³, Birkeland⁴, and Mowinckel⁵, prefer to regard these passages as later interpolations. The effect of these deletions is to reduce the significance of the prophecy considerably; Joel merely becomes a poet describing a disaster at present afflicting the inhabitants of Judah. A locust plague was a common catastrophe; it was a doctrine of the Torah that a plague of locusts was a punishment for transgressing the commandments of God (Deut. xxvii:38), and

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1. O. Eissfeldt, The Old Testament : an Introduction, 1965, p.394.
 2. E. Sellin, Das Zwölfprophetenbuch übersetzt und erklärt 2 und 3 umgearb. Aufl. Leipzig, 1929.
 3. T.H. Robinson, Die zwölf kleinen Propheten. Hosea bis Micha, Tübingen, 3rd Ed., 1963.
 4. H. Birkeland, Zum hebräischen Traditionswesen. Die Komposition der prophetischen Bücher des Alten Testaments, Oslo, 1938, p.64f.
 5. S. Michelet, S. Mowinckel, N. Messel, Det Gamle Testamente Overstatt, 1-3, Oslo, 1929-44.

whenever it occurred preparations for penance were thus bound to be arranged. If Joel had only sent out the appeal to do penance, there is no reason why his words should have been handed down to posterity, as he intimates is his wish in i:3. It is because Joel saw more in the plague than the mere destruction of vegetation that his words gain in meaning. His task as a prophet is to look beyond the present calamity to its wider significance as a part of the dealings of Yahweh with his people, and to make them, as his people, aware of this significance. Is not the introduction of the concept of the Day of Yahweh into the description of the effect of the locusts to be understood in the light of Joel's consciousness of this task?

Joel begins by calling the elders and the inhabitants of the land (v.2). The same terms are used in v.14; could this be some sort of formula or stock expression? אֲנִי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל are mentioned throughout the Old Testament: Exod. iii:16,18; Num. xi:16; 1 Sam. xxx:26-31; 1 Kgs. xxi:8; 2 Kgs. x:1,5. M. Noth¹ suggests that the institution of the elders of the clan goes back to the period before the occupation when the clans were still nomadic units, and that the institution was later transferred from the clans to the tribes. During the monarchy they seem to have formed a sort of municipal

1. M. Noth, History of Israel, 1960, p.108.

council and were the men who took action under the laws (Deut. xxi: 1-9). R. de Vaux¹ points out that in Mesopotamia, from the eighteenth century Mari texts down to the royal correspondences of the Sargon dynasty in the eighth century, the elders appear as the people's representatives and the defenders of their interests, but without any administrative functions. It seems to have been a similar case in Israel. The elders appear to have held established positions of responsibility and were thus the focal point of the community (Lev. iv:13-21; Deut. xxi:1-9). Their judicial functions are especially prominent in Deuteronomy, cf. xix:2; xxi:2-20; xxii: 15-18; xxv:7-9. Such passages as Exod. xxiv:1-2,9-11; Lev. iv:13-21 show them in cultic roles, and they are seen as parties to the royal covenant with David (2 Sam. v:3). They survived the fall of the monarchies and are found during the Exile (Ez. viii:1, xiv:1, xx:1,3) and after the Return (Esd. x:8,14). The evidence thus does seem to suggest that the term הַזְקֵנִים designated a particular class in Israelite society. It is not obvious to whom Joel is referring in the phrase כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל הָאָרֶץ. Perhaps the natural assumption is that he is here addressing the populace in general. In view of the position of respect which the elders seem to have held, Joel may be purposefully suggesting an antithesis which can include

1. R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions, 2nd Ed., 1965, p.138.

within its compass all strata of society, and in this way he emphasises the comprehensiveness of his summons.

In v.4 Joel comes to a description of the plague itself. The locusts, coming in unprecedented numbers, have stripped the countryside bare of every growing thing. The four terms here used for the locust are mentioned again in ii:25, where Yahweh promises that, despite the action of these insects, the land will still yield grain, wine and oil. The question has been raised whether the four terms signify four different insects or simply point to the various stages in the locust's development. Other Semitic languages have names for the phases of the locust; the Talmud gives over twenty names. J.A. Thompson¹ points out that the existence of Talmudic and Arabic names for locust phases gives credence to the assumption that Joel is speaking of the one insect in its stages of growth.

Vv. 6-7 amplify the description of the locust and its effect. They are pictured as אַרְבֵּי עֲצוּמִים וְאֵין מִסְפָּרָם. As early as the Targum on Joel ii:25 a symbolic interpretation of these insects is found:

וְאֵשְׁלִים לְכוּן שְׁנִיָּא טַבְתָּא חֲלִף שְׁנִיָּא
 דְּבִזְרֵי יִתְכוּן עַמְמִיָּא וְלִישְׁנִיָּא שְׁלִטוֹנִיָּא
 וּמְלִכוּתָא פּוֹרְעָנוּת חִילִּי רַבָּה
 דְּשִׁלְחִית בְּכוּן

1. J.A. Thompson, 'Joel's Locusts in the Light of Near Eastern Parallels', Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 14, 1955.

- I will restore to you the good years instead of the years which peoples, tongues, powers, and destroying kingdoms have plundered, my army which I sent against you.

As late as E.B. Pusey¹, commentators have taken these insects as figures of successive human invaders of Palestine. Joel's frequent use of similes of a human army (cf. ii:7-9) provides the basis for this interpretation. In non-biblical Near Eastern texts human armies are often compared with locusts in both numbers and destructiveness.

In the legend of King Keret (1 K 103-5, 192-194) his army is said to be as numerous as locusts². Many passages in Assyrian royal annals compare invading armies to locusts in their number and the devastation which they cause.³ Adadnirari 111 asks that Adad, 'foremost in heaven and earth', destroy the name of any prince who may remove or deface his stela and 'come on like a locust swarm and bring low his land' (D.D. Luckenbill. *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1. Chicago. 1926. para. 737). Sargon II states that he overran the lands of the Manneans and their associates 'like (a swarm) of locusts' (ibid. 11. Chicago. 1927).

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1. E.B. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, 1860, London.
 2. H.L. Ginsberg, 'The Legend of King Keret', Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research, Supplementary Studies, Nos. 2-3, pp.16,18, 1946.
 3. P.L.O. Guy, 'New Light from Armageddon', with a chapter on An Inscribed Scaraboid by W.E. Staples. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 9, 1931, pp.62-63.

para. 10). The same monarch likens his attack on the lands about Mounts Arzabia and Irtia to that of a swarm of locusts (ibid. para. 163). Sennacherib describes how his warriors, attacking the enemy along the river Ulai, swarmed from the ship to the shore like locusts (ibid. para. 321). He also speaks of the Elamites attacking him 'like the onset of the locust swarms of the spring-time' (ibid. para. 252). Assurbanipal's messengers brought back word to him that the Elamites were 'overrunning Akkad like a dense(?) swarm of grasshoppers' (ibid. para. 355). Assurbanipal also describes the people and animals which he carried off from Elam as being 'more numerous than grasshoppers' (ibid. para. 920).

Biblical records also bear witness to the familiarity of the comparison between human and locust armies among the Israelites. The Deuteronomist, writing at a time when the Assyrian influence had long been felt in the land, speaks of the Midianites as 'coming like locusts for number; both they and their camels could not be counted; so that they wasted the land as they came in' - Judges vi:5. Jeremiah prophesies of the armies of the north that 'they shall cut down her forest (i.e. Egypt's) . . . though it is impenetrable, because they are more numerous than locusts; they are without number.' - Jer. xlvi:23.

In all the above examples, however, it is obvious that the characteristics of the locust are used metaphorically in order to emphasise the magnitude and destructiveness of the human armies. Nowhere are the human armies described allegorically as locusts. Thus there does not seem to be any precedent for the view that Joel, in mentioning locusts, is allegorically alluding to human invaders. In his prophecy the description of an invasion of locusts must be understood literally, relating to an actual historical incident, and the reference to locusts is not to be taken as a mere literary device to describe a vast army.

The first group of people whom Joel calls to lament the effects of the calamity are the $\square\text{לכרד}$, v.5. The RSV translates this as 'drunkards', but in the absence of any kind of invective against drunkenness, contrary to what is so often found in other prophets (Am. vi:6; Hos. iv:11), this is perhaps too strong a word. Indeed, it is noticeable that Joel, alone among the prophets, does not rail against his listeners for their opposition to and stubborn defiance of Yahweh's will. Although it was believed that a plague of locusts was a punishment for transgressing God's commandments (Deut. xxviii: 38), we seem to look in vain in the Book of Joel for an ethical basis to Joel's summons to penance. He offers no reason for the occurrence of the plague, but concentrates on its removal by means of a public

festival of lamentation.

It is not obvious why Joel picks out first the wine-bibbers and summons them to lament. Perhaps he is simply fixing on certain situations in order to bring home the severity of the disaster. The drinkers will certainly have cause to lament when the wine supply is exhausted because the locusts have laid waste the vines. The description of v.7 gives the motivation for the tipplers' lament.

The wine-drinkers are asked to weep. The verb used here is

בכה . Since ancient times this verb was connected with the Canaanite cultic weeping for Baal when he descended into the earth.¹ The problems of cultic weeping are dealt with by F.F. Hvidberg.² Some of his conclusions are especially relevant here and deserve quoting in full:

It seems as if in the laments and the requests to weep before Yahweh in the Book of Joel there are a few passages which according to stylistic form and motif date back to early Israelite traditions of lamentation and weeping connected with the withering of the vegetation in the fire of the summer sun, which again dated back to the ancient Canaanite lamentation over Baal's death. If so, the first two chapters of the Book of Joel are of special interest to us. On the one hand, they deal with weeping before the living Yahweh, on the other hand, they occasionally in their motifs date back to the weeping over the dead Baal.³

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1. G.R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, 1956, p.109, B.1.i.9, B.1.i.16 concerning Anat's weeping for Baal.
 2. F.F. Hvidberg, Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament, first published in Danish in 1938. Translated by N. Haisland and published in English in 1961.
 3. F.F. Hvidberg, op.cit., p.142.

The last part of this quotation raises the question: why should the Israelites weep? The Canaanites wept for their god whom, they believed, had died, but there is no evidence to suggest that in Israel the belief in a dying god was assimilated into Yahweh worship; weeping among the Israelites could not thus be regarded as part of the mourning rites for the deity. In adopting the Canaanite cultic practice, Israel transformed it into an established feature of the functions of repentance, by means of which one consciously tried to influence Yahweh. Weeping was taken into the service of confessions and became part of the communal lament, cf. Ps. cxxxviii:1. This development of cultic weeping is illustrated in Joel ii:12, with which Esth. iv:3 should be compared; in both passages the same three words are used - צָרָה ; נָכַח ; תְּפִלָּה . They are obviously practices which are a part of a public feast of repentance.

This tradition can be traced back to the old Canaanite religion, and in v.5 there is perhaps a more direct connexion. Its context, mentioning wine and drinkers of wine, suggests an accumulation of words and terms which depends on a background in the old fertility cult, with its lament over the dead god of vegetation. The verb, הִלְלִיל , to lament, wail, howl, may well have belonged to the same world of ideas, but there are no longer in the Old Testament many traces of this.

Among the passages in the prophetic books where the verb is to be found, Hos. vii:14 may well contain an allusion to the fertility cult. There are certain textual difficulties within the verse. If the Hebrew text is to be accepted in 14a, Sellin¹ suggests that the wailing upon their beds, על-משכבתם, should be understood to refer to their cries at the places where they prostrated themselves beside the altars; cf. 2 Sam. xii:16; Ps. iv:5; lxxiii:7; cxlix:5. The evidence for this interpretation is somewhat dubious, but if it can be accepted it is the same as that arrived at by adopting the reading על-מזבחתם, beside their altars. The Hebrew reading of v.14b על-דגן ותירוש יתגוררו, 'they assemble themselves for corn and wine', can only mean that their resort to the places of worship is to ensure their supply of corn and wine. Another possible rendering of יתגוררו is 'they excite themselves'; but elsewhere the root גרר implies a stirring up of strife or war, rather than the excesses connected with the altar. Moreover, the hithpoel of גרר is not otherwise found. LXX κατετεμνυτο points to 'they gash themselves' i.e. יתגוררו. This would seem entirely in accord with the realm of thought in the rest of the verse. The 'gashings' referred to are the bodily

1. E. Sellin, op.cit.

lacerations which occurred during the ecstatic manifestations which were a feature of Canaanite worship. They were also part of the well-known mourning customs which, while forbidden in Deut. xiv:1; Lev. xix:28; xxi:5, were nevertheless practised in Israel, cf. 1 Kgs. xviii:28; Jer. xvi:6; xli:5; xlvii:5; xlviii:37. Thus on the basis of the above interpretation and emendation, Hosea appears to be directing his polemic against the weeping and lamentation over the dead deity of vegetation as was practised in the fertility cult.

The verb לָלַח is found in Joel i:11 and 13 as well as in i:5. Within the context of vv.3-14 the complex of ideas suggests a background in the wailing and mourning for the dead god when he descended into the earth, and grass and trees withered. There are a number of Tammuz hymns which contain laments connected with the god. Two are published in Cuneiform Texts XV 28 and 29, and are discussed in an article by F.A. Vanderburgh¹. The first appears to be connected with Tammuz' sojourn in the lower world. His consort, Ishtar, is with him, and she appeals to Tammuz to regard the wasting life of the vegetable and animal world. His response suggests that there is no means of relief at present. Ishtar, therefore, takes to lamentation and turns to the house of solitude

1. F.A. Vanderburgh, 'Babylonian Tammuz Lamentations', American Journal of Semitic Languages, XXVII, 1910-11, pp.312-321.

to await the arrival of a better day. In the second hymn the thought advances from that concerning the decline of vegetable growth to that of unproductiveness in the animal kingdom. The scene of the dialogue is still the lower world. The chief figure is Tammuz, and probably the second character is Ishtar, appearing in the guise of Tammuz' sister. She comes before Tammuz with ewe and lamb and kid; looking at these offerings she bursts into wailing because of the unproductivity of animal life.

In another development of the Tammuz story he himself is the object of lament and lies stretched on a bier surrounded by mourning musicians. J. Dyneley Prince has published a translation of a 'hymn to Tammuz' found in cuneiform texts XV, plates 20 and 21, in which it appears that the god himself is the object of lament¹. In lines 4-9 there appears what amounts to a refrain calling for weeping for the god, whose various attributes are then enumerated; although the text is somewhat mutilated, it is still possible to see to whom the hymn is addressed and what his attributes are:

L.4 Stormy weeping for the mighty one, the god Damu . . .

L.5 Stormy weeping for the youthful one, lord of the name of life.

L.6 Stormy weeping for the god of the word of judgment, of the eye of precious stones . . .

1. J. Dyneley Prince, 'A Hymn to Tammuz', American Journal of Semitic Languages, XXVII, 1910-11, pp.84-89.

- L.7 Stormy weeping for the god, the artificer, the lord of . . .
 L.8 Stormy weeping for the artificer, the lord of . . .
 L.9 Stormy weeping for him who is the light of my heaven . . .

In the Ugaritic texts there is a description of the mourning of Lutpan (i.e. El) and Anat for the dead Baal (B.1.vi.10-31)¹. When Lutpan hears the news of Baal's death, he descends from his throne and sits on the ground, strews straw and dust upon his head, rends his clothing, sets up a stone daubed with blood and two pillars, gashes his face and cheeks, beats his breast and tears his arms, while he asks what will become of Baal's followers; and he announces his intention of going down to the netherworld. Meanwhile, Anat, scouring hills and mountains in search of Baal, arrives at the Elysian fields where she finds him dead and thus also rends her clothes in token of her grief.

It is clear that throughout the Semitic world the death of vegetation was seen as the result of the departure of the deity to the underworld, and both events were accompanied by ritualistic wailing, the characteristics of which were similar to the wailing for a dead relative or friend. Is this the complex of ideas which lies

1. G.R. Driver, op.cit., p.109.

behind Joel's lament in vv.8-14? One must beware of making too facile a judgment. Throughout his lamentation Joel has in mind the especial historical disaster which is affecting his listeners here and now, while the laments for the dead deity are essentially seasonal rites. To try to carry the influence of these ancient myths too far would be a mistake.

An illustration of this point is to be seen in v.8. The term בעל נעוריה , 'the lord of her youth', is puzzling. בעל generally denotes 'husband', and does not fit well with בתולה 'virgin'. It is possible that בעל נעוריה may mean the husband whom a girl might have married but did not. In Prov. v:18 and Mal. ii:14 the phrase 'wife of thy youth' is found, and it signifies the wife a man married while still a young man. On this analogy, the phrase 'husband of thy youth' could refer to the husband a girl might have married while still young. 'Baal' could also be translated 'god', and in this case the verse appears to allude to the fertility rites of lament. Hvidberg¹ suggests that 'the phrase in 1:8 might be a formula that dated back to the virgin, whose weeping over her beloved one, her brother and baal, could serve as a model to all Canaanites in ancient times, the weeping of the 'Virgin Anat' over the dead Baal'.

1. F.F. Hvidberg, op.cit., p.142.

The cultic background of this phrase seems to be more certainly established when we find in the Gilgamesh Epic¹ (VI.16-47) what appears to be an almost exact parallel:

a-na ^{ilu} du'uzi ha-mi-ri su-uh-ri-ti-ki
 sat-ta a-na sat-ti bi-tak-ka-a tal-ti-meš-su

ha-mi-ri su-uh-ri-ti-ki provides an almost exact parallel to the phrase

בַּעַל נַעֲרָתָיָה , and here the husband is defined unmistakably as

Tammuz. This may suggest that the passage in the Gilgamesh Epic is the original of which Joel i:8 is a reflexion. Bi-tak-ka-a is the participle 'weeping' from the root bkh with an infix 't', paralleling the Hebrew root בכה . Tal-ti-meš-su may be derived from 'sim, to decree, (cf. Heb. ס'פ) with an infix 't' and dissimilation of 's' to 'l'. Thus we obtain the translation:

'For Tammuz, the husband of thy youth

Thou has ordained wailing year after year.'

In view of the undoubted correspondence between this passage from the Gilgamesh Epic and Joel i:8 it is tempting to assume that Joel has taken up the whole range of concepts which are associated with the liturgical wailings for Tammuz, but the temptation must be resisted. It is one thing to suggest that literary expressions

1. R. Campbell Thompson, The Epic of Gilgamesh, Oxford, 1930, p.39.

from the myths of the dying god have been incorporated into the prophetic message, but to suppose that the content of the Yahweh worship has been affected by these myths is something quite different and entirely without adequate foundation. To call upon Hosea again to illustrate the point: while he retains phraseology whose original Sitz in Leben is undoubtedly the fertility cult, as in his marriage metaphors (e.g. ii:11,13), he so uses this phraseology that it is turned against the context from which it sprang, and deliberately reiterates the fact that it is not Baal, but Yahweh, to whom worship is due.

Thus in Joel we must remember that we are still discussing the locust plague which was described in the immediately preceding verses, and it is this disaster which is the cause of Joel's summons to lament. In falling back on the phraseology of the death of the god and the loss of fertility, Joel is making use of expressions of distress with which the people were familiar, although it is unlikely that they were aware of the original locus from which these 'motifs' sprang, and by this means he emphasises the distress caused by the plague.

V.9 begins with the statement:

הכרת מנחה ונסך מבית יהוה

With this can be connected v.13c

כי נמנע מבית אלהיכם מנחה ונסך

A religious consequence of the devastation wrought by the locusts is that there are now no materials available with which to make an offering. A cultic prophet, which Joel may well have been with his stress on and knowledge of the cult, would emphasise this aspect of the enormity of the situation, and would see in it a major reason for a call to penance. In view of ii:14

מי יודע ישוב ונחם והשאיר אחריו בכרה
מנחה ונסך ליהוה אלהיכם

this view of the verses in question is to be accepted as the correct interpretation.

v.9b אבלו הכהנים משרתי יהוה

v.10a שדר שדה אבלה אדמה

Here we have the verb אבל occurring twice. In the third edition of Koehler-Baumgartner's lexicon two roots, with no semantic connection between them are suggested:

1. אבל , to mourn, found in Ugaritic once as a plural participle meaning 'mourners'.
2. אבל from the accadian abālu, meaning to dry up, wither.

It is obvious that it is the priests who mourn and the ground which dries up.

Perhaps the meaning of the two roots can be related in the cycle

of wailing found in the Tammuz and Baal liturgies. When the deity descended into the ground the grass dried up, the fields withered, the vines and the plants were scorched by the relentless summer sun. Possibly this withering of the vegetation was interpreted as a mourning of the soil for the dead god. However this may be, the consequence of both the departure of the deity and the death of vegetation was universal lamenting for the return of the god and the subsequent revival of vegetation. Thus the verb אָבַל, used for withering, could glide into the meaning of to lament, mourn. This does not mean that there is here in Joel an explicit reference to or an echo of the Tammuz liturgy. But an understandable semantic connection is explained in the Tammuz cycle.

In each of the next three verses - 10, 11 and 12 - the verb-form אָבַל is found. Koehler-Baumgartner and Brown, Driver and Briggs derive it from the verb אָבַל. It occurs five times here, almost in the nature of a cultic refrain. But there seems to be no reason why this form cannot equally well be derived from אָבַל, to wither, and if אָבַל can be accepted as having the double meaning of 'to wither' and 'to mourn', could not אָבַל be interpreted on the same analogy? In v.10 אָבַל is coupled with מָלַל, to wilt, and therefore the primary meaning of the root (i.e. to wither) is most acceptable. But in v.11 אָבַל is followed by הִלְלִילוּ,

'wail', and in this instance it seems appropriate to assume that a close parallel is implied, and that here נָחַם has the derived meaning of 'mourn'.

Down to v.7 of this chapter, the description is undoubtedly that of a locust plague. But from vv.8-12 it is not at all certain that this is still in the prophet's mind. The complex of ideas from which Joel seems to have drawn his imagery suggests rather the action of the scorching sun than that of the all-devouring locust. The idea of withering brings to mind a drought, and in these verses there does not seem to be an especial reference to locusts at all. Nevertheless, some continuity between vv.2-7 and vv.8-12 must be found. Perhaps both the plague and the drought are features of the same distressing situation. This problem occurs again before the end of the chapter, and will be dealt with more fully there.

In v.13 Joel turns to the priests in his summons to lament. The suffixes here are interesting; Joel seems to detach himself from the priests, he does not seem to speak as if he were one of them. He does not merely advise the priests to lament; but tells them that in view of the seriousness of the situation they should call the people to a day of penance. This is the motive behind Joel's address to the priests and his summoning of individual groups to mourning is perhaps to be understood in the context of the penance feast which in v.14 he urges the priests to proclaim.

In v.14b זקנים כל ישובי הארץ is an address in the vocative with the imperative זעק . This reference to elders and inhabitants of the land immediately recalls v.2 where the same people are addressed. זעק appears to be almost a technical term for appealing to Yahweh. It has become the stock formula in the Book of Judges - ויזעקו בני ישראל אל-יהוה (cf. iii:9,15; vi:6,7; x:10,14; xii:2). It is found in 2 Sam. xiii:9, interestingly connected with rites of mourning and penance. Cf. also Esth. iv:1; Jer. xxv:34; Ezek. xxvii:29b-32a. In Isa. xiv:31 and Jer. xlvi:31 זעק and לל occur together. These examples of the use of this root suggest that it was contained within that circle of ideas of ritualistic wailing which was at first an expression of bereavement but soon in Israel came to be connected with the acts of penance before Yahweh. The context in which it is found here in Joel strengthens this interpretation of the verb's meaning.

Is there a certain pattern to be discovered in these first few verses of ch. i? In v.5ff., v.9ff., v.11ff., v.13ff., individual groups of people are distinguished, and the whole section has thus fallen into four stanza-like structures of five or six lines each which are approximately of equal length, while the metre of the individual lines varies. Within each unit there is a connection between the call to weeping, the indication of who it is who has

been called, followed by the explanation of why he has been called, introduced with either כִּי , or עַל - v.5b, 11b. That this is a pattern is confirmed by its occurrence in many other places in the Old Testament: Isa. xiv:31; xxiii:1; xxxii:11-14; Jer. vi:26; xxv:34; xlix:3; Zeph. i:11; Zach. xi:2. The summons is given in the imperative and the one who is called is addressed in the vocative; the reason for lamenting follows generally with כִּי , more rarely with עַל , once with עַל and כִּי as in Joel i:5,11. Only on relatively few occasions (Isa. xxiii:14; Jer. vi:26) does the context clarify what kind of situation is involved - it is in general the summons to lament as the ancient world was wont to do on the occasions of death and public calamity.

An analogous imperative is perhaps to be presumed in the אָבֹל of v.9b which is how the LXX understood it, since it indicates אָבֹל . הַכְהֲנִיִּם is thus the vocative, and the explanation is given in v.10 where the כִּי occurs in the second part of the verse. הַבִּיטוּ and הִלִּילוּ in v.11 are also to be taken as imperatives and not perfects; the lack of the article with אָכְרִים and כְּרָמִים does not contradict this, cf. v.15. The explanation follows introduced by both עַל and כִּי .

Thus in v.14 Joel calls the priests to summon the people to a communal lament and feast of penance. On glazed tiles discovered at

Asshur and belonging to the time of Sargon II (722-705) there is a picture of intercession to an Assyrian deity for the removal of a locust plague.¹ In Joel, too, the people are called to intercede with Yahweh to remove the disaster under which they are suffering.

In the next verse, v.15, there occurs the first mention of the Day of Yahweh. This phrase occurs again in ii:1,11. How far Joel connects or even identifies the Day of Yahweh with the locust plague is a question which has puzzled many commentators.

Since the time of Amos, the idea of judgment was basic to the concept of the Day of Yahweh; it was a matter of the divine wrath and the fulfilment of Yahweh's well-deserved indignation. Zephaniah (i:18) saw it as a day of Yahweh's anger against a rebellious Jerusalem, impervious to Yahweh's word and lacking in faith. In i:7 he depicts the day as a day of punishment for Israel because it turned away from Yahweh and adhered to a foreign cult. Ezekiel, prophesying in Babylon to the exiled Jews awaiting the news of the fall of Jerusalem, announces יָמֵי יְהוָה, and, although the idea is not clearly set out in so many words, 'the day' signifies Yahweh's day. Again it is a day of punishment on Israel (vii:15,21,24) because of its sins and worship of foreign deities.

1. J. Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, Princeton University Press, 1946, pp.175-176, fig.76.

But the catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem marked an end and a beginning in the history of Israel. Despite the troubles faced by the struggling community of Judah during the years of reconstruction after the Exile, there is every reason to believe that a period of great security prevailed. Certainly Israel seemed to have paid double for all her sins (Isa. xl:2); and as long as the stability of the Persian empire persisted (539-332), the Jewish community in Palestine was not molested by external political threats. Within this community the faith was being reassessed. Pre-exilic prophecies of doom were felt to have been realized in the fall of Jerusalem with a severity unimagined. Israel began to turn in on herself, and her consciousness of being an 'elect' community grew side by side with her belief that her time for judgment was past. Obadiah's prophecy illustrates this: he also proclaimed the nearness of the Day of Yahweh, but he did not include Israel in the judgment which would be meted out thereupon (Obad. 15-17).

Due to the complete lack of direct allusions to time in the Book of Joel, it is impossible to arrive at any definite conclusions concerning the date of writing. But it is generally agreed that a date sometime in the fourth century B.C. is the most acceptable. This places the prophecy in the latter half of the Persian period, and the growth of the ideas just outlined must be taken into

consideration in an interpretation of the book as a whole and the concept of the Day of Yahweh contained therein.

It was noted above when discussing the lack of invective against drunkenness in v.5 that Joel appears to have no ethical basis for his summons to penance. Unlike the classical prophets he does not detail the causes which lead to the effect. Cf. e.g. Hos. iv:1-10; viii:11-14; x:1-4; Amos ii:4-5,6-8; iii:13-17; v:8-17; x:1-4; Jer. v:1-15; vi:13-15. His concern seems to be rather to bring about the removal of the disaster which is presently afflicting Israel by the summoning of a public day of penitence. This reflects Joel's concept of the Day of Yahweh: to him it does not essentially contain a threat to Israel; it is not a threat of judgment in view of the community's apostasy and disobedience. While she might be caught up in the preliminary woes of that Day, ultimately Israel might be sure of her salvation. In the Book of Joel thoughts of the Day of Yahweh are aroused because of the natural disaster of a plague of locusts which are wrecking havoc over the countryside. In this calamity Joel sees an omen or a portent of Yahweh's judgment, not on Judah, but on the nations. In other words, it is the beginning of the woes which will finally usher in Yahweh's day which will mean blessing for the Jews and doom for the rest of the nations of the world. In v.15 the idea of the Day of Yahweh is only briefly

sounded. It occurs in chapter ii in a more developed form. It is hoped that the interpretation of the concept found in Joel which is outlined above will be strengthened by the details there.

Eissfeldt¹ sees in vv.15-20 a prayer of lamentation spoken by the priests, who have been summoned in v.14. The lament of v.15 is followed by a description of the disaster. Here again occurs the question of what kind of calamity Joel is describing. In vv.16-20 there is not a single explicit mention of locusts, and the vocabulary employed suggests rather that the cause of the hardship is a drought. Perhaps it is advisable not to try to distinguish the two events, locust plague and drought, in Joel's mind. At the height of the summer drought would be an everyday occurrence and at this time too, the locust plagues were often at their most troublesome. It may even be that the connection between the two events is more intrinsic than this; the drought may have been more than just a usual seasonal drought, and may have been associated directly with this especially disastrous locust plague. Thus, in describing first the plague and then the drought, Joel was merely picking out individual features of a single complex situation.

The metaphor of fire, which he uses in vv.19-20 and again in ii:3,5, is equally apt for both aspects of the distress. It carries

1. O. Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: an Introduction, 1965, p.392.

within itself the idea of heat and the consequent withering of vegetation under the action of the sun; but it is in addition an apt figure of speech to describe the destruction wrought by the locust. G.A. Smith¹ quotes a recent observer when he says 'bamboo groves have been stripped of their leaves and left standing like saplings after a rapid bush fire, and grass has been devoured so that the bare ground appeared as if burnt'.

Vv.19-20 are cast in the form of a prayer with its motivation. It is the first real indication in this chapter that all these descriptions of distress are related to an address to Yahveh. Much of the vocabulary of the chapter is based on the stock descriptions of distress occurring in lament contexts (cf. Jer. ix:10, xiv:2-6), and the contents of the chapter, its motifs and vocabulary, suggests that a knowledge of a liturgy lies in the background. If Joel is to be regarded as a 'cultic' prophet, such knowledge is to be expected. 1 Chron. 25:1 affirms that the prophet's chief function is in the service of worship, and A.R. Johnson² suggests that the prophets were a part of the cultic personnel, and in the post-exilic period they appeared as leaders of musical guilds who enjoyed special responsibility for the musical side of worship. In this case, they

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1. G.A. Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets, 2nd Ed., 1928, Vol. II, p.403.
 2. A.R. Johnson, The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel, 2nd Ed., 1962, p.69.

may well have taken part in the liturgical recitation of some of the psalms. Engnell¹ suggests that the Book of Joel was originally based on a penitential liturgy and may perhaps best be characterised as a 'prophetic reproduction' of an original cultic liturgy. Nevertheless, the chapter itself is not a liturgy, and only in vv.19-20 is there a prayer addressed directly to Yahweh as in the communal laments, cf. Pss. xliiii, li, liv, lv, lx, lxi.

Thus in ch. 1 of the Book of Joel we find the sequence: locusts - drought - Day of Yahweh - drought - prayer. Engnell² would suggest that a broad and minute description of the details like that in Joel, should not lead to the assumption that we are dealing with a representation of actual facts. He prefers to suppose that the Book of Joel is a prophetic imitation of an original cultic liturgy, but he cannot deny that the Sitz im Leben of this liturgy could well be a day of penitence caused by such attacks of locusts as are described in chapters i and ii. There thus seems little reason, if any, to propose that Joel is not describing an historical incident. The devastation resulting from the locust attack appears in vv.5ff. as the point of departure of the prophet's preaching and in vv.8-14 Joel uses motifs furnished by the Canaanite cultic weeping over the

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1. I. Engnell, cf. A. Kapelrud, 'Joel Studies', Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1948, pp.193-195.
 2. A. Kapelrud, op.cit., p.193-194.

dead god to emphasise the severity of the disaster. But in recognising the source of this imagery, one must bear in mind that it is only a means of literary expression and that it is the historical fact of disaster caused by a locust invasion which is Joel's primary concern. The lack in the descriptions of the disaster of any differentiation between the plague and the drought leads one to suspect that there is for Joel an inherent connection between them and that they are simply two aspects of the same catastrophe. The introduction of the concept of the Day of Yahweh into this sequence is of interest for the interpretation of Joel's thought, although so brief a reference makes it unwise to draw any definite conclusions at this stage. All that can be safely suggested is that there is here no element of threat allied to the concept. It is hoped that this factor will prove of importance in a later stage in the exegesis. The sequence of thought in this first chapter creates a structure which has a certain slackness within itself, and is yet a complex unity; the description of the effects of the plague and drought culminates in a cry to Yahweh for help.

Exegesis of Joel ii in the light of the concept of the Day of Yahweh.

In ch. ii the eschatological note, which was but briefly sounded in ch. i, is expanded by Joel in his description of the locusts. He begins in v.1 by calling for a trumpet signal, **תִּשְׁמַע**, to sound the alarm in Zion, since the locusts, having pillaged the countryside, are now moving on to ransack the town itself. The verb **הִרְיֵעַן** which is perhaps best translated 'raise the cry', is connected with the cry **תִּרְוֵעָה**. **תִּרְוֵעָה** and **תִּרְוֵעָה** were associated with the ritual of Israel's early wars. 'When the battle was about to commence, the **תִּרְוֵעָה** gave the signal to shout the battle-cry (Jos. vi:5ff.; Judg. vii:16ff.) . . . This battle-cry, **תִּרְוֵעָה**, . . . was originally a savage shout meant to inspire the ranks and to strike fear into the enemy. But it was also a religious cry, closely bound up with the role of the Ark in fighting (cf. 1 Sam. iv:5f.); it then became part of the ritual surrounding the Ark (2 Sam. vi:15), and finally passed into the Temple liturgy (Lev. xxiii:24; Num. xxix:1) and certain psalms'.¹ Joel was probably aware of

1. R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions, 2nd Ed., 1965, p.254.

the liturgical use of these terms, but he must also have been familiar with their origin in the Holy War traditions. While calling these traditions to mind here he has reapplied them in an eschatological context: the שופר must give the signal for the cry תרועה to be raised, because Yahweh is calling up his army of locusts to execute his judgment upon כל ישרי הארץ - here perhaps all the inhabitants of the world, not just of Judah.

It was stated in the discussion of von Rad's theory of the origins of the concept of the Day of Yahweh that the holy war tradition meant essentially victory for Israel, and defeat for her enemies. This idea seems to be carried through in Joel's concept of the Day of Yahweh: the locust plague appears to be part of the first phase of the Day of Yahweh which will ultimately bring blessing for the Jews (ii:19ff., 24-27), but doom for the nations (iv:2ff., 14, 19).

The motivation for the alarm is given in vv. 1c and 2a:

כי בא יום יהוה כי קרוב
יום חשך ואפלה יום ענן וערפל

- 1c. For the Day of Yahweh has come, it is near,

2a. A day of darkness and gloom, of clouds and thick darkness.

v. 1c echoes i:15a: אהה ליום כי קרוב יום יהוה

The phrase in v. 2a finds a parallel in Zeph. i:15. The concept of

darkness seems to have been closely related to the Day of Yahweh since Amos confronted his hearers with the proclamation

Woe to you who desire the day of the lord!

Why would you have the day of the lord?

It is darkness and not light.

(v:18).

Behind the idea of darkness as opposed to light, i.e. night as opposed to day, there lay the concept of darkness as signifying chaos, and light as signifying the ordered world. This idea stems from Israel's cultural environment and is found in the creation story of Gen. 1. Before God actively sent forth his word to create light, darkness brooded over the primeval ocean, and this darkness of chaos represented the original condition of the world; God's first act in creating our world was to overcome darkness by causing there to be light.

The concept also has associations with theophany, especially with the theophany on Mt. Sinai, which served as the classic example for all later descriptions of the theophany, cf. Deut. iv:11, v:22, Exod. xiv:19ff., 2 Sam. xxii:12. Here darkness is an accompaniment of theophany. But the idea of darkness as a phenomenon which occurs when God in his holiness appears to sinful man does not necessarily contain the element of threat within it; rather does it play a beneficent role in shielding mortal man from the awesome majesty of

God (cf. 1 Kgs. viii:12).

לַיְהוָה יָבִיט occur also in Ps. xcvi:2, an ancient enthronement psalm belonging to the cultic New Year festival, where they are said to surround Yahweh. On the basis of this connexion, Kapelrud¹ feels that 'we have been able to ascertain that both Zephaniah and Joel use traditional material derived from Yahweh's enthronement festival when they are about to describe details of Yahweh's day.' From this, he goes on to conclude that 'the day of the enthronement was essentially Yahweh's day.' But the same objection is to be raised here - in the darkness which surrounds Yahweh at the enthronement festival the element of threat is as absent as it is at Mt. Sinai. Indeed, since the enthronement festival was essentially one of fulfilment for Israel, it cannot have been the original source for the concept of the Day of Yahweh as it was conceived by Amos and his fellow prophets unless one makes allowance for a process of radical reinterpretation of the concept.

Thus in the context of the Day of Yahweh darkness has a different function to that which it performs both in the theophany and in the enthronement festival. It has a tendency to take over the characteristics of the day which it describes and thus is representative of its aspects of judgment and threat. Aalen² suggests that

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1. A. Kapelrud, 'Joel Studies', Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1948, p.73.
 2. S. Aalen, Die Begriffe 'Licht' und 'Finsternis' im AT, 1951, pp.14-15.

darkness becomes a 'chaoszustand' and recalls the primeval darkness before creation. Possibly in this sense the eschatological darkness of the Day of Yahweh carries also that which goes against the established order of nature.

כשחר , 'like dawn', has involved much controversy in its interpretation. The notes on Joel i and ii from the meeting of the Old Testament Translators' Translation Committee (Cambridge, March 18-21, 1968) suggest that 'to retain the pointing of the Masoretic Text makes good sense, and the simile of 'dawn' is better suited to 'mountains', and is appropriate if the emphasis is on speed rather than on light, and the idea that the multitude is coming from all directions.' But the most frequently accepted solution is to read

שחר , darkness, soot; this involves no variation of the consonants, only a change in the vocalization. Recent descriptions show that locusts in flight blot out the sun, and thus seem to bring darkness wherever they go.

עם רב ועצום recalls עצום ואין מספר (i:6) and עם עצום of ii:5. In v.2 Joel again emphasises the extraordinary character of these locusts . כמהו לא נהיה מן העולם . This is not simply a plague of ordinary locusts - these locusts have set in motion the train of events which will culminate in Yahweh's day.

V.3 continues the description. The structure of both v.3a and

v.3b is אַחֲרָיִךְ . . . לַפְּנֵיךְ , but whereas the parallelism of v.3a is synthetic, mentioning destruction both times, the parallelism of v.3b is antithetic. But it is not to be doubted that Joel is still describing the devastation wrought by the locusts. The metaphor of fire is very apt for this, as was noted in the discussion on i:19-20.

From vv.4-9 Joel describes the locusts with the aid of military terms. Von Rad takes this description as evidence that the Day of Yahweh originated in the traditions of holy war¹ - once the Day of Yahweh is mentioned the complex of ideas surrounding the concept is automatically brought forward. There is the call to battle (ii:1), the discouragement and panic which befall the nations (ii:6), the earthquake and the darkening of the sky (ii:10), and even the voice of Yahweh resounds as he precedes his army (ii:11).

Again in v.5 the metaphor of fire is used to describe the locusts; again the aptness of this metaphor is borne out by recent observers, who have compared the sound of flying locusts at close quarters to 'the rattle of hail or the crackling of bush on fire.'²

v.6 מִפְּנֵי יַחֲלִיל עַמִּים . The use of עַמִּים here signifies more than just the inhabitants of Judah, and lends credence to the interpretation of כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ suggested in v.1, thus

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1. G. von Rad, 'The origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh', Journal of Semitic Studies, IV, 1959, p.102.
 2. G.A. Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets, Vol. II, 2nd Ed., 1928, p.391.

strengthening the idea that Joel sees in the locust plague a threat to all the nations. The phrase כל פנים קצבו פארוך in v.6 finds a linguistic parallel in v.10: כוכבים אספו נגהם . Both קצב and אספו have the meaning 'to gather together', 'to assemble', and hence 'to withdraw'; פארוך and נגה are synonyms for 'brilliance', 'lustre'. Thus, in v.6 the phrase means literally 'all faces gather in, withdraw, their brilliance', and can be adequately rendered: 'the colour ebbs away from every face'.

Vv.7-9 resume the military imagery in the description of the locusts as they invade the city. V.7d, ולא יעבטון ארהותם, is somewhat obscure. יעבטון would be literally 'they borrow' or 'lend', but, as Bewer¹ points out, the explanation 'they do not lend their paths', i.e. each one maintains his own and does not allow another to take it, does not sound natural. One manuscript reads ולא יבעטון , another מ'עבטון ; the Targum explains by מ'עבטון . LXX εκκλινωσιν and Peshitta and Vulgate 'declinabunt' may point to an original יטון or יעוון or יעותון . Perhaps this last suggestion is most probable. The Interpreter's Bible proposes the emendation יעבתון , but Bewer dismisses this as inadvisable, due to the doubtfulness of the reading in Mic. vii:3, although the root meaning of עבת , to wind, weave, twist, is well-

1. J.A. Bewer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Obadiah and Joel, International Critical Commentaries, Edinburgh, 1912.

established. Certainly the context suggests some such meaning as 'they do not swerve from their paths', as the RSV translates.

It has frequently been pointed out in the above description that Joel portrays the locusts as supernatural creatures of cosmic significance. According to Merx¹, Joel's locusts are apocalyptic creatures even in ch.i, and symbols of invading armies of the end time in ch.ii. Similarly van Hoonacker² in 1908 held that they are not real, but types of the future catastrophe of the Day of Yahweh. Much more recently, Pfeiffer³ has described Joel's animals as 'similar to the mythical locusts of Rev. ix:3-11.' But one must differentiate between the locusts and the significance which they have for Joel. It cannot really be questioned that the plague itself was a real historical incident. But Joel has seen more in its advent than just a locust plague, severe and troublesome though it is; he has seen it as setting in motion the series of events which have a cosmic significance because it is bringing about the apocalyptic day when judgment will be proclaimed and the nations condemned. Because the locusts signify all this to Joel, it is easily understood why he uses eschatological terms in describing them.

These eschatological terms reach a climax in the description in

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1. A. Merx, Die Prophetie des Joel und ihre Ausleger, 1879.
 2. A. van Hoonacker, Les Douze Petits Prophetes, *Études Bibliques*, 1908.
 3. R. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1941, p.574.

v.10. The subject is still the locusts, but here more than anywhere Joel identifies the instrument which brings the Day of Yahweh with the event itself. The quaking of the earth is often associated with manifestations of divine power and judgment (iv:16; Pss. xviii:7, lxxvii:18; Isa. xlii:13; Nah. i:5; Hab. iii:6), as are also the trembling of the heavens (Isa. xlii:13) and the darkening of the heavenly bodies (Isa. xlii:10; Ezek. xxxii:7).

יִרְגֵזוּ כָל - v.10 - may be a deliberate echo of רָגַז אֶרֶץ
 יִשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ - v.1 - and suggests that it may not be contrary to Joel's thought to draw a parallel between 'all the inhabitants of the earth' and 'the earth'.

B.S. Childs¹ has made an interesting study of the verb used to describe the trembling of the heavens here in v.10, רָעַר . He draws evidence to suggest that early in the history of Israel רָעַר became associated with the theophany of Yahweh, when he showed his power over his creation in causing the earth to tremble or shake (Judg. vi:4; Ps. xviii:8). In both these examples the borrowing from the language of the Sinai theophany is clear.

During and after the Exile, however, 'the eschatological usage of רָעַר in connexion with a final judgment through a returned chaos is everywhere apparent'. The term seems to have become 'a terminus

1. B.S. Childs, 'The enemy from the north and the chaos tradition', Journal of Biblical Literature, 78, 1959, pp.187-198.

technicus within the language of the return of chaos'. To illustrate this contention, Childs draws upon Ezek. xxxviii-xxxix which describes the approaching end of the world when distant, anti-godly nations descend upon Jerusalem. At that time Yahweh ushers in his day with a great shaking - לַיָּמַי וְשָׁמַי v.19. The root is found again in v.20 when Yahweh shakes the world and destroys the demonic forces of Gog with rain, fire and brimstone. The verb is connected with the eschatological chaos in Isa. xiii:13 where the Day of Yahweh is pictured as a shaking of heaven and earth, cf. also Isa. xxiv:18ff. In Haggai וְשָׁמַי appears three times with reference to the end of the old age when the heavens and the earth will be shaken (ii:6,7,21). Finally Childs cites Joel ii:10 and iv:16, where the verb occurs referring to a final judgment through a return of chaos, to support this contention. His study is of interest in our discussion because it underlines the eschatological significance of the events described in ii:10 and in this way emphasises the eschatological interpretation which Joel gives to the locusts.

In reading Joel ii:1-11, Isa. xiii is constantly brought to mind. As well as the literal correspondence between Isa. xiii:6 and Joel ii:15, there are many other parallels. Isa. xiii:8 also mentions the panic and anguish which will be felt by the people. Cosmic disturbances are mentioned in Isa. xiii:10,13. The military imagery

of Joel's description finds an echo in Isa. xiii:4 - 'The Lord of Hosts is mustering a host for battle' - and this verse may have been in Joel's mind when he wrote ii:11 - 'The Lord utters his voice before his army, for his host is exceedingly great'.

In face of all these agreements, it has been suggested that either one passage may be dependent on another, or that both are dependent on a third, unknown to us. Most commentators appear to feel that Joel is the one who quotes or is influenced by the Isaiah passage - e.g. Bewer¹, Sellin², Wade³. The Interpreter's Bible⁴ suggests that one of the reasons for assuming Joel's dependence is that, while in Isaiah the similar phrases are integral parts of the larger context, in Joel they are only parenthetical theological interpolations. This almost tacit assumption of dependence on the part of Joel seems somewhat facile. Nowack⁵, in connexion with Joel i:15 and Isa. xiii:6 notes the similarity but remarks that it is difficult to decide which is the original, with which thought Kapelrud⁶ is in agreement: 'the sentence has the effect of being a standing expression, and neither Isa. xiii, nor our passage furnish any explanation of it. We seem to be dealing with an established expression closely connected with the idea of

1. J.A. Bewer, op.cit.
2. E. Sellin, Das Zwölfprophetenbuch, 1929.
3. G.W. Wade, The Book of the Prophets, Micah, Obadiah, Joel and Jonah, Westminster Commentaries, 1925, p.70.
4. Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VI, p.731.
5. W. Nowack, Die kleinen Propheten, 1922, p.100.
6. A. Kapelrud, op.cit., p.55.

Yahweh's day. It is then most likely that both Isa. xiii and Joel derived it from a third passage, unknown to us.' This explanation of the agreement between Isa. xiii:6 and Joel i:15 can perhaps be extended to cover the other agreements also in the proposal that the writer of Isa. xiii and Joel were drawing upon a similar tradition in their descriptions of Yahweh's day.

Joel's cry in v.11b כִּי גְדוֹל יוֹם יְהוָה וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד וְמִי יִכְלִי לִנְוֹ (Joel 1:11b) suggests that this time of woes will be so severe that it will be a test even for the elect on whom the judgment is not directly focused. It is this which gives the clue for the interpretation of vv.12-14. The Jews, as the elect community, were certain of ultimate salvation at the final reckoning, but before this the time of woes had to be endured. To ensure the people's survival during this period of testing, and perhaps to gain a mitigation in the severity of the woes, Joel called a feast of penance. It may be that Yahweh could be persuaded to look upon his people with mercy.

The section ii:12-14 begins with an unmistakable formula introducing a prophetic oracle. It is cast in the form of a speech from Yahweh and then turns into a word from the prophet, expressing the hope of divine mercy. The rites described in v.12 - תָּסוּמ (Joel 2:12) and תָּסוּמ , - have already been seen to be an established feature of the functions of repentance by means of which one consciously tried to influence Yahweh, cf. Esth. iv:3, and on Joel i:15. A deeper

prophetic note is sounded in v.13a, וְקָרָעוּ לְבָבְכֶם וְאֵל בְּגָדֵיכֶם recalling the words of Jeremiah (cf. xxiv:7, xxix:13). But Joel does not seem to have grasped the depth of meaning of Jeremiah's thought. His influence must be traced rather as it manifests itself superficially in words and expressions.

Joel now embarks on a song of praise. It has the structure of the hymn, which had an established position in the cult.¹ Here there is the introduction to the hymn: first the summons to turn to Yahweh, then the motive clause introduced by וְדָ with the building up of his attributes:

Return to the Lord, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,
and repents of evil.

ii:13.

But although the phrases are similar, the direct address to Yahweh, which is an intrinsic part of the hymn, is lacking: 'The hymns of praise express the consciousness of standing before Yahweh personally and of experiencing him as he really is . . . It is the eventuating God, the God who 'reveals himself' and 'saves', to whom the festal hymn is addressed'.²

The same catalogue of God's mercies is found in Jon. iv:2:

For I knew that thou art a gracious God and
merciful, slow to anger and abounding in
steadfast love, and repentest of evil.

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1. S. Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, Vol. I, 1962, pp. 81-90.
 2. S. Mowinckel, op.cit., p.89.

Cf. also Pss. lxxvii:15, ciii:8, cxlv:8, Neh. ix:17. Both the passages from Joel and Jonah correspond to God's own declaration to Moses on Mt. Sinai:

The Lord, the Lord, a god merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love
and faithfulness.

Exod. xxxiv:6b.

But instead of the phrase 'and faithfulness' which is found in the Exodus passage, they read 'and repenteth of evil', i.e. the evil which he intended to bring upon the people.

V.14a is closely connected with what precedes. Because Yahweh abounds in mercy, he may turn and repent of the sufferings which he has caused his people to undergo, and 'leave a blessing behind him'. V.14b is in parenthesis, giving Joel's interpretation of what this blessing of Yahweh will mean: the removal of the drought and of the locust plague as the afflictions which the people are enduring, and the subsequent renewed growth of vegetation. For Joel, as a cultic prophet, the most important consequence of this is that there will again be materials with which to offer the daily sacrifices at the Temple. It was noted in connexion with i:9 and 13 that one of the first results of the disaster was that there was no material for the offerings. In his attitude towards sacrifice Joel reveals much that is in common with priestly piety. This supports the view that he is in some way connected with the cult.

There is a renewed summons to penance in vv.15-17 (cf. i:14).

תקעו שופר בציון recalls v.1, but here the trumpet call is clearly connected with the liturgy and the day of penitence. The repetition of the imperatives conspires to give a sense of urgency to the summons. This is strengthened when it is realized that it is the entire population which is called together - even children and bridal couples who are normally released from the duties of the cult - that none may be lacking. This indicates the extraordinary nature of the situation which the people are facing.

As in i:14 it is the priests who offer up the prayers on behalf of the whole people. This idea of the whole community being personified by the one is discussed by Mowinckel¹: The 'unity of the whole and its proper representative becomes particularly clear in the cult . . . The priest or king contains the whole and all its members, when he appears as the leader of the cult. He really represents - in the old meaning of the word - the whole people'.

Community laments show many parallels with the thoughts expressed in the prayer of v.17. To the general request חוּסָה יְהוָה עַל עַמֶּךָ cf. Isa. xxxiii:2, Pss. lvi:1, lviii:1, lxxix:8. The idea of the mockery of other nations at the sufferings of Israel is also found in Pss. xliv:14, lxxiv:10, lxxix:4, lxxx:6, and in the individual lament of Ps. cix:25. The taunt אֵיךְ אֵלֶּהֶם occurs also in Pss. lxxix:10, cxv:2 - hymns with the lament motif - Mic. vii:10 and the individual

1. S. Mowinckel, op.cit., p.44.

lament of Ps. xlii:3,10.

In v.18 the holding of a penance day is already presupposed. Yahweh hears the appeal of the priests and a favourable answer from him is anticipated. As in the community laments, Yahweh's reply follows in the form of an oracle; there also his reply is almost always favourable, although in Isa. xvi:12, Jer. xiv:10,xv:1ff. the appeal of the people fails to elicit a favourable answer from Yahweh, cf. also the individual lament in Jer. xii:5.

Yahweh's oracle is given in vv.19f. and 24-27. It is introduced by the term וַיִּעַן , 'and (Yahweh) answered', which, as Engnell¹ points out, is to be found as a technical term precisely in this way in the liturgical texts from Ras Shamra. It looks forward to the removal of the drought and of the plague and the restoration of the land so that it will produce more than its customary abundance. In vv.17 and 19 we have the sequence: appeal - creative response. The promises harmonise with the complaints (cf. i:10), and the last part of the promise of v.19 is a direct answer to the prayer of v.17:

וְאֵל תַּתֵּן בַּחֲלֹתְךָ לְחִרְפָּה לְמַשַּׁל בָּם גּוֹיִם
וְלֹא אַתָּן אֶתְכֶם עוֹד חִרְפָּה בְּגוֹיִם

The typifying of the locusts as the army of Yahweh which he will use to fulfil his judgments, is found again in v.25. But in v.20 the locusts are typified as $\text{הַצִּיּוֹן הַצָּפוֹנִי}$. The 'enemy from the north'

1. Cf. A. Kapelrud, *op.cit.*, p.194.

is discussed by B.S. Childs¹. Drawing evidence from Isaiah and Jeremiah he suggests that in the pre-exilic passages dealing with the enemy from the north there are no signs of the mythical interpretation of the enemy, but throughout the enemy has retained the characteristics of a human agent. But Childs proposes that the Exilic and post-Exilic periods witnessed a development in the tradition. The change in the essential function and nature of the enemy first appears in Ezek. xxxviii-xxxix. The description, beginning on the nebulous fringes of history, has been elevated into the trans-historical, 'into an arena beyond direct relation to contemporary reality'.² There is a similar transformation of the enemy tradition in Isa. xiii and in the book of Joel. Childs' discussion concerning וַיָּבֵא in Joel ii:20 is directly related to his conclusions regarding וַיָּבֵא (see on ii:10).

"The book of Joel describes a locust plague which ushers in the day of Yahweh (ii:1,11). Gressmann³ noticed the many features which do not fit into the picture of an ordinary locust plague. The burning fire (ii:3), the trembling of the earth and heavens (ii:10), the blackening of the stars (ii:10); these stem from another tradition. Our suspicions are confirmed by ii:20: 'I will remove the northener far from you . . . ' The foreign elements appear due to the fact that the locust plague, which enters ordinarily from the south, has been described in the language of the enemy-from-the-north tradition. The relation between the locusts and the transhistorical cataclysm is clearly evident in ii:10: 'The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened and the stars withdraw their shining.' In ch. iv the parallel to Exediel's picture is striking. Again the attacking nations descend in the latter day

1. B.S. Childs, op.cit., pp.190-197.

2. Ibid., p.196.

3. H. Gressmann, Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie, 1905, p.187f., and Der Messias, 1929, p.134f.

upon helpless Zion. Yahweh intervenes at the last moment to shake the heavens and the earth (iv:16). Clearly the Enemy-from-the-north has become identified with the return of chaos. The occurrence of the verb וַיִּשָׁקֵט in ii:10 and iv:16 would appear to confirm this conclusion."¹

Childs concludes that in the early Exilic period the enemy took on superhuman characteristics and could be depicted with the aid of language drawn from the chaos myth. It thus developed into a definite tradition associated with the final judgment and the return of chaos.

The thought of v.27 reappears repeatedly in various laments - 2 Kgs. xix:19, Ps. lxxxiii:19, cf. also Isa. xlv:6, xlvi:9, xlix:26.

Vv.21-23 interrupt Yahweh's oracle with a summons, spoken by Joel, to thankful rejoicing. Eissfeldt² suggests that it "is perhaps to be understood eschatologically, since it anticipates the response of God to a prayer which in the context is proclaimed as if it had only just begun." Others prefer to think of these verses as a later addition; but it is a mistake to impose too rigid a time sequence on the prophet's thought. It was a license frequently exercised by the prophets that in the midst of the disaster of the present time they could anticipate the future and call the people to rejoicing in a hymn of praise, cf. Isa. xiii:5f., xliiv:23, xlix:13, liv:1, lxvi:10, Zeph. iii:14, Zach. ii:14, ix:9, and also Ps. xcvii:12. The form - the summons, the mention of the one who has been called, and the explanation introduced

1. B.S. Childs, op.cit., p.197.

2. O. Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: an Introduction, 1965, p.392.

by יו - is the same as that in i:5-13, and these hymnic summons to joy are the antithesis of all the calls to weeping.

There is thus a very definite movement of thought in this chapter. The lament over the disaster in the first verses, where the Day of Yahweh is practically identified with the locusts, is followed by the description of the invaders themselves. In vv.10 and 11 they are seen as having a definite eschatological significance and their effect is the same as that which occurs at the appearance of the divine. Because of Joel's terms of reference here, it must not be assumed that the locusts were other than an historical fact; the significance which they had for Joel as the initiators of the events which were to culminate in the final cataclysm, has naturally coloured his description of them. V.11 concludes with a cry of lamentation, followed in vv.12-18 by a new penitential call and the prayer of the cultic servants on behalf of the community. Yahweh's answer and promise is given in vv.19f., 24-27, while v.21-23 interrupt Yahweh's oracle with a song of rejoicing on the part of the prophet.

It is clear that the tentative conclusion of ch. i, that in Joel's concept of the Day of Yahweh there is no element of threat for Israel, is borne out by the thought of ch. ii. While the people are suffering under the invasion of locusts as part of the preliminary woes of the Day of Yahweh, Joel assures them that they are not to be disappointed in their confident hope of blessing from Yahweh. The afflictions of the

present time will be removed and Israel will be restored to her privileged position as Yahweh's people.

Exegesis of Joel iii in the
light of the concept of the Day of Yahweh.

The result of the rhythmical division of the books of the prophets undertaken by Sievers and Duhm has been that until quite recently Joel iii and iv have been regarded as later additions to the preaching of the prophet. Robinson¹ has analysed the strophes of the book of Joel and proved that it is difficult to posit any regular metre, many sections having no metric regularity whatsoever. He is still in agreement with Sievers and Duhm in their conclusion that chapters iii and iv must be separated from chapters i and ii and considered as an apocalypse: in contrast to the situation in i and ii, the events described in iii and iv have an eschatological significance. But Robinson makes the proviso that the eschatology in iii and iv is relatively undeveloped and is widely different from the apocalypses of the second century B.C., resembling rather the eschatology that Amos combatted in v:18-20. Weiser² agrees that chs. i and ii are to be separated from iii and iv, but he would not go so far as to suggest that they were written by different authors. He proposes that, when

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1. T.H. Robinson, Die zwölf kleinen Propheten. Hosea bis Micha. Handbuch zum Alten Testament, 1964, 3rd Ed.
 2. A. Weiser, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1961, pp.239-241.

the locust plague and drought were ended, Joel wrote down his oracles which he had pronounced on this occasion, and in order to expand the allusions contained in them to the coming Day of Yahweh - allusions which Weiser holds were present from the first - he added the more detailed apocalyptic prediction in chs. iii and iv. Thus Weiser is proposing that "from the point of view of *formgeschichte* the first part at least can be claimed as a kind of 'prophetic liturgy', composed for the day of lamentation and penitence on the occasion of the plague of locusts and recited by the prophet in the course of the cult. In this case the second part would then be considered to be a subsequent interpretation and expansion in a general eschatological sense."¹

In 1944 Engnell² rejected Duhm's theory and conclusion, maintaining that the book of Joel is 'uniform' in the same sense as the other prophetic books; here he bases his views on the new cultic aspects seen in prophecy and on his knowledge of the significance of oral tradition in the Old Testament. R.H. Pfeiffer³ had already in 1941 upheld the unity of the book of Joel: "since both parts of the book seem to have been written about the same time, there is no compelling reason for attributing them to a different author. In the devastation wrought by the locusts, Joel could have seen a symbol of the dreadful

1. A. Weiser, *op.cit.*, p.240.

2. Cf. A. Kapelrud, 'Joel Studies', Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1948, p.122.

3. R.H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1941, p.575.

crisis to come, when God would sit in judgment over mankind." And in an article on the date of the book, M. Treves sees no reason for questioning its unity and integrity.¹

But there is a certain problem in relating i and ii to iii and iv. The ideas of the later chapters do not seem to be intrinsically related to the central nucleus of the book of Joel - the situation of crisis caused by the severe locust plague and drought. Lindblom² states fairly categorically that chapters iii and iv are made up by "a series of purely eschatological prophecies which have no direct connexion with the foregoing, but were joined to it probably because they derived from the same prophet." It is true that there appears to be little close connexion with the general situation of the preceding verses; the materialism of the promise in ch. ii - e.g. vv.24 and 26a: "The threshing floors will be full of grain and the vats overflow with wine and oil . . . then you shall eat all you want . . ." - contrasts strongly with the more rarified prospect in ch. iii. On the one hand there is a straightforward description of material plenty, while on the other the picture is of an abundance of spiritual inspiration, a charismatic banquet - e.g. iii:1ff:

And it will come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,

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1. M. Treves, 'The Date of Joel', Vetus Testamentum VII, 1957.
 2. J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 1962, p.277.

and your young men shall see visions.
 Even upon the menservants and maidservants
 in those days I will pour out my spirit.

This idea of an ideal state of affairs when all Yahweh's people would be prophets is expressed as a hope in Num. xi:29 where Moses exclaims, 'Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.'

The connexion with the preceding verses of ch.ii is loosely stated in the words $\text{וְהָיָה אַחֲרַי־כֵּן}$. Some commentators have regarded this as an editorial formula for linking up with a new idea. Robinson¹ holds that the formula was inserted later, on the grounds that a syntactic connexion with וַיִּשְׁפֹּךְ is not as it should be, as this word should be linked with a waw consec.: "Die ersten Worte $\text{וְהָיָה אַחֲרַי־כֵּן}$ sind nachtraglich von einem Redaktor als Bindeglied mit dem Vorangegangenen hinzugefügt, wie auch die syntaktische Beobachtung zeigt, dass vor dem וַיִּשְׁפֹּךְ nicht ein Waw consec. steht, was sonst nach וְהָיָה der Fall ist". But the addition of a waw consecutive here in a continuous narrative would mean that the sense of וַיִּשְׁפֹּךְ would be changed to a perfect, i.e. 'I have poured out'. It would thus be no longer a prediction but a statement of an event already accomplished; this does not seem at all applicable in the context. Furthermore it is doubtful that a connexion of this kind is really necessary. וְהָיָה is used in the same way in the future sense,

1. T.H. Robinson, op.cit., pp.65f.

especially in relation to בִּירוֹם הַהוּא . In, for example, Isa. vii:18,21; xi:11; Hos. ii:18,23 the formula בִּירוֹם הַהוּא is followed by the verb in the imperfect without vay and this is a fairly common construction. P.A. Munch¹ proposes that בִּירוֹם הַהוּא is merely an old temporal adverb which later appears as an editorial connective formula joining oracles which were originally self-dependent; it does not concern its meaning that such later works were chiefly of an eschatological nature. Kapelrud² suggests that the phrase introduces pronouncements which point to the future, but this need not necessarily be an eschatological future, and, on this analogy, he would hold with regard to Joel iii:1 that הִלִּיךְ אֶת־רִכְזֵי־כֶן "holds a natural place in the context, that it points forward, but that it need not necessarily point to an eschatological future". Certainly in iii:1f. there does not seem much evidence of an eschatological interest in the sense of a description of the end time. The prophet seems more concerned with the realization of the tradition about an ideal society of prophets.

The following אֲשֶׁר־אֶת־אֲנִי־עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר רָחֵם is clarified in the rest of vv.1-2. The obvious significance of the pronouncement appears most clearly in the promise which follows immediately after

1. P.A. Munch, 'The expression בִּירוֹם הַהוּא . Is it an eschatological terminus technicus?' Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo II Hist. - Filos. Klasse, 1936, No. 2, p.56.
2. A. Kapelrud, op.cit., p.127.

וְנִבְּאָה בְּרוּחַ יְהוָה . That the effusion of the spirit is

connected with prophecy is testified by Num. xi:25,29 where the spirit rested upon the seventy elders and caused them to prophesy. This narrative is unquestionably old and is usually thought to belong to 'E'. It shows clearly that the desire for the whole nation to be infused by the spirit was known in ancient times, and cannot simply be regarded as a result of so-called apocalyptic speculations. The spirit is not usually the means of inspiration among the pre-exilic literary prophets, but after the Exile it is again invoked as in the period of the early monarchy.

Isa. xlii:1 bears witness to the relation between the effusion of the spirit and prophecy:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have set my spirit upon him,
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

Here the election of the servant is followed by his endowment of the gift of the spirit. It is charismatic and equips its possessor with unusual powers. Cf. also Isa. lxi:1; Ezek. ii:2; xiii:3; xxxix:29.

In this latter passage Yahweh promises to pour out his spirit over Israel as the culmination or climax of the whole process of Israel's regeneration as a community. The promise of the out-pouring of the spirit comes at the end of the chapter and is not further defined. But all these examples show that this effusion of the spirit is not

to be regarded as automatically ushering in an eschatological era.

Joel makes use of all the apparatus of revelatory experience to describe the effect of the pouring out of Yahweh's spirit. From ancient times dreams were significant for throwing light on happenings in the present and in the future. Many of the old narratives in Genesis mention dreams and visions - e.g. xx:3,6; xxviii:12; xxxi:10, 11,24; xli:1,5. The term itself, חלום חלום, is used in Gen. xxxvii:5f.,9f.; xl:5,8; xli:11,15; xlii:9; and also in Deut. xiii:2, 4,6; Jud. vii:13; Jer. xxii:25,28; Dan. ii:1,3. In Num. xii:6 visions and dreams are connected with prophetic activity: '. . . if there is a prophet among you, I, Yahweh, make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream'.

Vv.3-4 describe the strange happenings which are associated with the coming of Yahweh's day. It is still Yahweh who speaks here, because the verb is still in the first person singular. מרפת means something more than a sign, having a certain miraculous element. Robinson¹ suggests that " מרפת unterscheidet sich von ארת sowohl wie von פלא . ארת ist ein 'Zeichen', das kein Wunder zu sein braucht; פלא ist ein Wunder, das keine besondere Bedeutung zu haben braucht. מרפת ist beides: ein Wunder, das zugleich ein Zeichen ist und denem, die weise genug sind, es zu verstehen, eine gottliche Botschaft vermittelt." From early on such

1. T.H. Robinson, op.cit., p.66.

occurrences were connected with the prophets, their actions and preaching, cf. Isa. xx:3; viii:18; Ezek. xii:6,11; xxiv:24,27. Deut. xiii:2f. mentions a prophet, נביא, or a seer of dreams, חלם חלום who gives warnings or signs, ארת אר מרפת. This is the same association between prophet, dream, and sign which is found in the passage under discussion. In the psalms מרפת is often used for Yahweh's working of wonders at the exodus from Egypt (e.g. Pss. lxxviii:43; cv:5,27; cxxxv:9). That the portents shall appear both in heaven and on earth is a feature which belongs to the descriptions of omens before Yahweh's day or before Yahweh's intervention against his people's enemies, cf. Isa. xiii:10; xxxiv:4; Ezek. xxxii:7ff.

מק has occurred twice previously in Joel: in i:19f. it seemed to refer to the drought, and in ii:3 it was used to describe the effects of the locust on the land. In the context of iii:3 it is connected with דם, blood, and with עמודי עשן, columns of smoke. The occurrence of these three phenomena together has suggested to many commentators that they are "the common accompaniments of war".¹ It is true that the use of the word מק in a war-like sense is found on several occasions in the Old Testament, e.g. Num. xxi:28; Isa. xxvi:11; Ps. lxxviii:63. In Isa. xxxiv the concepts of fire and blood are connected in Yahweh's judgment over the enemy, although the

1. Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VI, 1956, p.753.

actual word זר is not used: the land of Edom is to become a sea of pitch which will burn day and night and never be quenched. Also in Ezek. xxxviii:22 it is part of the description of Gog's defeat that he will be punished with both pestilence and blood, while fire (here זר) and brimstone pour down on him and his fellows. But it is not necessary to assume, especially with regard to the two examples of Isa. xxxiv and Ezek. xxxviii, that the concept of fire is always derived from the imagery of war. In this Joel passage, too, it seems more likely that the prophet is merely trying to convey to his hearers the horrific nature of the event and is using a combination of highly evocative imagery - blood, fire, columns of smoke, darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon to blood - to do so. Where there is a definite military imagery in the book (i.e. ii:4-9) it is noticeable that it is much more anthropomorphic than the descriptions of unnatural portents found in ii:10 and iii:3,4.

The specific phrase תִּמְרֵת עֵץ is found only here and in the Song of Solomon iii:6 where it is a poetic metaphor and seems to offer little in the way of help for the interpretation of Joel iii:3.

תִּמְרֵת is derived from תָּמַר , palm, and thus clearly is to be applied to something which had the shape of a palm. Presumably one is meant to think of a slender pillar of smoke which reaches up into the air and spreads out when it gains height. There is a parallel with the same sense in Jud. xx:40. The incident being described is

the struggle between the Israelites and the Benjaminites - "But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke - עמך רען - the Benjaminites looked behind them, and behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven".

V.4 describes in more detail the 'portents' in the heavens. Similar concepts were already noted in ii:10 - the heavens tremble, the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars withdraw their brilliance. Isa. xiii:10 and Hab. iii:11 contain the same ideas, occurring in oracles of bliss which include the judgment and ruin of hostile nations. This situation is especially applicable to Joel iv:15. The niph'al of עָנָה is often used in the sense of 'to become changed' - Exod. vii:15,17,20; Lev. xiii:16f.; 1 Sam. x:6; Isa. xxxiv:9; lxiii:10; Jer. ii:21; xxx:6; Job xxx:21; xli:20; Lam. v:15.

The dire events of the change in the celestial bodies would be omen enough to foretell the coming of Yahweh's day. Bewer¹ suggests that לִפְנֵי בָרָא יְהוָה הַגְדֹּל וְהַנּוֹרָא is an editorial addition because Yahweh's speech ends at v.4a and is picked up again at v.5. This seems an unnecessary incision in the text - such transformations of the sun and moon were commonly thought to herald the coming of Yahweh's day and there is no reason why the prophet should not have added his weight to the already extant tradition. It is

1. J.A. Bewer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Obadiah and Joel, International Critical Commentaries, Edinburgh, 1912.

described in the same terms in ii:11 and Mal. iii:23. קָרָא , niph'al participle of קָרָא , has several shades of meaning. It can denote something fearful, dreadful or terrible, something awful in the sense of holy (e.g. Gen. xxviii:17 where it is used to describe a sacred site), or something marvellous or wonderful (e.g. Exod. xv:1; xxxiv:10 referring to Yahweh's deeds). It is possible that in using the word to describe Yahweh's day, Joel means to evoke each of these shades of meaning.

The more beneficent aspects of Yahweh's day are described in v.5 - the gathering on Mt. Zion of those who call upon the name of the Lord. $\text{קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה}$ means to invoke him in worship, e.g. Gen. iv:26. There is a return in this verse to the idea of the corporate manifestation of penance, the idea of which held so prominent a place in chs. i and ii. $\text{כִּי בָהָר צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תְּהִיָּה פְּלִיטָה}$ appears to be quoted by Joel from Obad. 17; he himself seems to indicate this by adding $\text{כֹּאשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה}$. This passage is used as evidence to suggest that in the parallels with other prophets Joel is the borrower.

The idea of the verse does not seem to be that only a few in Judah and Jerusalem will be saved; rather does Joel seem to be encompassing the whole world in his scope and meaning that Judah and Jerusalem will be the פְּלִיטָה . They are the true worshippers who will remain after the final cataclysmic events.

שרייד , one who has escaped, eluded (pursuers), has been saved, is a word known from early on. It is found in one of the sayings of Balaam (Num. xxiv:19), in which he prophesies that the Edomites shall become the subjects of victorious Israel. Here שרייד applies to him who saves himself from war. This may have been the most original sense of the word. In Jud. v:13 its meaning is rather obscure. In the historical narratives שרייד is used in descriptions of Israel's war-like experiences - Num. xxi:35; Deut. ii:34; iii:3; Josh. viii:22; x:20,28,30,33,37,39f.; xi:8; 2 Kgs. x:11.

But it seems more probable that the idea of שרייד , 'remnant', as found in Isaiah is the most influential in Joel's mind. In Isa. i:8f. we hear of the daughter of Zion being left "like a booth in a vineyard, like a shelter in a field of marrows, like a besieged city. If the Lord of hosts had not left us a remnant (שרייד , with practically the sense of 'as a remnant'), we should almost have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah." The thought is parallel to that of the present passage; שרייד does not refer here to only a small part of the population of Jerusalem, but to that of the whole city. The context describes a picture of destruction from which Jerusalem is immune; the use of the words 'booth' and 'shelter' indicate that שרייד means Jerusalem in its entirety. This interpretation of Isa. i:8f. supports the proposal that in Joel's inclusion of the whole world in his scope, he means by שרייד all

those Jews in Judah and Jerusalem. Perhaps he even looks beyond the salvation of the whole population of Judah and Jerusalem to those scattered throughout the known world, the Jews of the Diaspora.

Thus in ch. iii there seems to be described more specifically the phenomena which will accompany Yahweh's day - the bestowal of the spirit of prophecy upon all Israelites and the transformation of the heavenly bodies. It concludes by emphasising the belief that all those who are true worshippers of Yahweh will be saved. There seems to be a progression of thought from chs. i and ii through into ch. iii. The locust plague and drought of the first two chapters are seen by Joel as setting in motion the train of events which are part of the woes which usher in Yahweh's day; Israel as well as the other nations suffer under their severity. Chapter iii, however, seems to move into a description of the day itself, and for Israel this is a time of peace when she will fulfil her ideal of a nation of prophets dedicated to worshipping Yahweh. While the connexion between chs. i and ii is perhaps more intrinsic than that between these chapters and ch. iii, they can be seen as united in a progression of ideas. This progression is continued into ch. iv.

Exegesis of Joel iv in the light of
the concept of the Day of Yahweh.

Ch. iv begins with the introductory formula **כי הנה בימים ההמה** . It marks a progression of thought in the oracle of bliss: the judgment of the nations is the complement of the deliverance of Judah. The time referred to is not an eschatological time; the subsequent tone of the chapter does not suggest an eschaton - there is still to be an historical reversal and a restoral of Judah's fortunes in this world.

אשרב את שבות is translated in AV: "I shall bring back the captivity", and in RSV: "I restore the fortunes". As Beyer¹ points out, **שבות** is derived either from **שבה** or **שרב** . The strongest argument for its derivation from **שרב** is the use of the phrase in contexts where the captivity is not alluded to; but perhaps it is less likely that **שבות** comes from **שרב** as from **שבה** . From the time of Joreemiah its use becomes frequent. It appears that at first it meant 'captivity', deriving from **שבה** , and developed into a general phrase in prophetic usage for restoring the fortunes of

1. J.A. Beyer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Obadiah and Joel, International Critical Commentaries, Edinburgh, 1912.

someone. Here it is not a reference to the return from exile, as the translation "I shall bring back the captivity" might suggest, since the passage is later than the exilic period. The most that could be said along these lines is that it might envisage a re-assembling of those Jews still dispersed throughout the known world.

V.2 gives Yahweh's promise of judgment over hostile nations, a factor which always played a part in oracles of bliss. Israel's geographical and political situation was bound to create this attitude, encircled as she was by aggressive military states. Clearly, unless these powerful neighbours could be annihilated, there would be no possibility of any lasting peace and prosperity for Israel. "The increasing total threat offered by the nations to God's chosen area and, as a result, to his whole saving work, makes the prediction of the total destruction of the nations come to play a greater and greater part in prophecy."¹

אֲדָוָה is here used by Joel as a technical term denoting enemies. It was frequently used in the psalms in this way - e.g. Pss. ix:6,16, 20,21; x:16; lix:6,9; lxxix:6,10; cxv:2.

The mention of אֲדָוָה עַמּוֹת has posed several problems. Jeremiah seems to be aware of an ancient valley tradition; in vii:30-34 he speaks of the Ben-Hinnom valley as a place of judgment where Judah and Jerusalem will be punished for their apostasy from Yahweh.

1. G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 1965, Vol. II, p.347.

In Joel iv:1 the thought is not the punishment of Judah and Jerusalem, but of the foreign nations. There is also a valley tradition in Ezek. xxxix, which narrates the ruin of Gog. Here it is placed in the same context as in the book of Joel, i.e. in an oracle of bliss which speaks of the complete annihilation of the enemy, of the victory of Israel, and the restoration of her fortunes.

Thus Joel seems to be making use of a tradition concerning a valley as a place of punishment. Towards whom the judgment was originally directed cannot be definitely ascertained from the evidence in the Old Testament. It is possible that the tradition is found in its primary form in the Jeremiah passage (vii:30-34), which is from the late pre-exilic period. Here the valley is a place of punishment for Judah and Jerusalem. The exilic and post-exilic prophecies of Ezekiel (xxxix) and Joel (iv:1) thus reveal that the tradition has submitted to the tendency to re-instate the nationalistic note in prophecy against which Jeremiah was constantly fighting. Hence the tradition of the valley of judgment for the nations appears to be a re-interpretation of that tradition in which the valley is a place of Judah's punishment.

Probably this valley belongs to the sphere of mythology and cannot be, and is not intended to be, geographically located. On the analogy of]ל'תן נבא - "valley of vision" - Isa. xxii:5 - the name of Joel's valley must also be seen symbolically: it means simply

'the valley (where) Yahweh has judged or will judge'. It will have been noticed that this Isaiah passage was not taken into account in the above argument concerning the valley tradition, although the oracle in xxii:1-14 undoubtedly derives from Isaiah and is therefore of pre-exilic origin, and it does mention a valley. The oracle is not easy to understand in detail, but it appears to be a diatribe against Jerusalem, עיר הנמיה קריה עלאה, which is meant to show the people, who are planning a rebellion against Assyrian overlordship and anticipating their victory, what the result of such a rebellion will be. The prophet sees this in a vision in the גיא חזירן, and hence the title of the oracle - משא גיא חזירן. It was thus felt that the valley to which Isaiah is referring is not a place of judgment in the sense that those mentioned by Jeremiah and Ezekiel were, and so it was not used as evidence in the argument concerning the original form of the tradition of the valley of judgment. Nevertheless, it does not contradict the conclusions drawn above. The niph'al of נשפטתי - שפט has the meaning 'I will institute legal proceedings', and there is no doubt that the nations are about to be condemned.

The reason for this condemnation of the heathen nations is given in vv.2b-3:

"I will institute legal proceedings against them there because of my people and my heritage (נחלתי) Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations, and have divided up my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it."

Deut. xxxii:8f. bears witness to the fact that Israel is Yahweh's

נחלה :

"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance
When he separated the sons of men,
he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number
of the sons of God.

For the portion of Yahweh is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage (נחלתו).

From the very earliest times, Yahweh appointed angelic administrators for the nations, but he kept his own people, Israel, apart, so that he could rule and guide her himself. In this sense Israel is Yahweh's

נחלה . But the nations have dared to encroach upon his possession, and have taken Israel and have allotted her people amongst themselves; Israel has been reduced to slavery and lots are cast to decide her destiny. In this Joel passage the enemy nations are blamed for having scattered Israel among foreigners and divided up her land. This provides an interesting comparison with Ezek. xxxix:28 where Yahweh states that he himself sent Israel into exile among the nations.

The prophet now turns to address the nations by name - Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia. In their collections of oracles against foreign nations, the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all have denunciations of Philistia and the Phoenician cities. The last foreign oracle in Isaiah (xxiii) is directed against Tyre and Sidon. The problem for commentators in this prophecy is the alternation of the names Tyre (vv.1,5,8,15,17) and Sidon (vv.2,4,12).

Several solutions have been proposed; the most generally accepted is that suggested by Duham, who regards the original oracle (i.e. vv.1-4, 6-14) as a sarcastic elegy over the destruction of Sidon by Artaxerxes III in 348; the later author of xxiii:15-18 applied the poem to Tyre (v.1), adding v.5 and changing 'Sidon' to 'Tyre' in v.8. The question which immediately comes to mind is - why, if he was editing the oracle to this extent, did the 'later author' leave the mention of Sidon in vv.2 and 12? O. Procksch¹ proposes that a poem on Sidon (vv.1-4, 12-14), composed by Isaiah, was united with a much later one on Tyre (vv.5-11) with the consequent intrusion of Tyre in v.1, and that later still a further Tyre passage was added (vv.15-18). The text is rather vague and no definite historical situation can be precisely identified. It is quite possible, however, that a writer of uncertain date (550-300) composed a sarcastic dirge over the ruin of Phoenicia in general; this would account for the references to both Tyre and Sidon.

Jeremiah's oracle against Philistia and also Tyre and Sidon (xlvii) threatens destruction to the coastlands through an enemy coming from the north. Pfeiffer² suggests that unless the author was thinking of the conquests of Alexander, "it seems that the prophecy was merely an apocalyptic vision like xxv:30-38, for the victims are terrified not

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1. O. Procksch, Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Leipzig-Gütersloh, 1930, Isaiah i-xxxix.
 2. R.H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1941, p.508.

by human enemies, but by 'the sword of the Lord'." He proposes that an examination of the individual foreign oracles in xlvi-li shows that, except for xlvi:2-12 on Egypt, they have an apocalyptic rather than an historical background; they "are but a vision of the kingdoms that the Lord will overthrow before establishing his Kingdom upon earth."¹

Yahveh's annihilation of the hostile kingdoms of the earth is part of the general scheme of the oracles of bliss; this destruction of the heathen nations who are the historical threat to Israel's peace is the negative side of all the positive descriptions of bliss. And as von Rad points out, "since Israel's faith is based on history rather than on cosmology, it follows that the dominant feature in prophecy is the prediction of the destruction of the historical world, that is, the world of the nations."²

Ezekiel's oracles against Tyre (xxvi-xxviii) denounce her unsympathetic attitude towards Jerusalem's fate:

"Son of man, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, 'Aha, the gate of the peoples is broken, it has swung open to me; I shall be replenished now that she is laid waste', therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold I am against you, O Tyre."

xxvi:2-3a.

They were probably written after Nebuchadnezzar had begun to besiege Tyre in 585, but before he withdrew in 573, presumably in the early years of the siege, when Ezekiel could still look forward to the

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1. R.H. Pfeiffer, *op.cit.*, p.509.
 2. G. von Rad, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p.347.

complete devastation of the city.

Joel is thus not alone in his hostility towards the Phoenician cities and Philistia. But Tyre and Sidon had not always been Judah's enemies. During the period of the early monarchy and the united kingdoms relations appear to have been almost friendly, cf. 2 Sam. v:11; 1 Kgs. v:15, vii:13f.; 1 Chron. xxii:4, 2 Chron. ii:13. This relationship appears to have lasted for some time and to have revealed itself in certain cultural and social influences. When Solomon built his Temple he used Phoenician craftsmen (1 Kgs. v:32). The Israelite kings of the Omri dynasty sought to establish contacts with the Phoenician coastal cities which were beginning at this time to launch an extensive and successful colonization in the area around the Mediterranean. The marriage of Ahab, son and successor to Omri, to Jezebel, "daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians" (1 Kgs. xvi:32), is undoubtedly connected with this. Jezebel, with her Phoenician court, probably practised her own religion in her own specially built sanctuary in Samaria (cf. 2 Kgs. xxiii:13 which records Solomon's building of sanctuaries for his foreign wives in which they might worship their own gods). The existence of this foreign religion and its attendant cult personnel in Samaria evoked the opposition of the strict Yahwists and especially Elijah.

By the time of Amos, relations seem to have deteriorated, although Amos may not be stating the 'official position' in his denunciation of

i:9f. It is clear from our knowledge of the Phoenicians that they were a commercial nation, and slave-trading was a lucrative business for them throughout their history. At the time of Ezra and Nehemiah the situation again seems to have been peaceful - e.g. Ez. iii:7; Neh. xiii:16. On the basis of this evidence Kapelrud suggests that the present passage in Joel belongs to a time prior to Ezra and Nehemiah. He further suggests that it is possible to assign an even more accurate date to the passage:

"The moderate and general form in which the threats of punishment against Tyre and Sidon are couched, do not indicate that these cities have just undergone a great catastrophe. Had this been the case, the tone would have been different and far more triumphant, describing in vivid colours the ruin of the cities; cf. the strong note of triumph and derision in the oracle about Tyre and Sidon in Isa. xxiii, in which it seems that the conquest and the pillaging of the cities had already taken place. Ezekiel, too, gives dramatic portrayals of the destruction of Tyre, Ezek. xxvi-xxvii.

Tyre was conquered by Alexander the Great in 332, Sidon having already been levelled to the ground by the Persian king Artaxerxes III in 344. It is obvious that our section appertains prior to these events, for we proved above that it must have originated some time before Ezra and Nehemiah. However, Tyre and Sidon had been exposed to destruction and pillaging previously. Sidon was taken by the Assyrians in 678, receiving harsh treatment, but was again restored when the power of Assyria was on the wane. Tyre was conquered by the Babylonians in 586, after Judah and Jerusalem also had met their final fate.

There are thus many factors which plead for dating the present passage to the time before 586, since relations with Tyre and Sidon were markedly improved after the exile."¹

This pre-exilic dating of the present passage is extremely speculative,

1. A. Kapelrud, 'Joel Studies', Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1948, p.149.

and it is doubtful whether it can be accepted. If the hypothesis is to be entertained these verses must be detached from their context, although Kapelrud does not admit this. Elsewhere he says "the section iv:4-8 contains nothing that should give grounds for detaching it from other sections."¹ There is, however, a weakness in his argument as it stands. The evidence which he uses to 'prove' that the Joel passage 'must have originated some time before Ezra and Nehemiah' does not appear at all conclusive. And it is doubtful that one can accept his premis that Joel iv:4-8 derives from a different historical situation to that of the denunciations of Isa. xxiii and Ezek. xxvi-xxvii simply on the grounds of its more moderate tone. It is far from satisfactory to disassociate the events of vv.4-8 from the events described by Isaiah and Ezekiel merely because the passage does not seem to be sufficiently 'triumphant' in tone, and does not describe 'in vivid colours the ruin of the cities'. Even if Joel's description is more 'moderate', it cannot be arbitrarily detached from an historical situation like that described by Isaiah and Ezekiel on these grounds alone. The attempt to date the passage, and the prophecy as a whole, by means of such inconclusive arguments is unconvincing, and the grounds which Kapelrud puts forward for so early a date are insufficient to combat the more usually accepted dating of some time in the fourth century.

1. A. Kapelrud, op.cit., p.159.

The Philistines seem to have been settling along the coast of Palestine at about the same time that Israel was starting to penetrate the land under the judges. They founded several city communities, and came into conflict with the Israelites in trying to force their way inwards from the coast - cf. Exod. xv:14; Judg. xiii-xvi; 1 Sam. iv-vii; xiii-xiv; xvii-xviii; xxiii; xxvii-xxxi. David succeeded in forcing the Philistines back into their coastal regions - 2 Sam. v:17ff., viii:1, xxi. The enmity with these people continued throughout Israel's history, even after they were destroyed by the Assyrians and no longer constituted a threat to their neighbours, e.g. Pss. lx:10, lxxxiii:8; cviii:10; Zeph. i:14-18; Jer. xlvi. Here the hatred against the Philistines is due more to tradition than to actual historical circumstances. This may well be the case in Joel also, and makes any attempt at a dating on these historical grounds questionable.

V.5f. witness to the spoliation of the Temple and the selling of the captives of war to the □□□□□□□□. This mention of the 'sons of the Ionians' has been one of the main reasons for dating Joel fairly late. 'Ionians' is usually regarded as a synonym for 'Greeks'. Hitti¹ observes that Greek trading colonies appeared in Syria in the sixth century. Albright² has also pointed out that during Iron Age III (Persian period) the whole eastern Mediterranean

1. P.K. Hitti, History of Syria, 1950, p.228.

2. W.F. Albright, Archeology of Palestine, 1949, p.142ff.

coast from Syria to Egypt was dotted with trading posts. Certainly the appearance of Greek sherds of the period in almost every excavation points to more than sporadic contact between Greece and Palestine. These contacts could only have been of a commercial nature, and in early Greek sources (Odyssey XIV 297; XV 48-484; Herodotus history I 1; II 54) the Phoenicians are condemned as slave-traders.

V.7 contains the threat of retribution which is expanded in v.8. There is a clear parallel to the retaliation outlined here in Ps. vii:16f. -

the wicked man
makes a pit, digging it out,
and falls into the hole which he has made;
his mischief returns on his own head,
and on his own skull his violence descends.

This thought is echoed in Proverbs xxvi:27:

He who digs a pit will fall into it,
and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.

and also in Ps. ix:16f.:

The nations have sunk in the pit which they made,
in the net which they hid has their own foot been caught.

כִּי לַהֲרֹג דָּבָר marks the end of the oracle. The unity of this section (iv:1-8) has been questioned. Bewer¹ proposes that vv.4-8 are "not merely a digression but a later insertion by a writer who

1. Bewer, op.cit.

probably interpreted vv.2-3 as referring to the Persians under Artaxerxes Ochus, c.352. He added them here because the behaviour of the Phoenicians and Philistines at that time called for special condemnation. They were the slave-traders and merchants to whom the Persian soldiers had sold their captives."

Weiser¹ is in essential agreement here, suggesting that iv:4-8 is a subsequent addition, since it "interrupts the chain of thought." But these do not appear to be sufficient reason for detaching vv.4-8 from their context. Vv.1-8 as a whole can be taken as an oracle of threat; the indictment occurs in vv.2b-3,5-6, and the threat in vv.2a,4,7-8. It is quite possible, despite Kapelrud's attempts to prove otherwise, that there are no precise historical circumstances to account for the references to Tyre, Sidon and the Philistines, and that Joel is simply taking up traditional motifs.

The emphasis in the section is not apocalyptic but prophetic in its awareness of Yahweh's control over history. But in the exilic period there was a "credibility gap" between belief and reality. A small community making assertions like those Israel made has a tendency to lose its anchorage in history, and in this way is more and more at variance with historical probabilities. When the community is carried by the events of history further and further

1. A. Weiser, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1961, p.239.

away from the goals of the prophets, it is in danger of moving towards a position where the boundary between prophetic and apocalyptic is blurred or disappears.

The structure of v.9ff. is not as clear-cut as in the preceding section. Presumably Yahweh is still speaking; the words קראו זאת appear to be his instructions to his heralds; . . .

קדשו is thus what must be proclaimed. This expression, מלחמה "prepare" or "sanctify", shows clearly that war was a sacral activity; preparation was made by religious rites (1 Sam. vii:8-9). The same verb is used in i:14 and ii:15 for instituting a national fast. Both קדשו and קראו are the usual terms for an army's approach for battle - cf. Judg. xx:23; 1 Kgs. xi:22; and also Joel i:6.

In this section Yahweh is calling the nations to mobilise and encompass their own destruction. This idea refers back to the ancient tradition, found throughout the Old Testament, of the assembling of the hostile nations against Zion, and the failure of their attack. It occurs in the so-called "songs of Zion" (Pss. xlvi, xlvi, lxxvi) which belong specifically to Jerusalem and which describe an attack upon Jerusalem by all the kings and nations of the earth; but just when the distress has reached a peak, Yahweh appears and crushes them all, so that once again the wall of the city remains unshaken. This idea clearly has roots in the myth of the fight against chaos,

and in the old belief that Yahweh comes to save the world at the moment when the powers of chaos and death seem to be overwhelming it - when it is poised on the brink of chaos. That it is the primeval ocean and the powers of chaos which lie behind the concept of "the nations", is revealed more clearly in Ps. xlvi:2-4:

Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea,
though the waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

In Ps. lxviii also there is the identification of the actual and potential enemies of Israel with the chaotic powers (v.22).

As Mowinckel rightly points out: "This mutation of the chaos myth into a myth about the fight of the nations is the place where the fundamentally historical point of view of Israelite religion breaks in and depicts the distress in a new guise. Israel was constantly experiencing threatened distress of this different kind: the enmity of the surrounding nations, the 'gentiles' and their kings, constantly planning to destroy Yahweh's people¹ . . . so in the myth of the fight of the nations the cosmic and mythological meets the historically orientated view of the basis of Yahweh's kingship and its consequences to the world."²

This myth of the fight of the nations appears to have played a part also in the enthronement of the king at the New Year festival:

1. S. Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, 1962, Vol. I, p.152.
2. S. Mowinckel, op.cit., p.154.

the king had first to enact symbolically the conquest of his enemies before he could ascend the throne. The psalms show this clearly. In Ps. ii, a recognized enthronement psalm, the enemy peoples, $\square''\gamma\lambda$ plot against Yahweh and his $\gamma\eta\gamma\omega$. But Yahweh is scornful because he has set his king on Mt. Zion and he will

. . . break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
(v.9).

A similar utterance is found in Ps. cx. Yahweh promises the king that he will make his enemies his footstool and:

The Lord is at your right hand;
He will shatter kings on the day of his wrath,
He will execute judgment among the nations,
filling them with corpses.
(v.5-6).

This tradition of the attack on Zion is taken up again by the prophet Isaiah and is especially clear in xvii:12-14: a thunderous throng of nations dashes against Zion; Yahweh rebukes them and they flee away. The nations mentioned here are not definable historically; they appear as a formless, surging mass, entirely without political configuration. This was made necessary because motifs from the myth of the struggle with the chaos dragon have been included. The tradition also appears briefly in Micah (iv:11-13) with the unique feature that here Zion herself is summoned to fight against the enemy.

The description portraying the eschatological assault by the nations on the largest scale is Ezekiel's prophecy of the coming of Gog and Magog and their destruction "on the mountains of Israel"

(xxxviii). This prophecy obviously regards itself as based on an earlier prophetic tradition:

Thus says the Lord God: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?

xxxviii:17.

In Zech. xii and xiv all the basic component parts of this Zion cycle are brought out - Yahweh's assembling of the nations, the battle, and the preservation of Zion. A new development is that the enemy will succeed in forcing its way into the holy city itself. Another unique feature of Zechariah's prophecy here is the conflation of motifs which derive from entirely different eschatological concepts - from now on, the survivors of the foreign nations will make pilgrimage to Zion and worship Yahweh (xiv:16f.).

In the present passage, Joel reiterates the idea previously expressed by Isaiah that the nations advancing against Zion do not come by their own initiative and choice, but because they are summoned by Yahweh. The same idea is found again in Ezekiel - "I will turn you about and drive you forward and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north and lead you against the mountains of Israel" - xxxix:2, cf. xxxviii:4 - and also in Zech. xiv:2 - "I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle."

There is thus a certain difference in the tradition: in the psalms the nations come against Zion of their own accord, but in the

traditions as found in the prophetic books their advent is due to Yahweh's action and they come, almost despite themselves, inevitably to their destruction. It would seem that the original form of the tradition was that found in the psalms, and the later development is due to the extraordinarily pervasive prophetic belief in Yahweh's control of all history, not merely that of Israel, but that of all the nations of the world.

Also in the Joel passage there appears to have been a fusion of two cycles of tradition which originally had nothing to do with each other - that of the attack of the foreign nations on the city of God and that of the Day of Yahweh. The same association seems to be hinted at in Obad. 15f.

The first part of Joel iv:10 is almost the exact opposite of the floating oracle of Isa. ii:4 and Mic. iv:3 which demands the conversion of the instruments of war to those of peace. The only difference is in the word used for 'spear'. Isaiah and Micah were making use of another Zion tradition concerning the pilgrimage of the nations to the city on Mt. Zion. This concept differs radically from that of the fight of the nations: it is a peaceful event and its object is the salvation of the nations, not their judgment and subsequent annihilation. Joel is obviously conscious of this cycle of ideas, and he ironically re-interprets them to fit the other tradition.

The imperative **חָלַץ** (v.11) occurs only here in the Bible and its sense is obscure. Koehler-Baumgartner III translates "restore", Brown, Driver and Briggs, "help"; certainly the related Arabic root has the latter meaning. The RSV translation "hasten" is based on an emendation **חָלַץ** . **מִסָּבִיב** is usually translated "round about", but it is more comprehensive than this and means "all around" - not just the nations which border on Israel, but the world of nations which encircles her (cf. Ezek. xvi:33,37; xxiii:22; xxxvii:21; xxxix:17) - for the judgment is not limited to the surrounding nations but is universal. Jeremiah's oracles on foreign nations also comprise practically a judgment on the whole world.

The phrase **הַנְּחֹת יְהוָה גְּבִירֶיךָ** has posed certain problems.

הַנְּחֹת is the hiphil imperative of **נָחַת** . This is the only instance of the hiphil of this verb. In qal it is used in the sense of "to descend" by Jer. xxi:13; Job xxi:13; Ps. xxxviii:3. It is far from clear who is supposed to be speaking here, as the phrase seems to interrupt Yahweh's words. Kapelrud¹ suggests that "there is no reason why the prophet, carried away by his feelings, should not proclaim: 'Send down thy warriors, Yahweh!' In his ecstatic state he sees the hostile nations gathered for decisive battle, and deeply moved by this vision, he cries to Yahweh that now the moment has come for his intervention." The difficulty of the phrase here must be

1. A. Kapelrud, op.cit., p.161.

acknowledged. It appears as a most unexpected development, even an interruption, in the passage, and cannot really be explained in a wholly satisfactory manner.

In v.12 Yahweh is clearly speaking again and, as in v.2, Joel employs legal terminology to express the condemnation of the nations - "there I will sit to judge the nations all around." יַעֲרֶר is jussive: "let the nations arouse themselves." Presumably Yahweh's speech follows into v.13 also. Bewer¹ suggests that there is a rhetorical pause after v.12, during which the nations have gathered themselves in the valley of judgment, "for suddenly Yahweh's command rings out, addressed most probably to his angelic host and not to the Jews." It is possible that Yahweh is addressing those גְּבֻרִים mentioned in v.11. Here they are to act as harvesters; the imagery of the grain harvest for judgment is also found in Isa. xvii:5, the chapter which contained the description of the thundering of the nations against Zion.

V.14 appears to be a comment by the prophet upon the whole scene which he sees in his mind's eye. הַמְּרִיבִים - the meaning of the root indicates that these hordes are raging and tumultuous, again like the assembled enemies of Israel in Isa. xii:12. Joel's concept of the Day of Yahweh here is still historical in that it is identified with a day of judgment of the nations of this earth. But

1. J.A. Bewer, op.cit.

this idea of the judgment of Israel's oppressors is a far cry from the actual conditions of her situation at the time when Joel wrote. The "credibility gap" between the realities of life and the proclamations of faith were widening, and thus the process, which marks the movement from prophecy to apocalyptic, was already in train.

The descriptions of the portents in the heavens is identical with that of ii:10, where the subject is still the locusts, although Joel had almost completely identified the instrument bringing the Day of Yahweh (i.e. the locusts) with the event itself. As was noted in the exegesis of iii:4, similar portents are described in Isa. xiii:10 and Hab. iii:11. These, in common with the Joel passage, occur in oracles of bliss which include the judgment and ruin of hostile nations. This suggests that there may have existed a cycle of ideas and imagery which could be drawn upon when describing such events.

This identification of Yahweh's day with the time of the judgment of the foreign nations completes Joel's picture of the Day. In the first two chapters of the book it was seen that as far as Israel was concerned there was no suggestion of threat at that time: when the day arrived, the afflictions of the present time would be removed and Israel would be able to enjoy her privileged position as Yahweh's people. This idea was further developed in ch. iii, and it re-occurs later in ch. iv. But in iv:1-16a,19, there is described the

other side of the Day of Yahweh: for all but Israel, it is to be a day of destruction, of Yahweh's wrath. The reason for this attitude, as was pointed out above, is to be found in Israel's geographical and political situation. Throughout her history, from the time of David and Solomon onwards, she was hemmed in and attacked by surrounding nations. As long as her hopes for the future remained on this earthly plane, and did not take flight into the supra-historical, she was bound to assume the necessity for the destruction of other nations before she could be free to expand and live as she wished.

וַיִּהְיֶה מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעָה (v.16a) also describes a judgment on Israel in Amos i:2, and the imagery of a roaring lion is used by Jeremiah (xxv:30) to portray God's final judgment on all the nations. The parallel, יִתֵּן קוֹלָו , is similar to the phrase in ii:11. The shaking of the heavens and the earth was already seen as an element in the Day of Yahweh in ii:10.

In v.16b the description of the judgment ends abruptly, and, except for v.19, the rest of the chapter is concerned with God's mercies to his people. In the midst of the terrible judgment which is befalling the nations, Yahweh remains a מִחֹסֶה and מִלְעֹזֵז for his people. These metaphors of God's protection are often used in the psalms and are combined in Ps. lxi:3. The structure of vv.16b-17 is difficult. In v.16b it appears to be the prophet who speaks, but in v.17 Yahweh is the speaker. As Bewer says, "the transition from v.16

to v.17 is abrupt, not in thought, but in form, and the fact that Yahweh comments on the words of the prophet in v.16 is remarkable."¹

V.18 begins a new section. Bever feels that these verses are not to be attributed to Joel: "It is not the thought but the lack of originality in the form and its close correspondence to the editor's work that leads us to assign these verses also to the editor."² But he also feels that v.16 does not provide a satisfactory conclusion to the prophecy as a whole because "Israel's fate after the judgment has still to be described." It has, however, already been seen that, as far as Israel is concerned, Joel appears to have no doubts about her 'fate' after the judgment of the Day of Yahweh: the judgment is to be on the hostile nations, the enemies of Israel, and she herself will be glorified, as befits the people of Yahweh. Her blissful situation has been described in ch. ii and ch. iii. The detailing of the blessings in ch. iv.18ff. is therefore not strictly necessary. But it is not sufficient reason in itself to attribute these verses to 'the editor'; intrinsically they are a unity and make use of stock descriptions to portray Israel's time of prosperity.

The section is introduced by the formula בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא , which has been investigated by Gressmann³ and Munch⁴. Gressmann maintains

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1. J.A. Bever, *op.cit.*
 2. J.A. Bever, *op.cit.*
 3. H. Gressmann, *Der Messias*, 1929, p.83ff.
 4. P.A. Munch, 'The expression בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא . Is it an eschatological terminus technicus?' *Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo II Hist. - Filos. Klasse*, 1936, No.2.

that "'jener Tag' und 'der Tag Jahves' sind sachlich zweifellos identisch."¹ He links up these expressions with באחר הימים and arrives at the conclusion that all point to 'the end of days' and must therefore be understood eschatologically. Munch objects to this, holding that throughout the Old Testament ביום ההוא can be understood as a temporal adverb. This is especially true in the narrative passages, e.g. Gen. xv:18; Exod. xxxii:28; Deut. xxxi:22; Josh. ix:27, viii:25, xxiv:25. Munch maintains that the expression is not associated with an eschatology even in the prophetic books; it occurs frequently in these contexts merely because editors used it to link up different sections - particularly promises of bliss were connected by this means. Munch's conclusion is, therefore, that "the expression wants everywhere to be understood as a temporal adverb But in the Old Testament ביום ההוא never has been used as an eschatological term."²

Both Gressmann and Munch are right in specific instances. In the narrative passages of the Old Testament ביום ההוא certainly appears as a temporal adverb and a connective link between the events described. But this explanation of its meaning is not sufficient to account for its use in prophetic circles and Munch's attempts in this direction are not convincing. Here Gressmann seems to be the more

1. H. Gressmann, op.cit., p.83.

2. P.A. Munch, op.cit., p.56.

correct in holding that in such circles בְּיָמֵי הַהוֹרָא is a more specialised expression which is used of a decisive future event. But this does not necessarily mean that these future events are supra-historical. Since the book of Joel does not transgress terrestrial limits in its portrayal of the judgment of the nations and the vindication of Israel, there is no reason to assume that בְּיָמֵי הַהוֹרָא has any supra-terrestrial reference. The picture it introduces can be interpreted simply as an exaggerated description of the blessings of Israel's future situation in this world.

יִטְפֹּר הַהָרִים עֲסִיס וְהַגְּבֻעֹת הַלְּכֹנָה חֶלֶב is influenced by Amos ix:13 and by the traditional description of the land of promise as 'a land flowing with milk' - Exod. iii:8. The rest of the verse describes the abundance of water flowing from Judah and the Temple. This concept of the life-giving water which shall flow forth from the holy city is found in other parts of the Old Testament, cf. Pss. xxxvi:8, xli which seems to have been in the forefront of the prophet's mind when he uttered the oracles of this chapter; Ezek. xlvii:1-12 which speaks of life-giving water flowing from the Temple; and lastly Zech. xiv:8.

While Judah and Jerusalem were enjoying this abundance of fertility, the hostile nations, Egypt and Edom, will be laid waste as a punishment for their treatment of Judah (v.19). Again, disaster for the enemy is the reverse side of Israel's happiness. Egypt was

another traditional enemy of Israel, and the roots of this animosity probably go back to the tradition of the sojourn in Egypt. But almost as soon as Israel was established in Palestine she was forced into the awareness that Palestine was within the Pharaoh's sphere of interest. The battle for supremacy between Egypt and her mighty enemies in the north and east was frequently waged in Palestine, and Israel and Judah were often made to bear the consequences of this fight for supremacy in the Near East. Thus, whatever the actual historical situation at the time, Israel's hostility towards Egypt remained unchanging, because she could never be sure of how long she would continue to be untroubled by the land of the Nile; e.g. Hos. vii:11, xii:2; Isa. xi:15, xix; Ezek. xxix-xxxii; Jer. ii:16,18,36, xxv:19, xlii:15f.,xlvi.

The other land which is to be devastated is Edom; hatred existed between the Edomites and the Israelites from early on in their history, e.g. Exod. xv:15; Num xx:14-21; Jud. xi:17ff.; 1 Kgs. xi:14-22; 2 Kgs. xiv:7; Ps. cxxxvii:7; Isa. xxxiv; Jer. xlix:17ff.; Lam. iv:21ff.; Ezek. xxxv:12-14; Am. i:6,9; Obad. 1-21; Mal. i:4. They were constantly at war with one another over the boundary which they shared in the south-east.

After pronouncing this threat against Egypt and Edom, the prophet turns again to his own people with a renewed promise of blessing (v.20). V.21 contains further promises and ends with the assurance that Yahveh shall abide in Zion evermore. The Masoretic text of v.21a is difficult and repetitive - "I will hold innocent their blood

which I have not held innocent"; the reading of the LXX and the Peshitta, which is followed by the RSV, is to be preferred: "And I will avenge their blood and I will not clear the guilty." יהרה שכך בציון - the participle here indicates continuity and suggests that the promise is for the future as well as the present. "Thus in closing, Joel characteristically repeats one of the main themes of the section, the assurance of the presence of God, the vindication of his people and the source of all their blessings."¹

Ch. iv thus continues the prophecy of bliss and Joel uses a number of traditional ideas and complexes of imagery in his description. The oracles against the foreign nations are to be found in other prophets also; the theme of the downfall of her enemies is for Israel merely the negative aspect of all the positive portrayals of her time of peace and prosperity. This attitude is due to her historical situation: the ideal period was that of David, the ideal king, when Israel's boundaries reached their farthest extent and the surrounding nations were subjected to Israel. This situation was almost unique in Israel's history except for a brief spell under the Omri dynasty when the greater states were occupied with their internal affairs and unable to continue their offensive in Palestine. During this period, Omri and his successors deliberately brought to an end the frontier

1. Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VI.

disputes with Judah, and the two kingdoms became allies in their struggles against the Arameans. But this was an exceptional state of affairs. It was more usual that Israel was continually being pressed in by her neighbours and marched over by the greater military powers of Assyria, Babylon and Persia. It is thus not extraordinary that one of the requirements in the descriptions of peace was the annihilation of these troublesome nations by Yahweh; this need was mythologised to a certain extent into the myth of the assembling of the nations hostile to Israel against the holy city, Zion, with evil intent, but the might of Yahweh overcomes their combined forces and leaves Israel safe and at peace. Clearly this myth of the fight of the nations has its roots in the universal myth of the fight against the powers of chaos and the primeval sea. The Day of Yahweh is mentioned once more (v.14); it is identified with the judgment of the nations and is therefore completely a day of threat. V.16a takes up the positive side of the picture and describes the blessings which shall befall Israel with the judgment of the nations.

Conclusion.

The two principal problems of the Book of Joel are the relation of the references to the Day of Yahweh in chs. i and ii to their context, and the relation of these first two chapters to the last two. Eissfeldt¹ has posed the problem another way: "The decisive question is first whether i-ii and iii-iv are to be understood as prophecy, or rather as a narrative of past events or a description of present ones." Since Duhm's investigations² it has commonly been accepted that the references to the Day of Yahweh in i and ii are later interpolations in the text, and that they are to be ascribed to the same hand which added chs. iii and iv, namely 'the apocalyptist'. Eissfeldt seems at least to be in sympathy with this view: "If i-ii were prophecy, it would be most natural to attribute the whole book to one hand. But if they are narrative or description, then the book falls into two different parts, and it is not clear at first sight

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1. O. Eissfeldt, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1965, p.393.
 2. B. Duhm, Die Zwölf Propheten, 1910.

whether they do come from the same author."¹ But it does not seem necessary to ascribe "narrative or description" to the one hand, and "prophecy" to the other. Why could not the facts which gave rise to the narrative also give rise to the prophecy? Upon reflection it seems that the several problems posed by the book of Joel cannot be separated from each other. Both those associated with narrative and those associated with prophecy find their solution in Joel's understanding of the term "Day of Yahweh".

The theories concerning the origin of the day of Yahweh which were set out in detail in the beginning of this paper all add something different towards an understanding of the term. Gressmann suggests that from the outset the day of Yahweh was a part of the weal eschatology which derived from the eschatological system which was extant, he would suggest, in Mesopotamia. Mowinckel finds the origin of the concept in the cult, and, more specifically, in the New Year festival of the enthronement of Yahweh. Von Rad proposes that it is to the traditions of holy war that we must look for the growth of such an idea as the day of Yahweh.

How far are these theories valid in the light of Joel's concept of the day of Yahweh? Von Rad uses Joel ii:1-11 extensively in his attempt to prove his hypothesis. When Joel portrays distress, von

1. O. Eissfeldt, op.cit., p.393.

Rad suggests that he is dependent upon traditional prophetic concepts which he applies only secondarily to the actual locust plague. These traditional prophetic concepts are those of holy war: there is the call to battle (ii:1 - Blow the trumpet in Zion, sound the alarm on my holy mountain.), the discouragement and the panic which befall the nations (ii:6 - Before them peoples are in anguish, all faces grow pale), the earthquake and the darkening of the sky (ii:10), and even Yahweh's voice resounds as he precedes his army (ii:11). On the basis of this and other passages where similar war-like imagery is used (e.g. Isa. xiii; xxxiv; Ezek. vii), von Rad feels justified in stating that the day of Yahweh can be said to incorporate a pure event of war.

This view is open to a certain amount of criticism. In the first place the traditions of holy war did not contain any element of threat for Israel: they dealt essentially with her salvation. If the idea of the day of Yahweh grew out of these traditions of victory and promise, there must have been a considerable amount of prophetic re-interpretation to transform them into a tradition of doom and threat. It cannot be disputed that for Amos, Ezekiel and Zephaniah at least, the day of Yahweh means punishment for Israel. It is possible that the day, as it existed in its original form, was a day of vindication for Israel, that this nationalistic emphasis remained throughout its history - Joel is a late witness to it - and that the re-interpretation suggested by some of the prophets (e.g. Amos) failed to oust it, or was regarded as

fulfilled in the catastrophe of 586 B.C.

It is true that in Joel ii:1-11 the prophet does use military imagery to describe the appearance of the locusts, but this does not lead automatically to the assumption that the day of Yahweh is a 'pure event of war'. The command 'blow the trumpet in Zion' is not exclusively a call to battle: in ii:15 it occurs again where it is clearly connected with the liturgy and with the day of penitence. The portents in the heavens (ii:10) are to be found in other contexts in the Old Testament (e.g. Amos viii:9; Mic. iii:6) where the question of their association with holy war traditions does not arise. In that the sun, moon and stars have a precise regularity in their life-giving movements, they could and did signify the stability of the world; a departure from their customary actions and a failure in the precision of their movements portend the destruction of the ordered world (which is an element connected with the final judgment and the return of chaos), or at least an interruption in that order (cf. descriptions of such occurrences as accessory phenomena to theophanies, e.g. Ps. xviii:12; Deut. iv:11, v:20), but neither of these are necessarily associated with holy war.

The other passages in Joel's prophecy which mention the day of Yahweh - i:15; iii:4; iv:14 - do not bring to mind the traditions of holy war. i:15, which von Rad rejects as a secondary interpolation, seems to be a priestly lament followed by a description of the locust

plague; in iii:4 the day of Yahweh is again associated with omens in the sky, and also in iv:14 in connexion with the judgment of the nations.

Thus, to say that the day of Yahweh in Joel or in the Old Testament in general incorporates a pure event of war is somewhat sweeping. Joel will have been familiar with the traditions of holy war; but his use of military imagery could equally well be explained by his obvious awareness of the Zion tradition of the attack on Jerusalem by the nations and their defeat at Yahweh's hands (cf. ch. iv). Whenever Israel considered the downfall of her enemies, it was quite natural for her to see it accomplished by means of a warlike act. Often this downfall was equated with Yahweh's day, but this does not make it necessary to identify Yahweh's day with a warlike act to the exclusion of all other ideas.¹

Mowinckel introduces an entirely different concept to explain the origin of the day of Yahweh. He suggests that the day of Yahweh was the day of Yahweh's manifestation in the cult at the New Year festival. On every one of these days of Yahweh in the festival the people would experience his coming which guaranteed victory over enemies, deliverance from distress and the realization of peace, good fortune

1. For a more extensive criticism of von Rad's theory, the reader is referred to M. Weiss' article, 'The origin of the 'Day of the Lord' - Reconsidered', in the Hebrew Union College Annual, Vol. xxxvii, 1966.

and favourable conditions. If the hypothesis of an enthronement festival can be accepted, the suggestion that the day of Yahweh refers to such a festival can be made to explain much of the imagery in which the concept is couched.

Also, if the above hypothesis is allowed, Mowinckel's theory comprehends not just the day of Yahweh in particular, but the eschatology of Israel in general. While the cult maintained its hold on men's thinking, eschatological thought could not arise. In Israel the cultic claims of Yahweh's universal rule, and of his complete victory over the nations, were accepted unquestioningly as long as the cult maintained itself; but when, in the later monarchy, the discrepancy between what faith proclaimed and what experience encountered became too great, then men took refuge in projecting Yahweh's victory into the future. Thus, whenever the people were in distress, they would look forward to a glorious day of Yahweh when he would remember his covenant and, appearing as the mighty king and deliverer, would bring a day on his own and his people's enemies, condemning them to destruction and 'acquitting' and 'executing justice' for his own people.

Certainly the day of Yahweh as it appears in Joel's prophecy fits in well with this account of Mowinckel's. It is also interesting to note Joel's awareness of the myth concerning the investing of

Jerusalem by hostile nations which was an item of the Zion traditions. This tradition is also assumed to have been a part of the ritual of the New Year festival in which the king had to overcome his enemies before he could ascend the throne (cf. Pss. ii; cx).

Nevertheless, the obvious attractions of Mowinckel's theory must not be allowed to obscure its equally obvious drawbacks. While there are definite cultic elements in the conceptions and metaphors which are to be found in the book of Joel, it is a mistake to emphasise them as strongly as does Kapelrud in his 'Joel Studies'.¹ It cannot be stated with certainty that Joel's cultic interests and concerns are intrinsically related to his references to the Day.

The same criticism can be raised against this theory as against that of von Rad - that the enthronement festival as the place of origin of the concept of the day of Yahweh does not explain the element of threat in the concept. In the context of cultic participation and realization, the day of Yahweh must have been entirely hopeful, and even when the shape and tenor of Israel's existence no longer corresponded to the optimism in the cult, the hope was not destroyed, but, together with the belief in the day of Yahweh, was merely projected forward into the future. Thus, in no

1. A.S. Kapelrud, 'Joel Studies', Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1948.

way does Mowinckel's theory account for the element of threat which was so predominant in the classical prophets' formulation of the concept of the day of Yahweh. It is therefore not an explanation of the character of the 'day' in those Old Testament passages where it is a day of threat. Thus it becomes necessary again to fall back on the suggestion that this element of threat was due to a prophetic re-interpretation, which in turn was due to the classical prophets' belief in the deep-rooted sinfulness of the people. Amos is clearly the initiator of this process of re-interpretation; his words in v:18-20 imply that he is transforming a tradition of an optimistic hope of salvation into one of judgment and threat. But this modification of the concept was quite unable to overcome the nationalistic optimism which was contained within it from the first.

Von Rad criticises Mowinckel on the grounds that his "suggested derivation of the day of Yahweh from the cultic enthronement festival breaks down on the textual evidence, for none of the . . . references which speak explicitly of the day of Yahweh makes the link with the concept of Yahweh as king."¹ It is possible to carry this criticism further: in the psalms, where Mowinckel finds the bulk of his evidence for the hypothesis of the enthronement festival, the phrase 'day of Yahweh' does not occur. This suggests that Mowinckel's theory

1. G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. II, 1965, p.123.

is attractive but is unsupported by textual evidence and rests on inference alone. One must, therefore, use caution in accepting his suggestions. It is possible to build up an apparently satisfactory hypothesis which does supply the answers to a number of questions, but it must not be forgotten that the basic premises have not been proved beyond all doubt.

Gressmann would reject the theories of von Rad and Mowinckel. He holds that such a diversity of ideas are used to portray Yahweh's day and its accompanying phenomena that it cannot be identified simply with any one particular concept. His definition of the day is that it is a day in which Yahweh reveals himself in some way, on which he acts in some way, and which is characterised by him in some manner. Robinson¹ appears to be in agreement with Gressmann here, for he defines the day as the day of Yahweh's activity, in whichever direction this activity is needed to put wrong things right. Taken on their own, these definitions would appear to be almost too vague to add anything constructive to an understanding of the concept of the day of Yahweh. But this generality is not entirely a disadvantage; it has a certain value as a starting-point for research in that it allows access to all avenues of approach, that it does not foreclose discussion nor erect premature barriers to new ideas, as the exclusive character of the

1. H.W. Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, 1946, p.137.

theories of von Rad and Mowinckel tends to do. Gressmann takes the phrase 'day of Yahweh' at its face value and sees it as a day in which Yahweh acts. Recently M. Weiss has supported Gressmann's contention. He suggests that the day of Yahweh is "a 'neutral' concept, a formal one of changing content which adapts itself to the nature of the individual Day of the Lord implied by it. The Day of the Lord per se signifies the action of the Lord, his might- and power-potential . . . The Day of the Lord in its original and main significance meant an event in which the awareness of the Lord would gain a concrete and sensory expression."¹ Thus, there is no reason why this decisive action of Yahweh should not be described differently with reference to diverse Old Testament traditions, e.g. those of the cult or of holy war. The basic general thought of Gressmann provides for a wider basis, and can accommodate the various theories which utilise more specific strands of Old Testament tradition.

The prophecy of Joel is a witness to the expectation which was alive in the post-exilic period of a day when Yahweh would manifest his anger upon all peoples and bring to a realisation his judgment

1. M. Weiss, 'The origin of the 'Day of the Lord' - Reconsidered', Hebrew Union College Annual, Vol. xxxvii, 1966, p.47.

upon them. Israel herself would be involved in the woes which precede the final judgment, but ultimately she could be sure of her salvation. An unusually severe locust plague is seen by the prophet Joel as the beginning of the woes which will eventually culminate in the day of Yahweh.

In ch. i of the book the devastation wrought by the combined action of the drought and the locust plague is described, and various classes of the community are called to mourning. It is in this chapter especially that evidence is drawn to demonstrate the cultic interests of the book. It is clear that Joel values the channels provided by the cult for intercession and assurance; he believes in the efficacy of organized fasting, weeping and mourning. But from the evidence available in the book one cannot go much farther in associating the prophet and the cult. The book itself, while showing a background knowledge of the liturgical forms of the cult, is not a liturgical prayer, and on this point Engnell¹ goes perhaps too far in his suggestion that ultimately there is nothing to prevent the book of Joel being taken as a prophetic imitation of an original cult liturgy. Once again it must be emphasised that it is not certain that Joel's cultic concerns and interests are intrinsically related to his references to the day of Yahweh: his descriptions of the day cannot

1. Cf. A. Kapelrud, op.cit., p.122.

really be said to indicate conclusively that for Joel the origin of Yahweh's day is to be sought in the cult.

Ch. ii describes the locusts themselves in more detail. Using the tradition of an army from afar as the agent of Yahweh's wrath (cf. Ezek. xxxviii-xxxix; Isa. xiii), Joel actualises this army in the locusts and portrays their appearance and flight in military terms. In ii:10 the effect of the locusts is described as being of cosmic proportions, and the identification of the instrument (i.e. the locusts) with the event which it is bringing to pass (i.e. the day of Yahweh) is almost complete. It is noticeable that Joel's summons to penitence and his concept of the day of Yahweh do not hinge on the conviction that he is addressing a sinful people. Joel does not threaten the Jews with the aspects of judgment of the Day in view of their apostasy and disobedience - he is not a preacher of repentance. The classical prophets took for granted the proven sinfulness of the people, and this was the ethical foundation of their message. But in the post-exilic period this pre-supposition of sinfulness was changed into an assumption of a righteous community which kept the law. The prophet then had to deal with the situation in which an apparently righteous community was not receiving its just reward. The preaching of penitence no longer seemed relevant and the prophetic answer to the problem was to revert to the preaching of a day of

Yahweh which would be a day of Israel's vindication. In so doing the prophet was not creating a new content for the day of the Lord, but reviving an understanding of it which had a long history. The point of departure for Amos had been sinfulness, for Joel it was righteousness. This accounts for the differences in their proclamation and explains why for Joel the message to Judah was ultimately one of consolation. In response to the appeal of the priests on behalf of the people (ii:17), Yahweh promises blessing and abundance. In the midst of this divine oracle Joel calls the people to rejoicing (ii:21-23). Judah is to be preserved and Yahweh's day is seen as the realization of Israel's salvation.

This theme is continued in ch. iii. Here Joel portrays the phenomena associated with the day more explicitly. The hope of Num. xi:29 will be fulfilled on this day - every Israelite will be endowed with the spirit of prophecy. There will be strange happenings in the heavens which will serve to emphasise the horrific nature of the event. Similar occurrences are described in other oracles of bliss (cf. Isa. xiii; Hab. iii), and Joel describes their occurrence once more in iv:15, this time with explicit reference to the other side of all the oracles of bliss - the judgment and ruin of hostile nations. The chapter ends with the assurance that all those who are true worshippers of Yahweh (who in the context seem to comprise all Judah and Jerusalem) will be saved.

In ch. iv the threatening aspects of the day of Yahweh are revealed in the oracles against foreign nations. Such oracles figure in descriptions of the time of Israel's salvation in other prophets (e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and are not necessarily connected with the concept of the day of Yahweh. This is also true of the other tradition which Joel makes use of in ch. iv - that of the assembling of the nations against Zion with hostile intent, a tradition most frequently found in the psalms. Joel thus appears to be mingling these two separate traditions and associating them with yet a third tradition, that of the day of Yahweh.

The overall impression given by the prophecy is one of lateness. Israel is a beleaguered community, looking with wistful and impatient eyes towards the time when her subjection will be over. Throughout there is a definite movement of thought: the events which usher in the day of Yahweh are set in train in chs. i and ii, while chs. iii and iv describe the happenings of the day itself, both in their positive and negative aspects. The whole prophecy presents a complete and unified appearance, and this interpretation of the book of Joel is consistent with the date usually ascribed to it - i.e. fourth or third century B.C.

The book of Joel marks an important point in the development of the concept of the day of Yahweh. It has moved away from its classical prophetic formulation which saw it in close relationship with the unquestioned sinfulness of Yahweh's chosen people. Now it has been incorporated into the nationalistic attitude which was fostered in the post-exilic period in association with the community's belief in its own righteousness and subsequent right to vindication over against the world. While it furnishes a link with the eschatological day in apocalyptic literature, which was the final stage in the development of the concept, its focus is still upon this world and it has not transgressed terrestrial limits.

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