

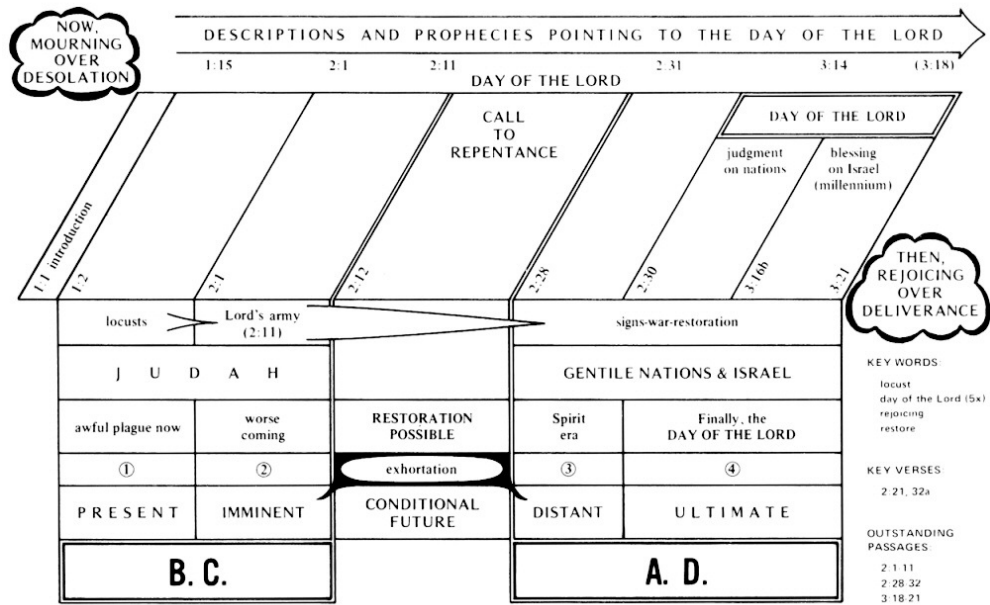
Joel 1 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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Click chart to enlarge

Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission

[Joel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

[Another Joel Chart](#)

- John MacArthur's [Introduction to Book of Joel](#)
- Chuck Swindoll's [Introduction to the Book of Joel](#)

DATE: 835 B.C.

This makes Joel a pre-exilic prophet, who ministered before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel (721 B.C.) or the southern kingdom of Judah (586 B.C.). Other pre-exilic prophets include Obadiah, Jonah, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah. Joel is one of the earliest prophets—only Obadiah prophesied before his time (845 B.C.). 835 B.C. was a time of turmoil and transition in Judah, at the end of the reign of the Queen Mother Athaliah and the beginning of the reign of King Joash. Athaliah seized power at the sudden death in battle of her son Ahaziah, who only reigned one year (2 Kings 8:26, 2 Kings 11:1). Athaliah killed all her son's heirs, except for one who was hidden in the temple and escaped—one-year-old Josiah (2 Kings 11:3). Her six-year reign of terror ended in 835 B.C. when the High Priest Jehoiada overthrew Athaliah and set the seven-year-old Josiah on the throne (2 Kings 11:4–21).. During her six years as queen over Judah, Athaliah reigned wickedly. She was the granddaughter of the wicked King Omri of Israel—making her daughter or niece to Ahab, one of Israel's worst kings (2 Kings 8:26). Athaliah raised her son Ahaziah to reign in the wicked pattern of Ahab, and even brought in Ahab's counselors to advise him (2 Chronicles 22:2–4). When Ahaziah was killed in battle and she seized power, she set her other sons to evil, even desecrating the temple and its sacred things (2 Chronicles 24:7).. If we are accurate in thinking that Joel prophesied in 835 B.C. then the judgment he described came toward the end of the six-year reign of ungodliness under Queen Athaliah. No wonder God brought a heavy hand on Judah! (Note from David Guzik)

The Prophet and His Times Joel, whose name means "Yahweh is God," apparently wrote during the days of young King Jehoash (835-796), who was under the regency of priests when he ascended the throne of Judah at the age of seven (2 Kings 11:21). Though some date the book after the Exile, the enemies of Judah are not identified in the prophecy as Arameans, Assyrians, or Babylonians, as would be the case if the book were written after the captivity (see 3:4, 19).

The prophecy was occasioned by a severe drought and an invasion of locusts, which Joel saw as a punishment for the sins of the people. He also depicted this invasion of locusts as an army, a harbinger of a future military campaign in the Day of the Lord.

Charles Feinberg - Joel was probably one of the earliest of the minor prophets. Compare the quotation of Joel 3:16 in Amos 1:2 and that of Joel 3:18 in Amos 9:13. The sins denounced by Amos and Hosea are not mentioned here, nor is the sin of idolatry touched upon at all. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

The Day of the Lord The Day of the Lord, the major theme of this prophecy, involves God's special intervention in the affairs of human history. Three facets of the Day of the Lord, are discernable: (1) the historical, that is, God's intervention in the affairs of Israel (Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 1:15) and heathen nations (Isa. 13:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3); (2) the illustrative, whereby an historical incident represents a partial fulfillment of the eschatological Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-11; Isa. 13:6-13); (3) the eschatological. This eschatological "day" includes the time of the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:12-19; 4:1), the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32), and the Millennium (Isa. 4:2; 12; 19:23-25; Jer. 30:7-9).

Lloyd J. Ogilvie - Seven words. We have heard them said with a sigh of hopeless resignation or with a cry of anguished grief. We hear them in hospital rooms, in deep conversations with friends, in times of calamity and adversity. The seven words expressing the loneliness of suffering are: "I just don't know where to turn!" We have all said these words. We get to the end of our endurance and do not know what to do. We face seemingly impossible problems that stretch us beyond our understanding and our ability to find solutions. All of the alternatives seem equally unacceptable and unworkable. Sometimes physical suffering brings us to the place where we do not know where to turn. Emotional pain can be just as excruciating. Failures, broken relationships, anxiety, and fear can paint us into a lonely corner. Then there are times when these seven words take on a third person intensity or shared dilemmas. In a marriage in tension, a family facing a crisis, or a church that needs renewal, we cry out, "We just don't know where to turn!" Also, these words are drenched with dismay when we confront the monumental problems of our society or allow ourselves to empathize with the suffering of the disadvantaged, the poor, and the hungry. And we wring our hands over the lack of morality and integrity around us. Added to all this are the natural disasters that hit us or someone we know. The emergency makes us wonder where to turn. For many people, times when we do not know where to turn expose that we have been living life on two separate tracks that seldom meet. One track is our relationship with God that often lacks vitality and power because of either benign neglect, willful independence, or unconfessed sin. On the other track is the reality of daily life with its mixture of routines, pressures, and busyness pursued with little thought of God. Sometimes this track gets littered with disappointments, frustrations, and conflicts. It is in times of great distress that these two tracks have an opportunity to come together in a profound way. In those times, the vital connection is made between what is happening to or around us and our supreme need for God. Then we can discover the prescription for perplexity: "When you don't know where to turn, return to the Lord."

This is the central theme of the prophet Joel. He is the prophet of the vital connection. At a time of a national catastrophe in Judah, Joel called the people to return to God. Their only hope was in Him. He helped them connect what was happening and what God

wanted to have happen in His people. Preaching and teaching from Joel gives us an opportunity of being communicators of the vital connection. There is a tendency in our day to think that being a Christian should put us on a route bypassing the distresses of life. But shallow triumphalism does not help in the depths of difficulties. If God is only for the up, successful, hurrah times of life, He is excluded from three-fourths of our lives. Joel helps us stand at the intersection of the two tracks of life when painful, heartbreaking things happen. It is then that people exclaim, "What can I say?" and we enable them to ask a much more crucial question, "What is God saying in this?" There is a place to turn. Tough times are the times to return to God. He has something to say to us. ([The Preacher's Commentary Series](#))

OUTLINE OF JOEL

- I. Title Verse: the Author, Joel 1:1
 - II. Desolation, Joel 1:2-Joel 2:17
 - A. The Character of the Desolation, Joel 1:2-12
 - B. The Reactions to the Desolation, Joel 1:13-14
 - C. The Picture of the Desolation, Joel 1:15-20
 - D. The Prophecy of Future Desolation, Joel 2:1-11
 - E. The Exhortation in View of Desolation, Joel 2:12-17
 - III. Deliverance, Joel 2:18-Joel 3:21
 - A. The Promise of Immediate Deliverance, Joel 2:18-27
 - B. The Promise of Future Deliverance, Joel 2:28-Joel 3:21
 - 1. Its initiation, Joel 2:28-32
 - 2. Its judgments, Joel 3:1-17
 - 3. Its consummation, Joel 3:18-21
- (Ryrie Study Bible)

Joel - Judgment precedes Israel's future spiritual revival.

John Phillips Outline Joel: Prophet Of The Plague

- 1. Day of the Locust (Joel 1:1-14)
 - 1. Divine Displeasure Expressed (Joel 1:1-5)
 - 1. A Word for the Prophet (Joel 1:1)
 - 2. A Word for the People (Joel 1:2-5)
 - 1. Descendants (Joel 1:2-4)
 - 2. Drunkards (Joel 1:5)
 - 2. Divine Displeasure Expanded (Joel 1:6-14)
 - 1. Desecration (Joel 1:6-7)
 - 2. Desolation (Joel 1:8-12)
 - 3. Desperation (Joel 1:13-14)
 - 3. The Day of the Lord (Joel 1:15-3:21)
 - 1. Day of Assyria (Joel 1:15-2:32)
 - 1. A Day of Destruction (Joel 1:15-20)
 - 2. A Day of Darkness (Joel 2:1-10)
 - 3. A Day of Deliverance (Joel 2:11-32)
 - 1. A Call for Repentance (Joel 2:11-19)
 - 2. A Call for Rejoicing (Joel 2:20-27)
 - 3. A Call for Revival (Joel 2:28-32)
 - 2. Day of Antichrist (Joel 3:1-16)
 - 1. The Gathering of the Hebrew People (Joel 3:1)
 - 2. The Gathering of the Heathen Peoples (Joel 3:2-16)
 - 1. A Gathering of the Wicked (Joel 3:2-8)
 - 2. A Gathering of the Warmongers (Joel 3:9-13)
 - 3. A Gathering of the World (Joel 3:14-16)
 - 3. Day of Anticipation (Joel 3:17-21)
- ([Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary](#))
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The following timeline is an estimate as the exact date is not known with absolute certainty (Source: Ryrie Study Bible).

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

- **The word of the LORD** : Jer 1:2 Eze 1:3 Ho 1:1 2Pe 1:21
- **that came to Joel**: Ac 2:16

Lloyd J. Ogilvie's summary of Joel 1

- A Word of the Lord to Joel (1:1)
- Listen and Tell of the Extraordinary (1:2–4)
- An Impassioned Call to Lament (1:5–14)
- A Foretaste of the Day of the Lord (1:15–20)
- A Diminutive Day of the Lord

A VERY SPECIAL WORD FROM JEHOVAH

The prophecy of Joel is very special to me, for this is the name we gave our firstborn son. When Marty and I were newly weds in medical school (a long, long time ago, August, 1969), we were told by the fertility experts at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas (which was internationally known for its work in this field) that we would never have children. And yet we did not give up and God visited us with our first pregnancy which we quickly lost, thinking that was probably our one in a million chance. And then we got pregnant again and although neither of us were genuine believers (if you had asked us we probably would have said we were "Christians" but neither of us had yet been born again), we named our first born son, Joel, for reasons that I cannot remember as there is no one on either side of our family by that name. Of course Joel's name means "Jehovah is God" (we did not know that at the time), and as God's good hand of blessing would have it as the years passed, both my wife Marty (1982) and I (1984) were born from above (Jn 3:3-8) by the Spirit of God and the Word/Gospel of God (through the ministry of [Bible Study Fellowship](#)) and within a very short time Joel and Meredith (our oldest daughter of 4 children by then - so much for "infertility!") also were born again and all four of us had the wonderful experience of being baptized together. O glorious day! As I was writing these notes it dawned on me that instead of the name "Joel," we should have named our son "Matthew" which means "Gift of God," because clearly considering the dire prognosis for fertility by the experts, Joel was truly, [indubitably](#) a gift of God! Joel has grown up to be a godly young man, a man of the Book, holding fast to faithful word (Titus 1:9) as an elder and Bible teacher at the Austin Stone, a large evangelical church in Austin, Texas. I apologize for all the personal background, but it helps you understand the context for why the Book of Joel holds such a special place in my heart. And when you combine that with the deep, abiding love that God's Spirit has placed in my heart for the Jews and the Nation of Israel, you can see why I consider it an unbelievable blessing and privilege to be allowed to write comments on this incredible prophetic book! (See [My Personal Testimony of God's Grace](#))

[John Ruskin](#) once said "The Bible is indeed a deep book, when depth is required, that is by a deep people; but it is not intended particularly for profound persons. And, therefore the first, and generally the main and leading idea of the Bible is on its surface,

written in the plainest possible Greek, Hebrew, or English, needing ...nothing but what we all might give - attention." (Side note on Ruskin - Margaret Ruskin, an Evangelical Christian, more cautious and restrained than her husband, taught young John to read the King James Bible from beginning to end, and then to start all over again, committing large portions to memory. Its language, imagery and stories had a profound and lasting effect on his writing.)

Sidlow Baxter observes that "Both in style and subject this Book of Joel is arresting. For vividness of description and picturesqueness of diction Joel is scarcely equaled. His pen-pictures of the plague-stricken land, the invading locust-army, and the final gathering of all nations to the valley of judgment, are miniature masterpieces of graphic vigour." (Explore the Book)

Charles Feinberg on how Joel presages the **Day of the LORD**

Though the plague be literal and the prophet bewails the destruction wrought thereby, yet the plague in its literal sense does not exhaust the intent of the Lord. It points ahead to the coming great visitation of **the day of Jehovah**. This **day** is mentioned in Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14. Because **the day of Jehovah** looms so large in prophetic Scriptures, we define it and its relation to other days designated in the Word of God. In 1 Corinthians 4:3 Paul speaks of "**man's day**" (see ASV margin). The day here spoken of is that in which we live, when man has sway and governs on the earth. To represent this rule God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream of an image of a man (Dan 2:1-45). This day will come to an end, as far as the Church is concerned, with the "**day of Christ**" which is the rapture. (See Phil 1:6.) After the rapture "**the day of Jehovah**" begins. It comprises the time of the Great Tribulation on earth, the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27, and the time of the rule of the Messiah of Israel over them in Jerusalem on the throne of David. (See not only the Scriptures noted above in Joel, but Amos 5:18; Zep 1:14—2:2 together with Is 2:1-21 among many Scriptures throughout the prophetic books.) At the termination of **the day of Jehovah**, the "**day of God**" will begin. In that day the elements will melt with fervent heat and the new heavens and the new earth will result. This day lasts throughout eternity when God is all and in all. (Cp. 1 Co 15:28.) We have purposely elaborated upon these vital days, because the theme of the prophecy of Joel is **The Day of Jehovah**. **With this truth in mind, we can readily discern how the locust plague serves as a harbinger or foreshadowing of the coming Day of Jehovah**. Joel rightly views it with alarm. The then present judgment spoke clearly of the future terrifying day of judgment. (The Minor Prophets)

The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel (As to most of the prophets, e.g., Jer 1:2, Ezekiel 1:3, Jonah 1:1, Micah 1:1, Zeph 1:1, Zech 1:1, Hosea 1:1) - What a great phrase "**the word of the LORD came**" which not only conveys a privilege but also a responsibility! Thank You Jehovah, that You condescended to speak to such frail, depraved creatures as we are since sin entered the world and enthroned itself on our hearts usurping Your rightful rule and reign (cf Ro 5:12, Ro 6:12-14-[note](#)), for indeed "— for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2Pe 1:21)

This glorious phrase is found some 102 times (NAS) in the Bible. Today all the Words of the LORD to mankind have been given in the Bible and our job (yea, our privilege under grace) is to COME to the Word of the LORD each morning to receive our spiritual nourishment (Lk 4:4-note, Mt 4:4, Deut 8:3) and direction (and protection) for each new day the LORD hath made (Ps 118:24,25). Are you (under grace not law - cf Gal 3:3-note, Ro 6:14-[note](#), Ro 7:4, 5, 6-[note](#)) coming to the Word of the LORD which has come to all mankind? Are you heeding what you hear (our responsibility inherent in such a great privilege of being able to read the ACTUAL living Words of the Living God!) See [Quiet Time: 7 Minutes With God](#) and [Thoughts on the Quiet Time](#).

Ogilvie - The word of Yahweh came not merely to communicate information, but as a word of power, an agent to accomplish the purpose of God in difficult times. The word came "to" Joel, but was not to stop there. It was a word for Joel's generation and beyond (1:3), continuing to accomplish God's purpose long after Joel had left the scene. This is the quality of all of God's word given to us in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16—17), but seldom is it so explicit as in the opening verses of Joel. ([The Preacher's Commentary Series](#))

John Phillips - The pen was Joel's, but the prophecy was the Lord's. **The word of the Lord came to Joel** out of eternity—from God's throne on high. The prophecy came from the One who gathers all the ages into the eternal present, who sees the end from the beginning. He sees tomorrow's distant day of the Lord as clearly as yesteryear's day of the locust. ([Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary](#))

The Word of the LORD came..

Gen. 15:4; 1 Sam. 15:10; 2 Sam. 7:4; 2 Sam. 24:11; 1 Ki. 6:11; 1 Ki. 13:20; 1 Ki. 16:1; 1 Ki. 17:2; 1 Ki. 17:8; 1 Ki. 18:1; 1 Ki. 19:9; 1 Ki. 21:17; 1 Ki. 21:28; 2 Ki. 20:4; 1 Chr. 22:8; 2 Chr. 11:2; 2 Chr. 12:7; Isa. 38:4; Jer. 1:2; Jer. 1:4; Jer. 1:11; Jer. 1:13; Jer. 2:1; Jer. 13:3; Jer. 13:8; Jer. 18:5; Jer. 24:4; Jer. 28:12; Jer. 32:6; Jer. 32:26; Jer. 33:1; Jer. 33:19; Jer. 33:23; Jer. 34:12; Jer. 35:12; Jer. 36:27; Jer. 37:6; Jer. 42:7; Jer. 43:8; Ezek. 1:3; Ezek. 3:16; Ezek. 6:1; Ezek. 7:1; Ezek. 11:14; Ezek. 12:1; Ezek. 12:8; Ezek. 12:17; Ezek. 12:21; Ezek.

12:26; Ezek. 13:1; Ezek. 14:2; Ezek. 14:12; Ezek. 15:1; Ezek. 16:1; Ezek. 17:1; Ezek. 17:11; Ezek. 18:1; Ezek. 20:2; Ezek. 20:45; Ezek. 21:1; Ezek. 21:8; Ezek. 21:18; Ezek. 22:1; Ezek. 22:17; Ezek. 22:23; Ezek. 23:1; Ezek. 24:1; Ezek. 24:15; Ezek. 24:20; Ezek. 25:1; Ezek. 26:1; Ezek. 27:1; Ezek. 28:1; Ezek. 28:11; Ezek. 28:20; Ezek. 29:1; Ezek. 29:17; Ezek. 30:1; Ezek. 30:20; Ezek. 31:1; Ezek. 32:1; Ezek. 32:17; Ezek. 33:1; Ezek. 33:23; Ezek. 34:1; Ezek. 35:1; Ezek. 36:16; Ezek. 37:15; Ezek. 38:1; Jon. 1:1; Jon. 3:1; Hag. 1:1; Hag. 1:3; Hag. 2:1; Hag. 2:10; Hag. 2:20; Zech. 1:1; Zech. 1:7; Zech. 4:8; Zech. 7:1; Zech. 7:8

Joel gives a series of descriptions and prophecies which ultimately point to the great and awesome Day of the LORD (Joel 1:15, Joel 2:1, Joel 2:11, Joel 2:31, Joel 3:14, Joel 3:18). In Joel 1:1-2:11 the prophet is addressing Judah describing the plague of locusts which recalls a past historical event of an invasion of insects and predicts a future "plague" of an invasion of Gentile armies and emphasizes that this Day of YAHWEH is imminent and brings with it desolation. The past plague was awful, but as they say (as Joel says) "the worst is yet to come" and it is [imminent](#) (Joel 2:1). The etymology of the English word **imminent** is picturesque for it is derived from the Latin word *imminens* in turn from *imminere* a verb which means to hang or project over. So do you see the picture? The idea of **imminent** is some event is "hanging or projecting over" and thus is impending. As we move from Joel 1 to Joel 3 the prophet moves from a day of mourning to a day of rejoicing. This progression recalls the words of the Psalmist David...

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness;

That my soul may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever. (Psalm 30:5.11-12)

The LORD - This is [Jehovah](#) or Yahweh (YHWH - Hebrew had no vowels) which "speaks of intimacy and a relationship bonded metaphorically through the covenant likened to marriage and thus carries special significance to Israel (Ex 3:14)." ([MacArthur](#))

Spurgeon writes "The name of **Jehovah** reminds us that He has within Himself sufficiency for all His will; He hath adequate power of performance for all His purposes and decrees; Jehovah wills, and it is done. He has created legions of angels, but He borrows nothing from them. He can truly say, "I am, and there is none beside Me." Those mysterious living creatures which are nearest to His throne are His creatures, and not His helpers. The best instructed and the most willing of His servants, derive their all from Him, but supply Him with nothing. (Read Spurgeon's full sermon - [Jeremiah 32:26,27 Is Anything too Hard for the LORD? - Pdf](#))

See in depth article "**On the Divine Name (Jahveh, Jehovah)**" in volume 1 of the 8 volume work entitled [The History of Israel](#)" by Heinrich Ewald (1843-1859)

J. A. Motyer emphasizes the association of God's Name with His character rendering Exodus 6:3 "And I showed myself to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob in the character of **El Shaddai**, but in the character expressed by my name **Yahweh** I did not make myself known to them. (Bolding added) Motyer concludes that "it was the character expressed by the name that was withheld from the patriarchs and not the name itself. **To know by name means to have come into intimate and personal acquaintance with a person.**"

In "**The Book of Consolation**" in Jeremiah (in context of sacking of the city, destruction of the Temple and Judah's final exile to Babylon in 586 BC) God promised a future day of joy for the forlorn city of Jerusalem

"Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! Again you will take up your tambourines, And go forth to the dances of the merrymakers. (Jeremiah 31:4-note)

In Joel 2:12-17 the Joel exhorts the nation in a call to repentance emphasizing that restoration of Israel is possible. In fact the theme is "**Repent, for the Day of the LORD is near.**" Then in Joel 2:18-27 the prophet issues one of the greatest prophetic promises of hope in the entire Old Testament. Finally in Joel 2:28-3:21 the prophet predicts the coming of the Holy Spirit, the judgment of God, the Kingdom of God and the consummation of the Day of the LORD.

Pethuel - Only mention in Scripture. Some suggest that because there is no additional description this suggest the prophet was well known and therefore needed no additional introduction. Derived from the verb pathah meaning to be spacious, wide or open. So the name Pethuel is variously interpreted to mean "Enlargement of heart," "Openheartedness of/toward God," or "Persuaded of God." (See [devotional on the name Pethuel](#)).

Henrietta Mears - Traditionally, Joel is called the **prophet of Pentecost**, since his prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit (see Joel 2:28-32) is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:16-21 to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost....Joel has been called **the prophet of religious revival**. He knew that revival must follow repentance. As Robert Lee, the author of *The Bible at a Glance*, wrote, "A rent heart is followed by a rent veil and heaven." Joel tried to bring his people to that place. We will find access to the

throne of grace and know the presence of the Holy Spirit when we truly repent. (What the Bible is All About)

Summary of Joel - God's word came to Joel to deliver to Jerusalem in the midst of a devastating locust plague that had destroyed the crops, made temple sacrifices impossible, and caused the priests to put on mourning clothes. The locusts represented a nation about to invade Judah, so Joel called Jerusalem to fast and pray to God for help. (Holman Old Testament Commentary – Hosea-Micah)

Big idea: the devastation of the coming day of the lord (prefigured in the locust plague and severe drought) should prompt heartfelt repentance that will lead to god's gracious promises of restoration and blessing "Yet even now, declares the Lord, Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil." (Joel 2:12-13) (Paul Apple)

What are the KEY WORDS in Joel? While some of the key words below are not frequent, nevertheless they are key because of their importance to the overall message of Joel.

- **Locust** - Joel 1:4, Joel 2:25
- **Day of the LORD** (5x) - Joel 1:15 Joel 2:1 Joel 2:11 Joel 2:31 Joel 3:14
- **Five more allusions to the Day of the LORD** - "Day" = Joel 2:2 (twice), Days = Joel 2:29, In those days = Joel 3:1, In that day = Joel 3:18
- **Rejoicing** - Joel 1:12 (Gladness and joy = Joel 1:16) Joel 2:21 Joel 2:23
- **Restore** - Joel 3:1

There is another **key phrase** which is easily overlooked but clearly is the **KEY** to the entire prophecy. It is the little phrase "I WILL" which underscores the sovereignty and sufficiency of our great Savior to consummate the promises He makes to Israel in the prophecy of Joel. Here are the 13 uses of "I WILL" in 11 verses

- Joel 2:19 Joel 2:20 Joel 2:25 Joel 2:28 Joel 2:29 Joel 2:30 Joel 3:2 Joel 3:4 Joel 3:8 Joel 3:12 Joel 3:21

Duane A. Garrett - The **Day of the LORD** refers to a decisive action of Yahweh to bring his plans for Israel to completion... The **Day of the LORD** is more of a theological idea than a specific event. As a theological idea it can manifest itself in human history many times and in many forms.

Sidlow Baxter on the **Day of the LORD** - Three facets of the Day of the Lord, are discernable:

- (1) **THE HISTORICAL**, that is, God's intervention in the affairs of Israel (Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 1:15) and heathen nations (Isa. 13:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3);
- (2) **THE ILLUSTRATIVE**, whereby an historical incident represents a partial fulfillment of the eschatological Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-11; Isa. 13:6-13);
- (3) **THE ESCHATOLOGICAL**. (Eschatology from [eschatos](#) = last) This eschatological "day" includes the time of the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:12-19; 4:1), the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32), and the Millennium (Isa. 4:2; 12; 19:23-25; Jer. 30:7-9). (Explore the Book)

John MacArthur on the **Day of the LORD** - The phrase does not have reference to a chronological time period, but to a general period of wrath and judgment uniquely belonging to the Lord. It is exclusively the day which unveils His character – mighty, powerful, and holy, thus terrifying His enemies. The Day of the Lord does not always refer to an eschatological event; on occasion it has a near historical fulfillment, as seen in Ezekiel 13:5, where it speaks of the Babylonian conquest and destruction of Jerusalem. As is common in prophecy, the near fulfillment is a historic event upon which to comprehend the more distant, eschatological fulfillment. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Kenneth O. Gangel - Memories fifty years old are as vivid as yesterday. We would wake up one morning in west Texas to a darkened sky. The crickets had paid another visit. Walk out your door, and every step went crunch, crunch, crunch as you made your way to the morning paper or the morning milk bottles by stepping on the swarming crickets that filled the sidewalks and driveways. How can you drive when front and back windows are crawling with crickets? Shopkeepers had an even worse nightmare. The sidewalks in front of their stores as well as their plate glass windows were covered with crickets. But the worst cricket problem belonged to the farmers and gardeners. Whatever crops the perpetual west Texas drought had left, the chirping invaders gobbled up. What a helpless feeling! All we knew to do was wait it out and sweep up the dead bodies when the swarm moved on eastward. Joel's people faced the same problem. Locusts, locusts everywhere and not a crop to spare. Temple offerings stopped. People either drank themselves into oblivion or prayed. In such a disastrous time, God gave Joel a message—mourn, pray for help, but know this is only a sign of worse things to come. (Holman Old Testament Commentary – Hosea-Micah)

Brian Bell - When I was 5 years old standing in my backyard in Whittier it happened... 1.4.1. A large grasshopper landed on my left shoulder! He was the size of a small Mack truck. He had armor plating all over his body. He was huge, mean, & he was going to eat me alive. I hate them still to this day. I've grabbed a rattlesnake by his tail once(explain) but I don't do grasshoppers! 1.4.2. An old Arabian proverb claims(picture this), "In the locust, slight as it is, is the nature of 10 of the larger animals – the face of a horse, the eyes of an elephant, " the neck of a bull, the horns of a deer, the chest of a lion, the belly of a scorpion, the wings of an eagle, the thighs of a camel, the feet of an ostrich, the tail of a serpent." Joel is writing in-between invasions: Between a locust plague recently past & future judgments of a military invasion, & ultimately "The Day of the Lord." Joel is writing to Judah & writes to the old men/elders (Joel 1:1-4); to the drunkards (Joel 1:5-7); to the worshippers (Joel 1:8-10); to the farmers (Joel 1:11,12); & to the priests (Joel 1:13,14.) ([Joel 1 - "Locust Plague...a mini-version of The Day of the Lord!"](#))

Baxter concludes that Joel's prophecy is clearly to the Southern Kingdom of Judah noting that "he exercised his prophetic ministry in or near Jerusalem. It is the inhabitants of that city whom he addresses (Joel 2:23). It is Jerusalem which he sees in danger (Joel 2:9). It is in Zion that the "alarm" is to be sounded (2:1,15). It is in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem that deliverance shall be in the after-days (Joel 2:32). It is the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem which is then to be ended (Joel 3:1); and it is Judah and Jerusalem which shall "dwell forever" (Joel 3:20). The ten-tribed northern kingdom is not once mentioned." (Explore the Book)

PETHUEL - Thomas Walker, of Tinnevely, one of the Lord's greatest missionaries to India and with whom Amy Carmichael had eighteen years of close co-operation, was a profound Bible student and, when speaking on the prophecy of Joel, was in the habit of directing attention to Joel's father, whose name "Pethuel" means "enlargement of heart" or "openheartedness."

Walker of Tinnevely, the name by which he was best known, was fond of telling a most interesting story, one that befits our subject, from the life of a fellow minister in London. A few days after the first child was born in his friend's home, the mother passed away. The grief of the tragic event was intensified a little later when the father was informed that his little daughter was totally blind. For the next sixteen years no expense was spared in seeking to rectify the condition, but without the slightest relief. At this stage a famous eye specialist from Vienna started a practice on Harley Street, London. The blind daughter was now sixteen-and-a-half years of age, and the father was urged by his friends to take her to the specialist to find out if anything could be done. At first he was very reluctant to venture, lest it might prove to be only another expensive disappointment. However, the insistence of his friends prevailed, and after an examination of the girl's eyes, the specialist informed him that although a thick film covered the surface of each eyeball, he believed that underneath there was a normal pupil, and behind the eye an unimpaired retina. "Provided the film is successfully removed without injury to the eyes," he said, "it will be necessary for the patient to remain in subdued light for five or six weeks. Are you willing to entrust your daughter to my care for that time?"

Agreement was reached in the matter and, after the surgery, the father was informed from time to time of the progress being made. After five long weeks the father was notified that he would be permitted to see his daughter at the hospital at a specified hour. On arrival he was conducted to a dimly-lighted room, and shortly afterward the surgeon entered with his daughter. When the surgeon removed the shade from her eyes, she stepped quickly toward her father and throwing her arms round his neck, kissed him repeatedly. He noticed the tears running from her eyes, and intently inquired, "Are you in pain, darling?"

"No daddy," she said. "Then why are you sobbing?" Back came the reply, "To think I have had such a loving father for sixteen years and have never before seen his face."

Have we realized that the heart of God our Father is enlarged toward us (**LIKE THE NAME PETHUEL**)? Do we really know Him as the **openhearted Father** of mercies, or do we go on blindly year by year without realizing that He is generously kind? The Apostle Paul could say to the Christians at Corinth, "Our heart is enlarged... and now for a recompense in the same, I speak as to my children, be ye also enlarged" (II Corinthians 6:11, 13). The Father of Lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not (James 1:5, 17). (Charles Roll - The Names of God)

Joel 1:2 Hear this, O elders, And listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days Or in your fathers' days?

- **Hear this:** Ps 49:1 Isa 34:1 Jer 5:21 Ho 5:1 Am 3:1 4:1 5:1 Mic 1:2 Mic 3:1,9 Mt 13:9 Rev 2:7
- **O elders:** Job 8:8 12:12 15:10 21:7
- **Has anything like this happened in your days:** Joel 2:2 De 4:32-35 Isa 7:17 Jer 30:7 Da 12:1 Mt 24:21

UNDIVIDED ATTENTION CALLED FOR AN UNPRECEDENTED PLAGUE

Hear (command) **this** - He begins with a command to **hear this** (the word of the LORD). This is a clarion call for his

readers/listeners to give this message their undivided attention!

Ogilvie - Joel begins his communication of the Lord's Word with an impassioned call to attention. The call to hear and give ear marks the message to follow as especially crucial, worthy of undivided attention. ([The Preacher's Commentary Series](#))

O elders - This is the first of several groups addressed by Joel. The elders could refer to the literally aged (who would have been more likely to have seen other but lesser plagues) or to community leaders who would be in a position to speak to the singularity of this plague.

Hearing is a good thing! It is always wise to clean the wax out of our ears (cf the exhortation in James 1:21-[note](#) where filthiness = "[rhuparia](#)" = "ear wax!") when it is a "Word from Jehovah!" And then just as important to heed what we hear by cleaning out the sin in our heart through confession, repentance and dependence on the Spirit!

Has anything like this happened in your days Or in your fathers' days?- Joel is drawing his readers into his message (using interrogative statements is always a good way to arrest your audience's attention and draw them to mentally engage in the discourse!) Further, Joel's rhetorical questions emphasize to the audience, the utter uniqueness of this present plague. This rhetorical question is to be answered with a firm "No!" Joel is calling the old men to confirm the fact that there had never been one like this plague in Judah's history. This calamity is unprecedented. Of note is the fact that here Yahweh sent on His own chosen people the very plague He sent on Pharaoh! Jehovah does not play favorites. Sometimes I think to myself, "Well I can get away with this sin because I'm His son." How foolish and deceptive is such manner of thought. In fact, I have an even greater degree of culpability than the pagan who does not know Him! Woe! (cf Ro 2:1-4-[note](#))

Joel's query recalls some of the descriptions of the extraordinary events during the Exodus (Ex. 10:6, 14; Dt. 4:32-35).

What the Bible teaches on these rhetorical questions - By this means he aims to provoke their thinking, stir their memories and search their conscience. This plague was not the norm. The likes had never happened before in previous generations. Here was something new, and by these new measures God was seeking to attract their attention to Himself. They were not to take this as merely an ordinary, natural disaster. Locust invasions were common enough in the ancient east but here was something unprecedented and unparalleled in the national memory for generations past, so they should sit up and listen. The "old men" could draw upon the memory of many years and testify to the uniqueness of recent happenings. ([What the Bible Teaches – Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#))

In Joel 2:2 the prophet says "There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations."

While Joel is speaking of a literal locust plague in Judah the likes of which have never been seen before, the prophet's description is but a faint foretaste or foreshadowing of things to come for the nation of Israel for a similar declaration is made regarding the coming time of Israel's great distress, [Time of Jacob's Distress](#) (Jeremiah 30:7-[note](#)):

Daniel 12:1-[commentary](#) "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. **And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time;** and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Matthew 24:21-[commentary](#) "For then there will be a great tribulation, **such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.**

Comment: How sad it is for non-literal writers to try to twist and distort and contort the plain (literal) sense of Jesus' warning (Mt 24:16-19-[commentary](#)) into a description of the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD! Such attempts are utter foolishness and sadly miss the grave import of His solemn, urgent warning for the nation of Israel **in that day, the Day of the LORD** (cf Zechariah 12:3-4-[note](#)) Fortunately it is a warning which is repeated as noted above, so that when the Day of the LORD does truly arrive (WHICH IT WILL!), hopefully most of the Jews will read the pure milk of God's Word and not the specious speculations of the theologians! As Proverbs 30:5 says "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him." So we pray in that future Day of Destruction, the Jews will read the infallible Word from God and not be led astray by the words of fallible men!

Charles Feinberg - There is difference of opinion among students of the book as to whether the first part of the book is to be taken as a literal locust plague or to be understood allegorically (i.e., figuratively of some future judgment). We must decide for the literal view. An actual locust plague had devastated the land. There are no hints in the text itself that the prophet is using an allegory. The picture given in the prophecy of the locusts is true to their manner of action and to the results of their blighting invasions: the disappearance of the vegetation in the fields; the eating of the bark of woody plants together with the roots under the ground; their swarms darkening the sun; their compact march in military manner; the wind-like noise of their movements; and the munching

sounds accompanying their eating. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

Joel 1:3 Tell your sons about it, And let your sons tell their sons, And their sons the next generation.

- Ex 10:1,2 13:14 De 6:7 Jos 4:6,7,21,22 Ps 44:1 71:18 78:3-8 Ps 145:4 Isa 38:19

PASS IT ON!

Tell (command) **your sons about it** - Do you pass "lessons" you've learned on to your kids...successes and failures! Recount it to four generations, but of course the idea is to never cease passing it on. It is not so much to elaborate on the gory details of the gnawing locusts but on the greatness and power of our God Who is in control of the hordes of locusts and to do so as a punishment for hardness of heart (as with Pharaoh - Ex 10:1). In Dt 28:38 Moses had warned "You shall bring out much seed to the field but you will gather in little, for the **locust** will consume it." Israel was living like the world and now suffered like the world.

What the Bible teaches adds that "This insect invasion was something which the Lord not only allowed, He actually sent it to bring the people to their spiritual senses and the prophet Joel's ministry was to make clear to the people their responsibility. Their true reaction in this situation was one of repentance. These locusts were the rod of the Lord to lead them to repentance." ([What the Bible Teaches – Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#))

Beloved, willful sin that is not quickly confessed and repented of will surely bring down the disciplining hand of the LORD (as I well know from personal experiences) in the form of "variegated locusts" (much like the 4 descriptions in Joel 1:4) so that His discipline may come in the form of a lawsuit (mine was and it was sorely painful), a loss of finances, illness, etc. (**Disclaimer** - not all these life events are necessarily divine discipline, so one must as always keep the life context in mind for the most accurate interpretation). Read Heb 12:5-11-[note](#) and notice that it ends with a declaration of the disciplined one's good and God's glory for "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." (Heb 12:11-note)

APPLICATION: Parents (especially you fathers out there), the pattern in this passage is the Biblical pattern for parenting one's children as attested to repeatedly in the Old Testament...

Exodus 13:8; 14 "You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 14 "And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery."

Deuteronomy 4:9 "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons (I NEED TO TELL MY GRANDCHILDREN - RECENTLY I HAD TWO OVERNIGHT AND THEY ASKED ME "TELL US HOW YOU BECAME A BELIEVER" WHAT A PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO PASS ON THE GREATEST MIRACLE THE LORD HAS PERFORMED IN MY LIFE! THANK YOU JESUS! AMEN).

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:20-21 "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?' 21 then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.

Ps 78:4-6 We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children, 6 That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children,

And dear older believer who has walked with the Lord for a number of years, even several decades. **Are you passing it on?** Beloved, you will be held accountable for passing or not passing on what you have been privileged to learn. To what do I refer? This is a reference to Jesus' command to **MAKE DISCIPLES** (Mt 28:19-20-[note](#)). Paul presented the model in his letter to young Timothy writing

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Ti 2:2-[note](#))

Comment: Are you looking for some **faithful** younger men to spend some time with making the Word of the Lord and the Lord the central component of your time. Yes, accountability is important, but it should NEVER replace serious time together in the Word of truth, for it is from the Living and Active Word that we receive the power from the Spirit to be faithful in our accountability (cp John 6:63 = "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.").

Related Resource on "Passing it on" from generation to generation:

- [Make Disciples 1](#)
- [Make Disciples 2](#) - [Begins study of Five Most Important Passages for Believers](#)
- [Make Disciples 3](#) - [Chart comparing Filled with the Spirit and the Word](#)
- [Make Disciples 4](#)
- [Make Disciples 5](#)
- [Make Disciples 6](#)
- [Make Disciples 7](#)
- [Make Disciples 8](#)

Tell what? There is a touch of suspense in these first 3 verses. We don't find the answer until the next passage Joel 1:4.

What the Bible teaches - Sometimes history is dismissed as irrelevant to a modern, progressive generation. What can such a generation, with all the technology and sophistication, learn from the experiences of the past? One is reminded of the words of the famous philosopher here: "Those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it". ([What the Bible Teaches – Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#))

NET Note - The circumstances that precipitated the book of Joel surrounded a locust invasion in Palestine that was of unprecedented proportions. The locusts had devastated the country's agrarian economy, with the unwelcome consequences extending to every important aspect of commercial, religious, and national life. To further complicate matters, a severe drought had exhausted water supplies, causing life-threatening shortages for animal and human life (cf. v. 20). Locust invasions occasionally present significant problems in Palestine in modern times. The year 1865 was commonly known among Arabic-speaking peoples of the Near East as sent el jarad, "year of the locust." The years 1892, 1899, and 1904 witnessed significant locust invasions in Palestine. But in modern times there has been nothing equal in magnitude to the great locust invasion that began in Palestine in February of 1915. This modern parallel provides valuable insight into the locust plague the prophet Joel points to as a foreshadowing of the day of the Lord. For an eyewitness account of the 1915 locust invasion of Palestine see J. D. Whiting, "Jerusalem's Locust Plague," National Geographic 28 (December 1915): 511-50. ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

Related Article - [The Locust Plague of 1915 Photograph Album](#)

Joel 1:4 What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.

- **Locust** Joe 2:25 Am 4:9 See on Ex 10:4
- **the swarming locust has eaten:** Ex 10:12-15 De 28:38,42 1Ki 8:37 2Chr 6:28 7:13 Ps 78:46 105:34 Am 7:1 Rev 9:3-7
- **the creeping locust has eaten:** Na 3:15-17
- **the stripping locust has eaten:** Isa 33:4 Jer 51:14,27

Acridium peregrinum

A DIVINE NATURALLY OCCURRING "SCORCHED EARTH POLICY"

Gnawing locust - Like the lion, locusts have a strong bite and great power, grinding their food, completely destroying whatever they eat.

The repetition and plethora of terms for locusts at least in part serves to emphasize the profundity of the plague. This was not just a handful of locusts but a "horde full!" And their invasion was no accident but reflective of divine discipline (even as in Ex 10:12-20) and indeed this is part of why this lore need to be passed on. It would serve as a warning for sin!

John Phillips adds an interesting note - The words are structured to provide a rhythmic beat for the ear and a precise order for the eye. Reinforcing the significance of the plague, this literary device helped impress the facts of that scourge on the minds and memories of succeeding generations. The English language cannot adequately convey the force of the original idioms, but they can be expressed as follows:

Gnawer's remnant, swarmer eats;
Swarmer's remnant, devourer eats;
Devourer's remnant, consumer eats.

Garrett concludes: "Beyond the fact that they all in some way refer to locusts, we simply do not know what these four words denote" (NAC, 316).

See **J D Whiting's** famous 1915 National Geographic article below - "[Jerusalem's Locust Plague](#)"

Joel's description of the locusts is detailed and debated as to the meaning of the four different Hebrew words...

1. **gnawing locust** - Hebrew = gazam (3x in 3v = Joel 1:4; Joel 2:25; Amos 4:9)
2. **swarming locust** - Hebrew = arbeh (see uses below)
3. **creeping locust** - Hebrew = yeleq (9x in 7v = Ps. 105:34; Jer. 51:14; Jer. 51:27; Joel 1:4; Joel 2:25; Nah. 3:15; Nah. 3:16)
4. **stripping locust** - Hebrew = chasil from chasal = to consume (6x in 6v = 1 Ki. 8:37; 2 Chr. 6:28; Ps. 78:46; Isa. 33:4; Joel 1:4; Joel 2:25)

Related Resources:

- [Why did God use a locust swarm to punish Israel \(Joel 1:4\)?](#)
- [Is Joel 1:4 referring to literal locusts? When was this prophecy fulfilled?](#)
- Watch this [well done Locust Video](#).

Swarming locusts (0697)(arbeh from rabah = to be or become much, many, great) is a masculine noun translated in NAS as locust (8), locusts (11), swarming locust (5) and is the most commonly used Hebrew word for locusts. See the discussions below for more specific details about locusts. Solomon asked God that if there was a plague (including locusts) and Israel supplicated to Him, that He would forgive their sin (1 Ki 8:37, 35-40, cf 2 Chr. 6:28)

W E Vine on arbeh - This noun, which occurs 24 times, refers to a kind of swarming "locust": "Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land ..." (Ex 10:12). Several other nouns related to this verb appear infrequently. Marbeh, which appears once, means "abundance" (Isa. 33:23). Marbî, which is found 5 times, refers to a "great number" (1 Sa 2:33) or the "greater half" (2 Chr 9:6). Tarbût has a single appearance to mean "increase" (Nu 32:14). Tarbî, which occurs 6 times, can mean "interest, increment, usury" (Lev 25:36). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

The most concentrated use of arbeh is found in Moses' description of the locust plague on Egypt:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, ([Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?](#)) 2 and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD." 3 Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 4'For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring **locusts** into your territory ([The 8th of 10 Plagues](#)). 5 'They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has escaped—what is left to you from the hail—and they will eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field. 6 'Then your houses shall be filled and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, something which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day that they came upon the earth until this day.'" And he turned and went out from Pharaoh. 7 Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?" 8 So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God!

Who are the ones that are going?" 9 Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD." 10 Then he said to them, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind. 11 "Not so! Go now, the men among you, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desire." So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence. 12 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the **locusts**, that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, even all that the hail has left." 13 So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the **locusts**. 14 The **locusts** came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; they were very numerous. There had never been so many **locusts**, nor would there be so many again. 15 For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt. 16 Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. 17 "Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me." 18 He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD. 19 So the LORD shifted the wind to a very strong west wind which took up the **locusts** and drove them into the Red Sea; not one **locust** was left in all the territory of Egypt.(Ex 10:1-19)

Arbeh - 24x in 19v -

Ex. 10:4; Ex. 10:12; Ex. 10:13; Ex. 10:14; Ex. 10:19; Lev. 11:22 (=These of them you may eat: the locust in its kinds); Deut. 28:38 (Part of the curses = "you will gather in little, for the locust will consume it."); Jdg. 6:5 (Midianites and Amalekites "would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it."); Jdg. 7:12 (Midianites and Amalekites like locusts); 1 Ki. 8:37; 2 Chr. 6:28; Job 39:20; Ps. 78:46; Ps. 105:34 ("He spoke, and locusts came, And young locusts, even without number"); Ps. 109:23; Prov. 30:27 ("The locusts have no king, Yet all of them go out in ranks;"); Jer. 46:23; Joel 1:4; Joel 2:25; Nah. 3:15; Nah. 3:17

ESV Study Bible - The Bible often uses four agents of destruction to stress utter devastation (cf. Jer. 15:2-3; Ezek. 14:21; Rev. 6:1-8; 9:15).

Charles Feinberg - The four names in verse 4, meaning literally, the gnawer, the swarmer or multiplier, the licker, and the consumer or devourer, have been taken to mean either four types of locusts or four stages of growth in the case of one locust. (Note that the KJV and the ASV translate these Hebrew words alike.) Neither view is tenable, for the prophet uses the common word for **locust** ('arbeh) and then gives three poetic equivalents (**Ed**: But see [Yamauchi's](#) comment below). **What the prophet means to convey is this: in the successive swarms of the locusts what one portion of them left the other portion devoured.** Notice the number **four** in the matter of judgments in Jeremiah 15:3 and Ezekiel 14:21. Some Hebrew commentators have tried to relate the four names to the four empires in Daniel 2 and 7. Nothing in the text warrants such allegorical treatment. Furthermore, we have only to compare Joel 1:3 with Exodus 10:2, 6, and Deuteronomy 28:38-42 to realize the literal import of the words of the prophecy. Locusts have rightly been called "**the incarnation of hunger.**" They have been known to devour over an area of almost ninety miles every green herb and every blade of grass, so that the ground gave the appearance of having been scorched by fire. The locusts have a "**scorched-earth policy**" of their own. Joel's description of the plague has been confirmed by many accounts of locust devastations. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

Ancient Locusts. THE Locust, or grasshopper, is one of the most formidable insects mentioned in the sacred writings. It is used as the symbol of desolation, so great and terrible were its ravages. It is still dreaded in the East. M. Olivier thus describes its attacks : "*With the burning south winds (of Syria) there come from the interior of Arabia and the most southern parts of Persia, clouds of locusts, whose ravages to these countries are as grievous, and nearly as sudden, as those of the heaviest hail in Europe. We witnessed them twice. It is difficult to express the effect produced on us by the sight of the whole atmosphere filled on all sides, and to a great height, by an innumerable quantity of these insects, whose flight was slow and uniform, and whose noise resembled that of rain ; the sky was darkened, and the light of the sun was considerably weakened. In a moment the terraces of the houses, the streets, and all the fields were covered by these insects, and in two days they had devoured all the leaves of the plants.*" The effects of the locusts in Egypt (Ex 10:12-15) were terrible beyond description. No plague could have been more dreadful or impressive in the East, where the ravages of locusts are so dreadful that they are chosen as the fit symbol of a destroying conqueror. The very threat had urged Pharaoh's courtiers to remonstrance, but he had refused to yield and had driven Moses and Aaron from his presence. Now he recalled them in haste, and asked them to forgive his sin "only this once," and to entreat God to take away "this death only." A strong west wind removed the locusts as an east wind had brought them ; but their removal left the king's heart harder and more rebellious than ever. Locusts were used as food, and are still in some parts of the East. Sometimes they are ground and

pounded, and mixed with flower and water, and made into cakes, or they are salted, and then eaten; sometimes smoked, boiled or roasted, stewed or fried in butter, and are considered a luxury. It was the locust that constituted the food of St. John the Baptist. (**Animals, Birds, Insects, And Reptiles Of The Bible**)

Yamauchi on these 4 descriptions of **locusts** - The four words used by Joel (Joel 1:4; 2:25-note) in his vivid description of the locust plague evidently represent stages of the locusts' development (RSV, NEB, JB, NAB), rather than separate species of insects (KJV, KB). In Joel 2:25-note we have first the **'arbeh**, the mature locust which deposits the eggs. The **yeleq** may be the larva as it emerges from the egg. The **ḥāsīl** may be the intermediate instar (stage between molts). The **gāzām** may be the ravenous nymph which strips the bark from the trees.

Edwin Yamauchi has an excellent of locusts - ('arbeh) Locust. The word is probably derived from the root rābâ "to become numerous." It occurs in Akkadian as erebu, arbû, etc. In the Ugaritic KRT text (103, 192), the king's army is described as covering the field like locusts (irby). Of the many words for locust, **'arbeh** is the general word, and is used most frequently, twenty-four times. The KJV translates it "locust" twenty times and "grasshopper" four times. The 'arbeh plague (Deut 28:38) is listed as one of the divine curses which would befall the Israelites if they disobeyed God's commands. The 'arbeh is one of the plagues which Moses called down upon Egypt (Ex 10:4ff.; Ps 78:46; 105:34). **Locusts are used in similes of vast numbers** in Jdg 6:5-note; Jdg 7:12-note; Jer 46:23; Nah 3:15. Locusts belong to the order of the **Orthoptera**, "straight-winged." With the grasshoppers they belong to the subfamily **Saltatoria**, "leapers," which were considered edible (Lev 11:21-22). The biblical locust is not the cicada called "locust" in some areas of the United States. Locusts belong to the family Acridiidae, "short-horned grasshoppers." Of the ninety-one species found in Palestine only the desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria* or **Acridium peregrinum** - [see picture](#)) has served to plague the near east from time immemorial. At maturity these locusts are two and one-half inches long. They have two sets of wings and an enlarged pair of legs for jumping. **In appearance they are compared to horses** (Joel 2:4; Job 39:20; Rev 9:7-[see Tony Garland's interesting note on interpretation of the "locusts"](#); cf. German Heupferd, Italian caiallette). Desert locusts are phenomenal travelers. They are able to fly for seventeen hours at a time and have been known to travel fifteen hundred miles. The sound of their wings is compared to the sound of chariots (Joel 2:5-note; Rev 9:9). Their route of travel is determined by the prevailing winds (Ex 10:13, 19). In the **plague of 1915 (see original article below)**, locusts came to Jerusalem from the northeast (cf. Joel 2:20-note). The Bible does not exaggerate when it speaks of swarms of locusts covering the ground (Ex 10:5). A swarm has been known to cover a hundred square miles and to be so dense as to blot out the sun. A truly large swarm may contain ten billion locusts. Unlike the Babylonians who resorted to magical incantations to avert locust plagues, the Israelites asked God in fasting, repentance, and prayer to remove locust plagues (1 Ki 8:37; 2 Chr 6:28). In Lev 11:22 the **'arbeh** and three other types of locusts (sol'ām, ḥargōl, ḥāgāb) are listed as edible insects. Bas reliefs from Nineveh show servants bringing skewered locusts for Sennacherib's table. John the Baptist subsisted on honey and locusts (Mt 3:4; Mk 1:6). Many Africans and Arabs after removing the wings, legs, and heads eat locusts either cooked or ground up as flour. There are nine Hebrew words which designate locusts: 'arbeh, gāzām, gēbā, only as plural gēbīm, gōbay, ḥāgāb, ḥāsīl, yeleq, sol'ām, ṣēlāṣal. Akkadian recognizes eighteen names for locusts, and the Talmud twenty names. (TWOT)

John Phillips - The swarms move forward in a kind of rolling motion, some of the locusts always being on the ground as the rear ones pass on to the front. As the rear of the swarm passes over them, those on the ground resume flight. The period spent on the ground enables each locust to replenish its fuel supply for further flight. Locusts look like well-armed horsemen and have incredible strength. With teeth like saws, they devour grass and leaves, fruit and foliage—everything green and edible; they attack the young branches of trees and the bark on trunks; they consume corn in the field and fall on vines, willows, and even bitter hemp; they strip palm trees bare. Many observers have described locust plagues. One person saw the air eighteen feet above the ground filled with the insects. Reddish-brown in color with gauzy wings sparkling in the sunlight, they reminded him of dense snowflakes driven by a storm. He was awed by their numbers and said the strange sight would have seemed beautiful if he could have forgotten about the devastation the locusts were bringing. Another person observed a plague that came like a living deluge on his village. The villagers dug trenches, kindled fires, beat drums, and flailed and burned locusts to death by the thousands, but their efforts were useless. The swarm rolled up the mountainside, poured over obstacles, and descended on crops and trees. It took days for the whole swarm to pass through the area. The roads were covered with locusts marching along like soldiers. The villagers broke their ranks, but the locusts closed rank again as soon as they passed the men. Someone else who witnessed a locust plague said that hundreds of the insects sat on each bush and after eating the leaves, gnawed frantically at the woody fibers. The locusts invaded towns and houses and devoured food, linen, woolen garments, and leather belts. Such a locust plague had devastated Judah in Joel's day. To the prophet the plague was both a parable and a prophecy. Although the scourge was past, Joel used it as a picture of worse things to come. The real locusts became symbols of real warriors who would invade the land in successive waves. ([Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary](#))

Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Locust](#)

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Locust](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Locust](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Destroying Locusts](#) [Bald Locust](#) [Locust](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Bald Locust](#) [Locust](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Locust](#) [Locust](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Locust](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Locust](#) - Nice summary
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Bald Locust](#) [Locust](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Locust](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Locust](#) [Bald Locust](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Locust](#)

McComiskey on locusts - In our generation areas having the potential for a locust outbreak are monitored by international agencies using satellite reconnaissance and other technology; incipient swarms are met by aircraft and trucks carrying powerful pesticides. However, if the locusts are not destroyed or contained shortly after the hatch, once the swarm has formed, control efforts are minimally effective even today. For example, in 1988 the civil war in Chad prevented international cooperation in attacking the hatch, and a destructive swarm spread throughout North Africa devastating some of the poorest nations and threatening Europe as well. It is difficult for modern Western people to appreciate the dire threat represented by a locust plague in earlier periods. Such outbreaks had serious consequences for the health and mortality of an affected population and for a region's economy. Scarcity of food resulting from the swarm's attack would bring the population to subsistence intake or less, would make the spread of disease among a weakened populace easier, would eliminate any trade from surplus food products, and would stimulate high inflation in the costs of food products. Disease outbreaks are further aggravated when swarms die; the putrefaction of the millions of locust bodies breeds typhus and other diseases that spread to humans and animals (see the description in Augustine's *City of God* 3.31). Baron (*Desert Locust*, pp. 3-7) catalogues many locust outbreaks known to have been accompanied by outbreaks of pestilence.

It was only in 1921 that the mystery of the locust was solved. Prior to this date researchers wondered what became of the locust during the years in which there were no outbreaks. In 1921 B. P. Uvarov demonstrated that the swarming locust was none other than an ordinary species of grasshopper. However, when moisture and temperature conditions favored a large hatch, the crowding, unceasing contact, and jostling of the nymphs begin to stimulate changes in coloration, physiology, metabolism, and behavior, so that the grasshopper nymphs make the transition from solitary behavior to the swarming gregarious and migratory phases of the dreaded plague. Plagues continue as long as climatic conditions favor the large hatches. Once entering their gregarious phase, swarms of locusts can migrate great distances and have even been observed twelve hundred miles at sea. The swarms can reach great sizes: a swarm across the Red Sea in 1889 was estimated to cover two thousand square miles. A swarm is estimated to contain up to 120 million insects per square mile (Baron, *Desert Locust*, p. 32). In 1881 an effort in Cyprus to prevent a possible outbreak of locusts by digging up and destroying their egg cases netted thirteen hundred tons of their egg masses. Locusts were the eighth plague on Egypt described in Exodus (Exod. 10:4-19); images of locusts were already carved in sixth-dynasty tombs at Saqqara over three-quarters of a millennium earlier (Baron, *Desert Locust*, p. 2; for Egyptological evidence, see Keimer, "Pendeloques en forme d'insectes").

The lifespan of individual locusts is also influenced by temperature and other climatic conditions. In one swarm incubation was 14 days; the hopper period, 38 days; the immature stage, 45 days; and the breeding stage, 30 days—for a total of 127 days (Baron, *Desert Locust*, p. 34). During breeding the female lays approximately 250 to 300 eggs in individual pods dug in suitable soil, each pod containing 70 to 80 eggs. The hatch of an egg-field portends the swarm to follow. In the words of one entomologist (cited in Baron, *Desert Locust*, p. 41), "So far as the eye could see they were boiling out. Every inch of open ground appeared to be bubbling young locusts as pod after pod, many of them only a couple of inches apart, gave up its contents.... Within three days the whole of a vast egg-field had been hatched out and the hoppers were ready to march." ([The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary](#))

Joel 1:5 Awake, drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you wine drinkers, on account of the sweet wine that is cut off from your mouth.

- **Awake, drunkards,:** Isa 24:7-11 Am 6:3-7 Lu 21:34-36 Ro 13:11-14
- **weep:** Joe 1:11,13 Jer 4:8 Eze 30:2 Jas 5:1
- **That is cut off from your mouth:** Isa 32:10-12 Lu 16:19,23-25

A SOBERING THOUGHT FOR DRUNKARDS!

The effect of the locust plague is described on

- (1) Drunkards (Joel 1:5-7)
- (2) Priests (Joel 1:8-10, 13-16)
- (3) Farmers (Joel 1:11, 12, 17, 18)
- (4) the Prophet Joel (Joel 1:19, 20)

Wake up and weep and wail was the prophet's cry, a strong statement given that this was a triplicate of imperatives or commands! While this cry is to those who are physically drunk, the cry to awake clearly conveys a deeper meaning for them to awaken spiritually. Paul applies this same idea to the Church in his day (and surely to the church in our modern times which seems to be asleep spiritually, largely illiterate Biblically and with much too big of a "foot in the world!")

Romans 13:11-14 [note](#) Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to **awaken from sleep**; (SPIRITUALLY ASLEEP!) for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed (OUR FUTURE REDEMPTION - Eph 4:30 [note](#), OUR GLORIFICATION - 1 Jn 3:2-3 [note](#)). 12 The night (SPIRITUAL DARKNESS OF THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE - Gal 1:4 [note](#)) is almost gone, and the (GLORIOUS) day is near (OF CHRIST'S RETURN!). Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. (CONDUCT THAT IS RIGHTEOUS AND HOLY AND HAS A PROPER FEAR OF THE LORD - 1 Pe 1:16-18 [note](#)) 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But **put on** ([aorist imperative](#)) the Lord Jesus Christ (BY GETTING HIS WORD IN US, DEPENDING ON HIS SPIRIT'S POWER TO ENABLE CHRIST-LIKE LIVING - Eph 5:18 [note](#), Gal 5:16 [note](#)), and **make no provision** ([present imperative with a negative](#) - STOP PLANNING YOUR SIN!) for the flesh in regard to its lusts (WHICH CONTINUALLY WAGES WAR AGAINST OUR SOULS! - 1 Pe 2:11 [note](#))..

Comment: May God grant by His enabling Spirit for the Church in America to "wake up" to discern the signs of the times so that we might redeem the time, for the days are evil and becoming more so every day! (Eph 5:16). In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Dear brother and sister in Christ - can I encourage you to take 5 minutes to listen to an old Keith Green song almost "prophetically" entitled "[Asleep in the Light](#)." (A line for his lyrics = "How can you be so dead, when you've been so well fed?") May God's Spirit awaken our spiritual slumber and cause us to weep for the lost, for Jesus' sake. Amen

Awake, drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you wine drinkers, on account of the sweet wine that is cut off from your mouth - Hordes of gnawing locusts mean no vines. No vines mean no grapes and no wine. There is surely a bit of irony in this exhortation. Drunks can be difficult to arouse, but here Joel is arousing them with the bad news that their supply of alcohol will be cut off! As they go into withdrawal, one can see them weeping and wailing. Further, the weeping and wailing both speak of public mourning over this devastation. God is calling for a "spiritual awakening" not just a sobering up. The call to weep and wail is not for show but was a call for brokenness and recognition of the fact that the locust plague was not a freak of nature, not a random or accidental event, but was a warning message sent by God to stir the nation to repentance.

Thomas Finley - In his final appeal Joel calls explicitly for repentance and prayer to the Lord (Joel 2:12-17). Between the two parts of his admonitions, however, he compares the magnitude of the disaster to the day of the Lord (1:15-2:11). The only thing that might possibly avert such final judgment is a time of national lamentation and fasting; thus the urgency in the pleas to the people. (Joel, Amos, Obadiah)

See Isaiah 5:11, 22, 23; 24:7-9; 28:7, 8; Amos 6:1-6 for drunkenness in the land.

The drunkards are the first of five groups who mourn the locust calamity - (1) drunkards (2) Nation depicted as a virgin (Joel 1:8), (3) priests (Joel 1:9), (4) the land (Joel 1:10) and (5) farmers and vinedressers (Joel 1:11).

Why the drunkards first? They would be representative of those in the nation who had come obsessed with the pursuit of pleasures in lieu of the pursuit of Jehovah! Sound familiar America? While most Americans know we have an escalating drug and alcohol problem in our nation, far fewer understand the depth and gravity and potential future repercussions. As an infectious disease specialist trained in the study of epidemics, the drug and alcohol problem is nothing short of a devastating epidemic (like a "locust plague" in a sense!) crossing all socio-economic strata. America (the Church of born again believers) needs to awaken and weep

and wail, and seek the Lord while He may be found (Isa 55:6).

Patterson explains the historical context of Joel's call to **awake and weep and wail** - Although the first half of the eighth century BC had seen some spiritual awakening in Judah (2 Chr 26:4–5), King Uzziah was not always the spiritual leader he should have been (2 Ki 15:4 - **Ed**: over and over in the OT the failure here proved to be a spiritual Achilles' heel! Are there any "High Places" in your life that you are unwilling to totally eradicate? If you do not then be forewarned and beware! cf Nu 32:23b). Ultimately, his sinful pride led to his downfall (2 Chr 26:2, 6–21). Nor were things better in the north (THE 10 NORTHERN TRIBES USUALLY KNOWN AS "ISRAEL"). Indeed, the eighth-century prophets indicate that the spiritual level of the populace had not risen above that of the kings of the northern and southern kingdoms (cf. Hos 4:11–19; 7:5, 13–14; Amos 2:4–8; 6:6). No doubt, the very prosperity of the eighth century contributed to the desperate spiritual condition of God's people (**ED**: AS I WRITE IN DEC, 2017, THE U.S. STOCK MARKET HAS REPEATEDLY ACHIEVED ALL TIME HIGHS!). **How tragic it is that times of ease and prosperity too often lead to spiritual and moral lethargy, and to compromise and defeat.** The great military and economic gains of the era for both north and south are detailed in the Scriptures and validated by the archaeologist's spade. Excavations at various biblical sites illustrate the condition of the times. At Samaria a cache of [ostraca](#) was found which proved to be receipts for wine, oil, and barley. The names of those involved in the transaction often included the name of the pagan deity Baal, attesting to the growing loss of true religion. Joel's designation of the populace as "wine drinkers" was thus appropriate. They had turned what God intended as a blessing into a wanton consumption that all too often led to drunkenness and debauchery. Israel's religious experience was seriously affected, degenerating into an empty formalism devoid of spiritual vitality. The eighth-century prophets denounced the wine-drinking habits of the people, complaining that such had permeated all levels of society (from the king downward) and had infected every area of the peoples' lives (cf. Isa 5:11–12, 22; 22:13; 28:1; Hos 4:11–19; 7:5, 13–14; Amos 2:4–8; 6:6; Mic 2:11). ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

The devastating effect to the three groups addressed in Joel 1:5-12 emphasize the total destruction at all social and economic levels.

John MacArthur has an excellent observation noting that "As if building toward a crescendo, the prophet noted in the first stanza that the luxuries of life were withdrawn. In the second, the elements needed to worship were interrupted. In the third, the essentials for living were snatched away. To lose the enjoyment of wine was one thing; to no longer be able to outwardly worship God was another; but to have nothing to eat was the sentence of death!" ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Sweet wine can refer to anything from freshly squeezed grapes or newly fermented wine (Hebrew word [asis](#) used in Song 8:2, Isa. 49:26; Joel 1:5, 3:18; Amos 9:13).

Awake ([07019](#))(**qits**) means to wake up, to arouse (as from sleep). Da 12:2 says "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground **will awake**," clearly speaking of the resurrection from the dead. Isa 26:19 also speaks of a future resurrection (Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.). In 2 Ki 4:31 "The lad has not **awakened**" means come back to life as in Job 14:12.

Paul Gilchrist - Most of the uses are of a narrative nature relating the fact that a person "awoke" from his sleep, e.g. Noah (Genesis 9:24), Jacob (Genesis 28:16) Pharaoh (Genesis 41:4), Samson (Judges 16:14), Solomon (1 Kings 3:15), etc. Several times in the Psalms, it is associated with one's awaking and finding God's sustaining presence. Psalm 139:18 exalts the omnipresence of God; "When I awake, I am still with thee" (Psalm 17:15). In a slight metaphorical change, Proverbs 6:22 speaks of the law as guiding one and "when you sleep, they will watch over you and when you awake, they will talk to you." The thought is clear: God reveals himself through the inscripturated revelation, not through mystical experience. Ancient mythology expresses the limitation of the gods as needing to sleep, hence having to shout to awaken them. (Cf. the Ugaritic example noted above and 1 Kings 18:27). An allusion to this is made in several Psalms with reference to the Lord, e.g. Psalm 78:65, "Then the Lord awoke as if from sleep, like a warrior overcome by wine." From the human viewpoint, one may so speak of the Lord who keeps silent when sin and rebellion goes on without repentance. However, our theology is rather built on Psalm 121:3-4, "He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

Gilbrant - Most frequently, **qits** is used to indicate arousal from sleep, either self-initiated or caused by an outside agent. Ordinarily, the reference is to awakening naturally. The psalmist lay down to sleep confident that he would awaken safely in the morning, "for the Lord sustained me" (Ps. 3:5). When he awakened, the expectation was that God would be present with him (Ps. 139:18). If wisdom is heeded, it will give direction for the day: "When you awake, it shall talk with you" (Prov. 6:22). In some cases, the context is that of a dream. The wicked fade as does a dream when a person awakens (Ps. 73:20). A hungry man dreams of food and water only to awaken hungry and thirsty (Isa. 29:8). Jeremiah's particular divine revelation occurred in the form of a dream, and he awoke refreshed (Jer. 31:26). At times, the individual or agent asks why God is not responding to his need and prayer. Expressing urgency, the Hiphil imperative is employed in these situations, "to stir or awaken." Elsewhere, with regard to Israel's sad plight, the psalmist cries, "O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever" (Ps. 44:23). An appeal is made to God to deal with the heathen (Ps. 59:5). The one

occurrence in the Qal stem (Isa. 18:6) is in an oracle against Cush (during Isaiah's day a Cushite established Egypt's Twenty-Fifth Dynasty). Representative of nations opposed to God's people, its judgment is portrayed in vivid imagery—birds feasting upon the leftover stalks of the cut fruit. Qîts is employed with sarcasm one other time in a condemnation of idolatry, "Woe unto him who says to the wood, Awake" (Hab. 2:19). Four times this verb refers to the stupor or sleep of drunkenness (Prov. 23:35; Jer. 51:39, 57; Joel 1:5). Those in such a condition are admonished to change, prodded cynically in Prov. 23:35, "When will I wake up so I can find another drink?" (NIV). Several occurrences of qîts address death and resurrection (2 Ki. 4:31; Job 14:12; Isa. 26:19; Jer. 51:39, 57; Dan. 12:2). In Jeremiah, God himself, the Commander of an army, will inflict a drunkenness ("a perpetual sleep," Jer. 51:39, 57) upon Babylon's forces and its captains. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, reported the death of the Shunammite's son with the words, "The child is not awaked" (2 Ki. 4:31). Unrighteousness or darkness will be swept away when the psalmist meets the Lord while in prayer. Hinted at is the thought that God will be met, not only in an earthly temple, but ultimately in its heavenly counterpart (Ps. 17:15). While the doctrine of an afterlife was not fully understood in OT times, a belief in a kind of shadowy existence after death was held even by Israel's pagan neighbors. Job asked whether a man at life's end, after lying down, would again "awake" (Job 14:12) and "live again" (v. 14). Daniel 12:2 speaks more clearly of a future resurrection, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

Qits - 20x in 19v - awake(13), awakened(2), awakens(2), awakes(1), awoke(2).

1 Sam. 26:12; 2 Ki. 4:31; Job 14:12; Ps. 3:5; Ps. 17:15; Ps. 35:23; Ps. 44:23; Ps. 59:5; Ps. 73:20; Ps. 139:18; Prov. 6:22; Prov. 23:35; Isa. 26:19; Isa. 29:8; Jer. 31:26; Ezek. 7:6; Dan. 12:2; Joel 1:5; Hab. 2:19

The **Lxx** translates with the verb **eknepho** (in Job 1:5) which is a command to literally "sober up" after being drunk. Figuratively the idea means to regain proper control of one's thinking and so to come to one's senses (1 Cor 15:34).

Weep (01058)(**bakah**) means to weep, bemoan, lament or wail, because of grief, pain, humiliation or even joy (Ge. 42:24; 43:30; Dt 21:13, Joel 1:5).

Bakah is used also in Joel 2:17 (Lxx **klaio**)

The **Lxx** translates **bakah** in this verse with the verb **klaio** which means means to mourn, to weep, to lament or to wail with emphasis upon noise accompanying weeping. It expresses one's immediate and outward reaction to suffering. The picture is of one lamenting with sobs or wailing aloud and was used to describe the wailing that took place when someone died. Weeping thus was a sign of the pain and grief for the entity or person being wept over. **Klaio** implies not only the shedding of tears, but also external expression of grief. It was a term frequently used to describe the actions of professional mourners. In Joel 1:5

Wail (howl) (03213)(**yalal**) is a verb that means to howl with loud crying and shrill shouting sounds of sorrow, with a wailing tone. This verb is found only in the prophets and most often in the context of divine judgment, especially the coming **Day of the Lord**. Thus it is not surprising that this verb is often used as an expression of mourning, distress or dismay!

Joel uses this verb 3 times in this book, all in Joel 1 commanding wailing from the drunkards, the vine dressers and the priests.

Cut off (03772)(**karath**) in the more literal usage means cutting something off or down and in a sense the grapes are "cut off" by the devouring locusts which cuts off the supply of wine.

What the Bible Teaches – The intensity of the sorrow Joel called for is seen by the double call to "weep; and howl". These are terms often employed in a situation of bereavement. Here the drinkers of wine had become bereft of the new supply. The outlook was bleak. There was no joy on the horizon. Their attitude was to reflect the hopelessness of the situation. ([What the Bible Teaches – Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#))

NET Note makes an interesting comment - The word drunkards has a double edge here. Those accustomed to drinking too much must now lament the unavailability of wine. It also may hint that the people in general have become religiously inebriated and are unresponsive to the Lord. They are, as it were, drunkards from a spiritual standpoint. Joel addresses the first of three groups particularly affected by the locust plague. In v. 5 he describes the effects on the drunkards, who no longer have a ready supply of intoxicating wine; in vv. 11–12 he describes the effects on the farmers, who have watched their labors come to naught because of the insect infestation; and in vv. 13–14 he describes the effects on the priests, who are no longer able to offer grain sacrifices and libations in the temple. ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

Joel 1:6 For a nation has invaded my land, mighty and without number; Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the fangs of a lioness.

■ **For a nation has invaded** : Joe 2:2-11,25 Pr 30:25-27

- **my land:** Ps 107:34 Isa 8:8 32:13 Ho 9:3
- **Its teeth are the teeth of a lion:** Pr 30:14 Rev 9:7-10

LOCUSTS LIKE AN INVADING ENEMY ARMY

For is a [term of explanation](#). What is Joel explaining? Joel gives the reason for the command to awake, weep and wail, and by implication to repent.

A nation has invaded my land, mighty and without number - Joel uses **nation** as a figure of speech to describe the waves of invading armies of locusts, a fitting illustration of the invasion of Israel that would come about in the last days and which Joel describes in chapters 2 and 3. Especially interesting is how Joel parleys the locust invasion into a foreshadowing of the Day of the LORD, as for example in Joel 2:31 "The sun will be turned into darkness (EXACTLY WHAT WOULD HAVE OCCURRED WHEN THE GIANT LOCUST SWARM HAD FILLED THE SKY!) And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes."

It is interesting that God assigns the Hebrew word **goy** to the locusts, for this is normally a term used for pagan nations. The word invaded is *alah* which means to go up, to ascend or to climb, all good word pictures of what a swarm of locusts would do (going up in the air flying, ascending over trees, etc, climbing up and over walls like a victorious invading army would do).

NET Note on nation - As becomes increasingly clear in what follows, this nation is to be understood figuratively. It refers to the locust invasion as viewed from the standpoint of its methodical, destructive advance across the land (BDB 156 s.v. 2 נָאִי). This term is used figuratively to refer to animals one other time (Zeph 2:14). ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

Mighty - Not because they were individually **mighty** but because [en masse](#) they were an overwhelming invading force. Their might was in their numbers and their organized devastation of the land. **Mighty** "nearly always occurs in a context of great numbers (cf. Num. 32:1; Deut. 26:5; Ps. 35:18; Prov. 7:26; Isa. 60:22; Amos 5:12). The idea of might derives from the power of a collective force ("strength in numbers"). Locust plagues are destructive because of their great size." (Finley)

Without number is a great description of hordes of invading locusts because a large swarm could contain ten billion locusts. [Whiting in his classic 1915 National Geographic article](#) paints a picture of locusts **without number** writing that on one day their "Attention was drawn to them (the invading locusts) by the sudden darkening of the bright sunshine, and then by a veritable shower of their excretions, which fell thick and fast and resembled those of mice, especially noticeable on the white macadam roads!" One article says "A desert locust swarm can be 460 square miles (1,200 square kilometers) in size and pack between 40 and 80 million locusts into less than half a square mile (one square kilometer)."

One ancient writer described the countless numbers of locusts this way - "Their multitude is incredible, whereby they cover the earth and fill the air; they take away the brightness of the sun. I say again, the thing is incredible to one who has not seen them." "It would not be a thing to be believed, if one had not seen it." "On another day, it was beyond belief: they occupied a space of eight leagues (about 24 English miles). I do not mention the multitude of those without wings, because it is incredible." "When we were in the Seignory of Abrigima, in a place called Aquate, there came such a multitude of locusts, as cannot be said. They began to arrive one day about terce (nine) and until night they cease not to arrive; and when they arrived, they bestowed themselves. On the next day at the hour of prime they began to depart, and at mid-day there was not one, and there remained not a leaf on the trees. At this instant others began to come, and staved like the others to the next day at the same hour; and these left not a stick with its bark, nor a green herb, and thus did they five days one after another; and the people said that they were the sons, who went to seek their fathers, and they took the road toward the others which had no wings. After they were gone, we knew the breadth which they had occupied, and saw the destruction which they had made, it exceeded three leagues (nine miles) wherein there remained no bark on the trees." (from Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament)

Another writes of South Africa (Barrow, S. Africa, p. 257);

"Of the innumerable multitudes of the incomplete insect or larva of the locusts, which at this time infested this part of Africa, no adequate idea could be conceived without having witnessed them. For the space of ten miles on each side of the Sea-Cow river, and eighty or ninety miles in length, an area of 16, or 1800 square miles, the whole surface might literally be said to be covered with them. The water of the river was scarcely visible on account of the dead carcasses which floated on the surface, drowned in the attempt to come at the weeds which grew in it." (from Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament)

A writer of reputation says of a "column of locusts" in India (Major Moor in Kirby on Entomology, Letter vi.);

"It extended, we were informed, 500 miles, and so compact was it when on the wing, that, like an eclipse, it

completely hid the sun; so that no shadow was cast by any object, and some lofty tombs, not more than 200 yards distant, were rendered quite invisible." (from Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament)

The steppes," says Clarke , an incredulous traveler, "were entirely covered by their bodies, and their numbers falling resembled flakes of snow, carried obliquely by the wind, and spreading thick mists over the sun. Myriads fell over the carriage, the horses, the drivers. The Tartars told us, that persons had been suffocated by a fall of locusts on the "steppes." (from Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament)

My land - Whose **land**? Recall God is the Speaker from Joel 1:1. This is God's **land** as clearly stated elsewhere (cf. Lev 25:23; Nu 36:2; Ezek 38:16, Hosea 9:3). It belongs to Him and tampering with Israel is tampering with God's **land**. In Joel 2:1 God calls Jerusalem "**My holy mountain**." The nations of the world will never learn and will pay the ultimate price of total defeat and devastation at the return of the King of kings!

Finley on "**my land**" - The **NASB** (Ed: as do most modern versions except the CSB) evidently referred the phrase to Joel ("my" in lowercase). In defense of this, one could appeal to the occurrence of "my God" in Joel 1:13. However, the Lord frequently designates Israel as "**My land**" in the prophets (Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Ezek. 36:5; 38:16; Joel 3:2).

What the Bible Teaches – The land was the physical and tangible sign of the spiritual bond between the Lord and His people. The cultivation and enjoyment of it belonged to them as part of His covenant. When they were living in obedience, the land prospered. When they were living in disobedience, the land suffered. The prosperity of their souls was reflected in the prosperity of the soil. Conversely, the barrenness of their lives was reflected in the barrenness of the land. This was the relationship Moses spelt out so clearly in Deuteronomy 28:1-68. ([What the Bible Teaches – Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#))

Joel is explaining the unprecedented locust invasion as **a nation that has invaded** Palestine. We see other allusions to locusts as an army, with literal armies compared to locusts...

The locusts have no king, Yet all of them go out in ranks (Pr 30:27)

For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, **they would come in like locusts** for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it. (Jdg 6:5; 7:12)

Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east **were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts**; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. (Jdg 6:5; 7:12)

Your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; **As locusts rushing about** men rush about on it. (Isa. 33:4)

"They have cut down her forest," declares the LORD; "Surely it will no more be found, Even though **they are now more numerous than locusts** And are without number. (Jer. 46:23)

The LORD of hosts has sworn by Himself: "**Surely I will fill you with a population like locusts**, And they will cry out with shouts of victory over you." (Jer. 51:14)

Lift up a signal in the land, Blow a trumpet among the nations! Consecrate the nations against her, Summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz; Appoint a marshal against her, **Bring up the horses like bristly locusts**. (Jer. 51:27)

Its teeth are the teeth of a lion - Obviously this is not a reference to size of the locust's chewing apparatus but to the fact that their jaws are especially crafted by the Creator for chewing things like leaves and grain and bark and fruit, etc. Yes, the lion's teeth are big but so are a hippo's teeth. The difference is that the lions dentition is created to rip and tear and shred meat in a way that a hippo cannot and a way human teeth cannot. In this sense the locusts' "teeth" are particularly suited for their devastating work. The cutting strength of locusts was often reported in ancient times. [Pliny the Elder \(Natural History 1:212\)](#) wrote "Scorching numerous objects by their very contact, they eat away everything with their teeth, **the very doors of the houses even**" For a simple, interesting discussion of the specialized nature of the lion's teeth click [Lion Anatomy- Teeth](#).

Locusts have sturdy jaws that bite or saw-off pieces of vegetation. Locusts jaws move from side to side. The locusts have such powerful jaws that the sound of a swarm of them eating can be heard from faraway. A swarm of locusts can eat up to 400 million pounds of plants each day! As the swarm descends, the insects eat everything in sight – garden crops, flowers, grass and even clothes hanging on a clothes line!

And it has the fangs of a lioness - Since the lioness actually kills the prey, her teeth are more fearsome than those of the male! Clearly this is a description of the gnawing and eating of anything and everything edible so that fig trees and vines, etc, were stripped totally bare by these "fangs" even as a lioness would consume her prey. "As one takes a closer look at the insects, one sees not simply "lion's teeth," but the very sharp "fangs" used by the lioness for dispatching her victim." (Finley)

NET Note on the fangs - Literally "its incisors are those of a lioness." The sharp, cutting teeth are metonymical for the action of tearing apart and eating prey. The language is clearly hyperbolic. Neither locusts nor human invaders literally have teeth of this size. The prophet is using exaggerated and picturesque language to portray in vivid terms the enormity of the calamity. English versions vary greatly on the specifics: KJV "cheek teeth"; ASV "jaw-teeth"; NAB "molars"; NASB, NIV, NRSV "fangs." see [Lion Anatomy-Teeth \(Net Notes Joel 1\)](#)

Barnes - The teeth of the locust are said to be "harder than stone." (Morier, second. Journey, p. 99): "They appear to be created for a scourge; since to strength incredible for so small a creature, they add saw-like teeth admirably calculated to "eat up all the herbs in the land.""Some near the Senegal, are described as (Adansson, Voyage au Senegal, p. 88) "quite brown, of the thickness and length of a finger, and armed with two jaws, toothed like a saw, and very powerful."

Joel 1:7 It has made my vine a waste and my fig tree splinters. It has stripped them bare and cast them away; Their branches have become white.

- **It has made my vine a waste:** Joe 1:12 Ex 10:15 Ps 105:33 Isa 5:6 24:7 Jer 8:13 Ho 2:12 Hab 3:17

It has made my vine a waste and my fig tree splinters - God ("**My vine...My fig tree**", cp Isa 5:3 "My vineyard" ~ nation of Israel) owns not only the land but the produce of the land. And here the very items He owns, He allows the locusts to destroy to arrest His people's attention, to bring them to a point of desperation, brokenness and repentance. While the primary sense is the destruction of the grape vines, there may be a double meaning because the "**vine**" is the well-known symbol of God's people (Ps 80:8,14; Hosea 10:1; Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2). Since fruitful vines and fig trees represented the blessing of the Lord on the land (1 Ki 4:25; Mic. 4:4; Zech. 3:10), so here we see a "divine inversion" of the pattern. The "good hand of the LORD" (as with Elijah - 1 Ki 18:46, Ezra - Ezra 7:6, 28, 7:9-[note](#)) was being removed from His people. (cf this aspect of the "hand of the LORD" in Ex 9:3 = against Egypt, Dt 2:15, Jdg 2:15-note = against Israel, Ru 1:13-[note](#) = Naomi, 1 Sa 7:13 = Philistines, etc)

NET Note on "IT" - Throughout Joel 1:6-7 the Hebrew uses singular forms to describe the locust swarm, but the translation uses plural forms because several details of the text make more sense in English as if they are describing the appearance and effects of individual locusts. ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

Patterson - Joel chides the people as those who would mourn the loss of vineyards, for that meant the loss of wine for drinking. In so doing, however, he calls attention not only to the vine but also to the fig tree. Both were well-known symbols of God's blessing for his covenant people (cf. Hos 2:12; Amos 4:9; Mic 4:4; Hag 2:19; Zech 3:10 see also 1 Kgs 4:25; 2 Kgs 18:31, Ps 105:33; Isa 36:16; Jer 5:17; 8:13). In this, Joel recognized that the unprecedented locust plague was nothing less than the judgment of God upon his wayward people. Joel's evaluation of his society stands as a warning to ours. That which so easily brings intoxication and personal degradation (Gen 9:21; 19:32; Prov 20:1; Isa 28:7) can easily corrupt one's thinking, even that of God's people (Hos 4:11). Far better is it to be free of its influence (Deut 29:6; Jer 35:6) and to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). While excessive drinking can lead to a degenerate lifestyle, it is not the only besetting sin. Whatever exerts so dominating and controlling an influence on a person's life that it takes away spiritual vitality and productivity is sin; it needs to be abandoned (Rom 6:1-14; 14:23b; 1 John 5:21). May God help us to be preoccupied with Christ, not with selfish indulgence (Phil 3:7-11).([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

Literally grapes and figs were two of the principle crops of the land of Israel but they are both laid bare! This devastation of these food staples is reminiscent of the prophetic curses that God would send on Israel if she disobeyed the Mosaic covenant. For example we read

"You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, **but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes**, (WHY?) for the worm shall devour them." (Dt 28:39)

The fig tree splinters because the locusts with teeth like a lion gnaw off the outside bark, exposing the inner [cambium](#).

God frequently mentions vines and fig trees in the context of judgment

Jeremiah 8:13 "I will surely snatch them away," declares the LORD; "There will be **no grapes on the vine** And **no figs on the fig tree**, And the leaf will wither; And what I have given them will pass away."

Hosea 2:12 "I will destroy **her vines and fig trees**, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them.

Habakkuk 3:17 Though the **fig tree should not blossom** And there be **no fruit on the vines** Though the

yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,

ESV Study Bible - The **vine** and **fig tree** are symbols of a prosperous and peaceful life for Israel (2 Kings 18:31; Mic. 4:4), which the Lord sees as His property.

Their branches have become white - "Once choice leafy vegetation is no longer available to them, locusts have been known to consume the bark of small tree limbs, leaving them in an exposed and vulnerable condition. It is apparently this whitened condition of limbs that Joel is referring to here." ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

What the Bible Teaches – These two trees are, in Scripture, used to describe a situation of idyllic prosperity as when men would sit under the vine and under the fig tree. Now these trees afford no shade and plenty has been exchanged for poverty. Whiting ([see article below](#)), gives a vivid description of the injury which can be inflicted on the fruit trees: "On every leaf dozens would be perched ... When the daintier morsels (fruit and leaves) were gone the bark was eaten off the young topmost branches which, after exposure to the sun, bleached snow white. Then, seemingly out of malice, they would gnaw off small limbs, perhaps to get at the pith within". ([What the Bible Teaches – Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#))

Barnes on It has made my vine a waste and my fig tree splinters - This describes an extremity of desolation. The locusts at first attack all which is green and succulent; when this has been consumed, then they attack the bark of trees. (Jackson's Travels to Morocco ap. Kirby): "When they have devoured all other vegetables, they attack the trees, consuming first the leaves, then the bark." (Shaw's Travels, p. 257): "A day or two after one of these bodies were in motion, others were already hatched to glean after them, gnawing off the young branches and the very bark of such trees as had escaped before with the loss only of their fruit and foliage." (Adansson, Ibid.): "They carried desolation wherever they passed. After having consumed herbage, fruit, leaves of trees, they attacked even their young shoots and their bark. Even the reeds, wherewith the huts were thatched, though quite dry, were not spared." (Chenier, Recherches Historiques sur les Maures, iii. 496. "They destroyed the leaves and bark of the olive." Dr. Freer, in Russell's Aleppo, p. 230): "Everything in the country was devoured; the bark of figs, pomegranates, and oranges, bitter hard and corrosive, escaped not their voracity." The effects of this wasting last on for many years.

Barnes on It has stripped them bare and cast them away - (Constitutionnel, May, 1841, of locusts in Spain in that year. K.): "It is sufficient, if these terrible columns stop half an hour on a spot, for everything growing on it, vines, olive trees, and grain, to be entirely destroyed. After they have passed, nothing remains but the large branches, and the roots which, being under ground, have escaped their voracity." (Philippians Trans. 1686. T. xvi. p. 148): "After eating up the corn, they fell upon the vines, the pulse, the willows and even the hemp, notwithstanding its great bitterness." (Burekhardt, Notes, ii. 90): "They are particularly injurious to the palm trees; these they strip of every leaf and green particle, the trees remaining like skeletons with bare branches." (Lichtenstein, Travels in South Africa. c. 46. p. 251): "The bushes were eaten quite bare, though the animals could not have been long on the spot. They sat by hundreds on a bush gnawing the rind and the woody fibres."

Barnes on Their branches have become white - (Alvarez, c. 33): "The country did not seem to be burnt, but to be much covered with snow, through the whiteness of the trees and the dryness of the herbs. It pleased God that the fresh crops were already gathered in."

Joel 1:8 **Wail** like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.

- **Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth:** Joe 1:13-15 2:12-14 Isa 22:12 24:7-12 32:11 Jer 9:17-19 Jas 4:8,9 Jas 5:1
- **For the bridegroom of her youth** Pr 2:17 Jer 3:4 Mal 2:15

NET Joel 1:8 Wail like a young virgin clothed in sackcloth, lamenting the death of her husband-to-be.

BITTER BEREAVEMENT LIKE LOSS OF A BRIDEGROOM

Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth (or "like a bride dressed in black" = NLT but Patterson adds "The NLT's "husband" should not be taken to indicate that the marriage had been consummated—the young woman may yet have been in her father's household.") - The subject is not clearly stated. A number of commentators feel since the imperative (wail) is feminine singular that this call is directed at Jerusalem which was often personified as a woman (cf Lam 1:1-2, Jer 31:15). Patterson adds that "Although the Hebrew text does not mention the death of a husband, such is the natural assumption of the virgin's putting on sackcloth." ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

McComiskey - Israel is to mourn like a young woman whose betrothed dies before the consummation of marriage; a time of anticipation and eagerness ends in frustration, disappointment, and sadness. ([The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary](#))

The command issued is again a charge to lament like a young woman who has lost her prospective bridegroom and mourns (the Lxx verb *threueo* can speak of a funeral dirge). The point is the depth of the loss to the young woman is profound, and so too would be the sense of loss to those in Judah at the losses suffered by the locust plague.

Wail (0421)(**alah**) is a verb meaning to lament or wail and is used only in Joel 1:8 in the Bible. Unlike the more general term for weeping found in Joel 1:5 (*bakah*), the verb **alah** specifically denotes crying born of deep sorrow. The Lxx supports this idea translating **alah** with the Greek verb *thorueo* which is derived from *threomai* which means to shriek out and thus *thorueo* meant to express oneself in grief, frequently in sounds and rhythms established by funereal custom in various regions of the ancient world.

NET Note - The verb (**wail**) is feminine singular, raising a question concerning its intended antecedent. A plural verb would be expected here, the idea being that all the inhabitants of the land should grieve. Perhaps Joel is thinking specifically of the city of Jerusalem, albeit in a representative sense. The choice of the feminine singular verb form has probably been influenced to some extent by the allusion to the young widow in the simile of v. 8. Heb "the husband of her youth." The woman described here may already be married, so the reference is to the death of a husband rather than a fiancé (a husband-to-be). Either way, the simile describes a painful and unexpected loss to which the national tragedy Joel is describing may be compared. ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

MacArthur - The metaphor is significant because the OT speaks of the Lord as the husband of Israel, His wife (Isa 54:5-8; Jer 31:32). The covenantal offerings and libations could not be carried out; Israel, the wife of the Lord, was to repent, lest her relationship with the Lord became like that of the young widowed maiden. As with the drunkards, the religious leaders were to wail as a young maiden would upon the death of her youthful husband, wherein she exchanged the silky fabric of a wedding dress and the joy of a wedding feast for the scratchy, coarse clothing of goat's hair and the cry of a funeral dirge. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Virgin (01330)(**bethulah**) is a feminine noun meaning virgin, a mature young woman that has never had sexual intercourse, and under the authority and protection of the father (translated as such 49x and once as maiden in the NAS). Judges 21:12 describes "400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him." So while the meaning of **bethulah** is unquestionably a virgin, that is not always the case for in Joel 1:8 we read "Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth," which suggests the bethulah is mourning for her husband. The Lxx of Joel 1:8 translates **bethulah** with the noun **nemphe** which is literally a young woman engaged or newly married (Jn 3:29) Liddell-Scott on **nymphē** - a young wife, bride, Lat. nupta, 2. any married woman, 3. a marriageable maiden, 4. = Lat. nurus, daughter-in-law. **Bruce Waltke** adds that "in Joel 1:8, where the **betûlâh** is called upon to lament the death of her **ba'al** "husband," it probably does not mean "virgin" for elsewhere **ba'al** is the regular word for "husband" and its usual translation by "bridegroom" in the versions is otherwise unattested. ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

Bethulah also refers to cities or countries that are personified as females (Isa. 37:22; 47:1; Jer. 18:13; 31:4, 21; Amos 5:2). Swanson adds that bethulah also means "young women, i.e., a class of young female, though the class may be virgins, the focus is on the youth group (Dt 32:25; Ps 148:12; Jer 31:13; Am 8:13)." Swanson adds that a third meaning of bethulah is "dear one, one cared for, loved one, formally, virgin daughter, a young woman who is loved by the father, with the associated meaning of being pure, innocent, and under the protection and care of the father (2Ki 19:21; Isa 23:12; 37:22, 22; 47:1, 1; Jer 46:11; La 1:15; 2:10, 13)."

Bethulah - 50x in 50v - maidens(1), virgin(32), virgins(17).

Gen. 24:16; Exod. 22:16; Exod. 22:17; Lev. 21:3; Lev. 21:14; Deut. 22:19; Deut. 22:23; Deut. 22:28; Deut. 32:25; Jdg. 19:24; Jdg. 21:12; 2 Sam. 13:2; 2 Sam. 13:18; 1 Ki. 1:2; 2 Ki. 19:21; 2 Chr. 36:17; Est. 2:2; Est. 2:3; Est. 2:17; Est. 2:19; Job 31:1; Ps. 45:14; Ps. 78:63; Ps. 148:12; Isa. 23:4; Isa. 23:12; Isa. 37:22; Isa. 47:1; Isa. 62:5; Jer. 2:32; Jer. 14:17; Jer. 18:13; Jer. 31:4; Jer. 31:13; Jer. 31:21; Jer. 46:11; Jer. 51:22; Lam. 1:4; Lam. 1:15; Lam. 1:18; Lam. 2:10; Lam. 2:13; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 5:11; Ezek. 9:6; Ezek. 44:22; Joel 1:8; Amos 5:2; Amos 8:13; Zech. 9:17

- [Virgin - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Virgin; Virginité - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Virgin virginité - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)

Sackcloth generally was worn to depict sorrow and [penitence](#) or remorse for your past conduct. It was a rough, uncomfortable fabric that chafed and irritated the skin. Other English dictionaries have this definition for penitence - the action of feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong, even repentance. Of course God's desire was that the despair from the dramatic losses would stimulate the people to search their hearts and come to a place of confession and repentance. God was not interested in

external show but in internal surrender to Him.

Sackcloth (08242)(**saq**) means sack or sackcloth refers to a thick, coarse cloth, dark in color and typically woven from goat's hair and sometimes camel's hair. Sackcloth was worn traditionally to demonstrate mourning or despair; to convey the message dramatically. Sackcloth was used as a garment by mourners and those who wished to express contrition. It was worn in such a way as to leave the breast free for beating. As a garment of grief and self-abasement, sackcloth was sometimes the dress of the prophet who preached a message of repentance (cf. Rev. 11:3). Such a sight would be a call to trembling and repentance. Both Elijah and John, preachers of repentance, wore garments of camel's skin (2 Kings 1:8; Matthew 3:4). Persons might tear their clothes as well, especially at the death of a son. The word is also used of sacks used to transport various items of merchandise (Gen. 42:25, 27, 35)

Gilbrant - Sackcloth was worn by mourners who lamented either because of a national catastrophe (2 Ki. 6:30ff; Lam. 2:10) or a personal tragedy (Gen. 37:34; Job 16:15; Joel 1:8). For example, the elders of Jerusalem "cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth" because of God's wrath which had come upon their nation (Lam. 2:10). Also, when Jacob was told that his beloved son Joseph had been mauled by a wild animal, he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days" (Gen. 37:34). The wearing of sackcloth symbolized a person's passionate desire for mercy from God (Dan. 9:3). The shape of the saq was possibly similar to a loincloth or a beanbag, while its dark color signified lamentation, grief and sorrow. Isaiah compared metaphorically the dark color of a sackcloth with the darkness of Israel's sky on account of their sin (Isa. 50:3). The darkness of the sackcloth contrasted the colorful garments worn at festive times and celebrations. Therefore, the absence of color signified sadness, while the presence of color signified joy. A saq could also be used as a holder of items such as food (Gen. 42:25, 27, 35; Lev. 11:32; Josh. 9:4) or as a blanket for covering (2 Sam. 21:10; Joel 1:13). (Ibid)

Saq - 48x in 46v - sack(4), sackcloth(42), sacks(2).

Gen. 37:34; Gen. 42:25; Gen. 42:27; Gen. 42:35; Lev. 11:32; Jos. 9:4; 2 Sam. 3:31; 2 Sam. 21:10; 1 Ki. 20:31; 1 Ki. 20:32; 1 Ki. 21:27; 2 Ki. 6:30; 2 Ki. 19:1; 2 Ki. 19:2; 1 Chr. 21:16; Neh. 9:1; Est. 4:1; Est. 4:2; Est. 4:3; Est. 4:4; Job 16:15; Ps. 30:11; Ps. 35:13; Ps. 69:11; Isa. 3:24; Isa. 15:3; Isa. 20:2; Isa. 22:12; Isa. 37:1; Isa. 37:2; Isa. 50:3; Isa. 58:5; Jer. 4:8; Jer. 6:26; Jer. 48:37; Jer. 49:3; Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 7:18; Ezek. 27:31; Dan. 9:3; Joel 1:8; Joel 1:13; Amos 8:10; Jon. 3:5; Jon. 3:6; Jon. 3:8

Resources on Sackcloth:

- Nave Topical Bible [Sackcloth](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Sackcloth](#)
- American Tract Society [Sack](#), [Sackcloth](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Sackcloth](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Sackcloth](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Sackcloth](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Sackcloth](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Sackcloth](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Sackcloth](#) [Sackcloth](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Sackcloth](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Sackcloth](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Sackcloth](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Sackcloth](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Sackcloth](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Sackcloth](#)

Joel 1:9 The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off From the house of the LORD. The priests mourn, The ministers of the LORD.

- **The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off** : Joe 1:13,16 2:14 Ho 9:4
- **The priests mourn,**: Joe 2:17 La 1:4,16
- **The ministers of the LORD:** Ex 28:1 2Ch 13:10 Isa 61:6

**WORSHIP OF THE LORD
IS JEOPARDIZED!**

The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off - " Rather than grieving over what their loss of grain and wine meant to their

daily consumption, they ought to have mourned the loss of their opportunities to perform the daily sacrifices. Without these products, the meal and drink offerings could not be offered. Both were crucial products in the sacrificial system. The drink offering is particularly significant to the full scriptural record. It was employed chiefly to accompany and culminate the offerings that are spoken of as having a pleasing aroma before God and that symbolize full dedication (the burnt offering, together with its grain offering, signifying active service) and loving communion (the peace offering) with God (Ex 29:38–42; Lev 2:2,9,16-note; Lev 6:14–18-note; Num 15:1–10; 28:3–8; 29:30)." ([Patterson](#))

Empty altars meant empty stomachs!

Finley - For the average Judean, accustomed to presenting on a regular basis a portion of the harvest, it must have been quite a shock to be unable to supply the Lord's portion, let alone have enough left to live on. (Ibid)

Cut off (03772)([karath](#)) in the more literal usage means cutting something off or down and like the grapes are "cut off" by the devouring locusts which cuts off the supply of wine for the drink offering and cuts off the supply of grain for the grain offering. The morning and evening offerings (Ex 29:38-42; Lev 23:13) required flour, wine, and oil, but now these were destroyed.

The effect of the cutting off of the offerings was to cut the people and the priests off from communion with God.

The priests mourn - The Hebrew expresses this as a fact. It is interesting that the Septuagint expresses it as a command for the priests to mourn using the verb [pentheo](#) denotes loud mourning such as the lament for the dead or for a severe, painful loss. One has to ask is their mourning over loss of the supply or over the loss of communion with the Source of the supply?

The **priests** would also undoubtedly **mourn** their loss of their divinely allocated supply of sustenance as they were allowed to eat a portion of the grain offering (Lev 2:3, 10).

Mourn (056)([abel](#) from [abal](#) = to mourn) means to be in mourning process and speaks of actions and persons. The root verb [abal](#) describes mourning for the dead as did Jacob when he thought Joseph had died (Ge 37:34). Obstinate Israel heard the sad word in Ex 33:3 and went into mourning (Ex 33:4). Israel mourned after God killed the spies who gave a bad report in their foray to Canaan (Nu 14:39). [Abel](#) is used figuratively, "The earth mourns." (Isaiah 24:4).

Patterson on The ministers of the LORD - The Hebrew root of the word translated "ministers" ([sharath](#)) was often employed to depict the religious duties of the Levites and priests who served in the Tabernacle and Temple (cf. Ex 28:35, 43; 1 Chr 16:4, 37). It also became a technical term for one who does special or responsible service. Joseph was a **minister** to Potiphar (Ge 39:4), Joshua was Moses's **minister** (Ex 24:13; 33:11; Josh 1:1), and Elisha performed a similar function for Elijah (1 Ki 19:21). The Greek word [leitourgia](#) (service) in the NT is similar in that it conveys the notion of priestly service. ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

Finley on ministers of the LORD - ([mēšārētē](#) YHWH, "ministers of Yahweh") describes the priests more closely (see Additional Notes for a variant in LXX). They are those who perform the service before the Lord in the Temple. Joel attaches the phrase here to focus the scene even further. The priests, who are no less than those who attend to the Lord through offering and libation, have gone into deep mourning ([אֲבָלוּ](#), 'ābēlū; cf. on v. 10 below). The Targum's rendering, "the priests who serve in the house of the sanctuary of the Lord," makes the parallel line descriptive. (Ibid)

The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – The opportunity to worship through the required animal sacrifice, grain offerings, and drink offerings was now gone. If a person was truly faithful to the Lord, he was bound to suffer deep grief and sorrow due to his inability to worship the Lord as instructed. Also, the people were no longer able to support the priests, which probably meant that most of them would have to give up their ministries in order to have time to scratch out a living day by day.

What the Bible Teaches – Within the city there is one area where the result of the locust invasion will be felt more keenly than any other. That is the Sanctuary of the Lord. Here the worship had been crippled and reduced to poverty. Since the crops of grain had been devoured there was no flour for meal offerings, and since the vines had been stripped there was no wine for the drink offering. The fact that these offerings were "cut off" had its effect on the priests, for part of the meal offering was the priests' food. Not only was the Lord's portion withheld but the priests' portion also suffered and they mourned. However, it was more than personal loss which made them mourn, it was rather their inability to present to the Lord His due. So much seems to be implied by the designation in the verse of the priests as "the Lord's ministers". In fact, there was the daily meal offering, presented morning and evening, symbolising the relationship of the people with the Lord Himself and His covenantal blessing upon them. The suspension of this offering struck at the core of the nation's religious existence and her devotions. The very constitution of the nation was in question as the reason for its existence was to be a "kingdom of priests" worshipping the Lord. They could no longer fulfil their responsibilities in this regard. ([What the Bible Teaches – Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#))

- **The field is ruined:** Joe 1:17-20 Lev 26:20 Isa 24:3,4 Jer 12:4,11 14:2-6 Ho 4:3
- **The new wine dries up:** Joel 1:5,12 Isa 24:11 Jer 48:33 Ho 9:2 Hag 1:11

JUDAH'S AGRICULTURE DEVASTATED

The field is ruined - **The field** of course stands for the crops grown in the field and indicate that the crops have been utterly destroyed by the locusts.

NET Note - "the field has been utterly destroyed." The term "field," a collective singular for "fields," is [ametonymy](#) for crops produced by the fields. Joel uses intentionally alliterative language in the phrases שָׂדֵה שָׁדֵד (*shuddad sadeh*, "the field is destroyed") and אֶבְלָה אֶדְמָה (*'avlah 'adamah*, "the ground is in mourning"). ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

The land mourns - (same verb [abal](#) used for priests' mourning in Joel 1:9 and here the Lxx is again the verb [pentheo](#) and is in the present imperative) - Land personified as even mourns over the devastation. This same phrase is used only 3 other times, all in the prophets who are speaking of Israel...

Isaiah 33:9 **The land mourns** and pines away, Lebanon is shamed and withers; Sharon is like a desert plain, And Bashan and Carmel lose their foliage.

Jeremiah 23:10 For (Jer 23:8-9) the land is full of adulterers; For **the land mourns** because of the curse. The pastures of the wilderness have dried up. Their course also is evil And their might is not right.

Hosea 4:3 Therefore (See Hos 4:1-2, esp "Because there is no faithfulness or kindness") **the land mourns**, And everyone who lives in it languishes Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, And also the fish of the sea disappear.

Patterson adds this note on **the land mourns** - Although it can be used figuratively (e.g., "the earth mourns," Isa 24:4) and in parallelism with verbs of weeping (2 Sa 19:2), the verb 'abal [56, 61] is often used of mourning for the dead (2 Sa 13:31-37) or in connection with an announcement of coming judgment (Neh 1:4; Esther 4:3). ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

Ruined ([07703](#))(**shadad**) means to spoil, to deal violently with, despoil, devastate, ruin, ravage, oppress, assault, lay waste. This verb is not found in the Pentateuch but predominantly in the prophets especially Jeremiah. **Shadad** describes Babylon as the "destroyer" of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 6:26; Jeremiah 12:12), God's instrument for punishing Judah. But then **shadad** is used of God's anger on Babylon (Jer 51:48, 53, 55, 56; Ps 137:8). One gets a sense of the ferocity of **shadad** in its use describing the activities of a wolf (Jeremiah 5:6) who pursues, attacks, and mauls its victim. Shadad describes the destruction of the unfaithful due to their duplicity (Pr 11:3). Jeremiah uses the word to describe the destruction of the Tabernacle and the barrenness when everything was taken away (Jer. 10:20).

The LXX translates **shadad** in this verse with the verb **talaiporeo** which means to experience distress, to toil heavily, to endure labors and hardships; to be afflicted; to feel afflicted and miserable, endure sorrow/distress (James 4:9).

The **shadad** had been sent by **Shadday**, the Hebrew name for **Shaddai** as in the name of God, [EL Shaddai - God Almighty](#).

Shadad - 56x in - assaults(1), completely destroyed(1), dead(1), desolate(1), despoil(1), destroy(7), destroyed(12), destroyer(9), destroyer still destroys(1), destroyers(4), destroying(2), devastate(2), devastated(6), lays waste(1), robbers(1), ruined(6).

Jdg. 5:27; Job 12:6; Job 15:21; Ps. 17:9; Ps. 91:6; Ps. 137:8; Prov. 11:3; Prov. 19:26; Prov. 24:15; Isa. 15:1; Isa. 16:4; Isa. 21:2; Isa. 23:1; Isa. 23:14; Isa. 33:1; Jer. 4:13; Jer. 4:20; Jer. 4:30; Jer. 5:6; Jer. 6:26; Jer. 9:19; Jer. 10:20; Jer. 12:12; Jer. 15:8; Jer. 25:36; Jer. 47:4; Jer. 48:1; Jer. 48:8; Jer. 48:15; Jer. 48:18; Jer. 48:20; Jer. 48:32; Jer. 49:3; Jer. 49:10; Jer. 49:28; Jer. 51:48; Jer. 51:53; Jer. 51:55; Jer. 51:56; Ezek. 32:12; Hos. 10:2; Hos. 10:14; Joel 1:10; Obad. 1:5; Mic. 2:4; Nah. 3:7; Zech. 11:2; Zech. 11:3

Patterson on the **grain...new wine** (grapes)...**oil** - The loss of these crops, customarily harvested in the fall, points to God's fulfilling the threatened judgment upon his nation for covenant unfaithfulness and transgressions (cf. Deut 28:51). All three were important agricultural products and deemed to be the result of God's blessing upon his people—blessings that could be withdrawn as punishment for sin (Num 18:12; Deut 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; Jer 31:12). ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

Joel 1:11 **Be ashamed**, O farmers, **Wail**, O vinedressers, For the wheat and the barley; Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

- **Be ashamed, O farmers:** Jer 14:3,4 Ro 5:5
- **Because the harvest of the field is destroyed:** Isa 17:11 Jer 9:12

NLT Despair, all you farmers! **Wail**, all you vine growers! **Weep**, because the wheat and barley-- all the crops of the field-- are ruined.

A SOBERING COMMAND: BE ASHAMED! BE EMBARRASSED!

Be ashamed, O farmers, Wail, O vinedressers - Again we see both of these actions are commands or imperatives. This is not a call to fake it externally, but to be broken internally. The devastation of the crops is but simply a "message" from God to Judah to awaken from their spiritual stupor and self-deception and to return to the Creator, the One Who had made possible the fertility of the fields. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the Name of the LORD! Peter's words to the Jews in Acts are surely applicable "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19) Dear wayward saint, remember that the way back to God is always the narrow path of brokenness and repentance! (Recall the prodigal - Luke 15:11-32-note)

Be ashamed as explained below conveys a combination of disappointment and disgrace, with a touch (hopefully) of embarrassment.

Finley - The failure of the harvest humiliates the farmers; they have nothing to show for their work. Consequently, they too should participate in ritual mourning, a rite that shows shame as well as sorrow (cf. Jer 48:1–5). (Ibid)

Patterson - The imperatives directed at those who tend the crops reflect a sense of shame and intense disappointment, which is reflected in a terrified look and bitter cry (cf. Amos 5:16,17). (Ibid)

Be ashamed (0954)(**bosh** from root = "to become pale" or "to blush") is a verb which conveys the primary meaning of to fall into disgrace, normally through failure, either of self or of an object of trust. It is both an external and a subjective experience, ranging from disgrace (Hos. 10:6) to guilt (Ezra 9:6) When failure or sin occurs, there is a disconcerting feeling, a flushing of the face. This Hebrew verb bosh often occurs in contexts of humiliation and shattered human emotions, and can include the feeling of public disgrace. The confusion, embarrassment, or dismay when things do not turn out as expected.

Ashamed - Affected by shame; abashed or confused by guilt or a conviction of some criminal action or indecorous conduct, or by the exposure of some gross errors or misconduct, which the person is conscious must be wrong, and which tends to impair his honor or reputation. Confused by a consciousness of guilt or of inferiority; by the mortification of pride; by failure or disappointment. (Webster, 1828).

Shame - A painful sensation excited by a consciousness of guilt, or of having done something which injures reputation; or by the exposure of that which nature or modesty prompts us to conceal. **Shame** is particularly excited by the disclosure of actions which, in the view of men, are mean and degrading. Hence it is often or always manifested by a **downcast look** or by **blushes**, called **confusion of face**. (Webster, 1828).

Wail (howl) (03213)(see discussion earlier use of **yalal**)

For the wheat and the barley; Because the harvest of the field is destroyed- ""Wheat and barley" function as a **metonymy** representing the total loss of the agricultural harvest." (Patterson)

Joel 1:12 The vine dries up And the fig tree fails; The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, All the trees of the field dry up. Indeed, rejoicing dries up from the sons of men.

- **The vine dries up** Joe 1:10 Hab 3:17,18
- **The pomegranate:** Nu 13:23 Ps 92:12 Song 2:3 4:13 7:7-9
- **Indeed, rejoicing dries up from the sons of men** Joe 1:16 Ps 4:7 Isa 9:3 16:10 24:11 Jer 48:3 Ho 9:1,2

FRUITLESSNESS

DAMPENS JOY

The vine dries up And the fig tree fails; The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, All the trees of the field dry up - The locusts "menu" includes everything edible, all of which are items men are dependent upon. When we disobey God, we step out on "thin ice" so to speak. In Judah's case the "fruit" they reaped for the seeds of sin they sowed was costly indeed.

Holman Old Testament Commentary – The **pomegranate** (Deut. 8:8), the date **palm** (Lev. 23:40), and the **apple tree** (Prov. 25:11) represent fruit that was eaten as well as objects revered for their beauty and their connection with lovers. The sweetness of life had disappeared.

Indeed, rejoicing dries up from the sons of men - Why does it dry up? Because it is concentrated on their temporal supply not their eternal Shaddai. The former is always vulnerable to loss or decrease. The latter is immutable and is always a sure, sufficient supply of "soul food."

Dries up is the very same verb used to describe the **new wine dries up** in Joel 1:10, **the grain dried up** in Joel 1:17 and **the water brooks dried up** in Joel 1:20.

Patterson - Joel's words to those who tend the crops (Joel 1:11–12) are also instructive. Although they would weep over the economic loss and the cutoff of their food supply, the commodities mentioned also had spiritual significance. Especially noteworthy are the vine and fig tree. These appear at times in the Scriptures to symbolize the basic relation of God to his people, as well as the blessings he bestows on them for their obedience (Ps 80:8–15; Isa 5:2–6; Jer 2:21; cf. Mt 21:18–21, 28–46). Indeed, the divine promise to a faithful remnant spoke of a future peace, prosperity, and felicity, symbolized by sitting under one's own vine and fig tree (Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10). Likewise, the pomegranate, palm, and apple trees were not only important to the economy but often symbolized spiritual nourishment, refreshment, joy, and fruitfulness of life (Dt 8:6–10; Ps 92:12; Song 2:3). ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

There is surely an application from Joel 1:12 for us today -- **Does not fruitlessness decrease our joy** ([rhetorical](#) of course)? Bearing fruit in this short day we have to accomplish this task, brings us great joy as we anticipate participation in the eternal rewards (cf Jesus' words in John 15:16NLT - "I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit.") that will be incredibly, graciously bestowed on those who bore fruit in time in anticipation of eternity. Indeed "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Gal 5:22-23-[note](#))

Holman Old Testament Commentary – Throughout the section the prophet uses a play on Hebrew words meaning to be **ashamed** ([bosh](#)) and to **dry up** (yabesh). This comes to a climax here as the prophet summarizes all he has tried to say. Add up his inventory of resources, and you discover that "the jubilation has been put to shame (or withered away) from among the sons of man" (author's translation). Causes for joy are now causes for shame. Joy has dried up and withered away from Judah and Jerusalem.

Joel 1:13 Gird yourselves with sackcloth And lament, O priests; Wail, O ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth O ministers of my God, For the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.

- **Gird yourselves with sackcloth And lament**; Joe 1:8,9 2:17 Jer 4:8 9:10 Eze 7:18
- **O priests**: 1Co 9:13 Heb 7:13,14
- **Come, spend the night in sackcloth**: 2Sa 12:16 1Ki 21:27 Jon 3:5-8
- **O ministers of my God**: Isa 61:6 1 Co 4:1 2 Co 3:6 6:4 11:23
- **For the grain offering and the drink offering Are withheld from the house of your God** Joe 1:9 Lev 2:8-10 Nu 29:6

COMMAND TO THE PRIESTS TO GIRD AND MOURN AND WAIL ALL NIGHT!

Gird...lament...wail...come, spend - Are all commands not suggestions. These repeated commands repeat earlier calls to other groups to mourn and wail. Joel is building from individuals to the priests and ultimately to the entire nation (v14) to be mourning and crying out to Jehovah.

Gird yourself - It was time for the people to humble themselves and pray

Jeremiah 4:8 "For this, put on sackcloth, Lament and wail; For the fierce anger of the LORD Has not turned back from us."

Jeremiah 6:26 O daughter of my people, put on sackcloth And roll in ashes; Mourn as for an only son, A

lamentation most bitter. For suddenly the destroyer Will come upon us.

O priests - The **priests** are the very ones who should have set a high spiritual example (standard) for the nation, but as other prophets testify many of the priests were given over to imbibing (cf Isa 28:7-10), to instructing the people for a price (Micah 3:11-note; cf "peddling the word of God" in 2 Cor 2:17), flagrantly ignoring God's law, and ultimately predisposing God's people to be "destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge." (cf Hos 4:6, 4-9)! There is an application here for all pastors, elders, teachers and spiritual leaders -- Jesus gave a strong warning in the NT declaring that "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." (Luke 12:48-note)

Sackcloth. (08242) See preceding discussion on this Hebrew noun [saq](#). Here the attire of mourning is commanded twice (the first is not in the Hebrew but is assumed)! To spend the night in sackcloth clearly indicates this is not conducive to sleep but is a command to lament and wail even in the night, so dire were their circumstances. The rough, black sackcloth would contrast sharply with the customary splendor of priestly garb, and the effect would surely be a humbling one!

McComiskey - Temple personnel maintained a watch through the night apparently on a regular basis (1 Chron. 23:30; Pss. 92:2-4 [1-3]; 134:1), but in these difficult days their numbers would increase (see 2 Sam. 12:16) and a lament liturgy would be observed. ([The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary](#))

Wail (howl) (03213) See discussion of earlier use of [yalal](#)

For the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God- They are withheld by God as God's punishment for the nation's sin. He withholds by sending locusts who devastate the harvest so that there is no grain to offer.

Patterson - It is only natural that the priests should realize what the loss of those crops meant not only to their inability to perform the sacrificial offerings but to Israel's spiritual condition. The loss of the opportunity even to offer the sacrifices should have caused the citizenry as a whole to realize that their spiritual service had degenerated into a meaningless formalism (cf. Isa 1:2-20). Further, their unfaithfulness and syncretistic practices (Hos 2:5; Amos 2:8) had established them as those who had broken the covenant bond between themselves and the Lord (cf. Deut 8:19-20; 30:15-18). Israel's condition was serious. Far more disastrous than what the locusts had done was what it symbolized! God would no longer tolerate their duplicity. Rather, he had taken away the ability and high privilege of offering those sacrifices that were intended to symbolize his people's devotion to him (cf. Hos 2:9-13; 9:1-4). The lesson is obvious. True religion is an active one that comes from the heart (Deut 6:4-5; Jas 1:22-27). Mere ritual and routine, without the genuine spiritual reality that is evidenced by a demonstrated allegiance to a sovereign God, is unacceptable to him (1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 40:6-8; Isa 1:10-20; Mic 6:8). May we be those who put our faith into action in true devotion, both in worship and service, while attending to our daily pursuits (Deut 10:12-13; Josh 22:5; 1 Sam 12:24; 1 Kgs 9:4; Ps 101:1-3; Matt 22:37-40). ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

Joel 1:14 Consecrate a fast, Proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land To the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the LORD.

- **Consecrate a fast:** Joel 2:15,16 2Ch 20:3,4
- **Proclaim a solemn assembly:** day of restraint, Lev 23:36 Ne 8:18
- **Gather the elders:** De 29:10,11 2Ch 20:13 Ne 9:2,3
- **And cry out to the LORD:** Jon 3:8

A CALL TO NATIONAL FASTING AND PRAYER

Consecrate ... Proclaim... Gather ... cry out - Are all commands not suggestions. They call not for external actions but for internal contrition, confession and repentance. Here we reach the heart of the matter, for it was because of sin that God was punishing the nation.

Finley - Fasting and the solemn assembly were proper ways for the community to show humility and submission to God in the face of national disaster, as long as they reflected reality faithfully. (Ibid)

Joel gives a similar series of commands in chapter 2

Joel 2:15; 16-note Blow a trumpet in Zion, **Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants.** Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her bridal chamber.

Consecrate (Sanctify, make holy)(Also used in Joel 2:15, 16) ([06942](#))([qadash](#)) means to set apart for a specific use. Removed from common use. To be holy. To show one's self to be holy. To consecrate or dedicate. To set apart a person or thing from all common or secular purposes to some religious use. Everything consecrated to God was separated from all profane use. This verb is found 4 times in Joel - Joel 1:14, Joel 2:15, Joel 2:16, Joel 3:9. The Lxx uses [hagiazō](#) ([aorist imperative](#)) in Joel 1:14 which means make holy, sanctify, set apart.

The fact that a fast is to be set aside, consecrated or made (considered to be) holy indicates that it is not to be a ritual but a reflection of one's reverence for Jehovah, a work of the heart (energized and enabled by the Holy Spirit), not to gain merit before God but to be carried out as an act of worship and to be accompanied by the sharpening of one's spiritual senses in turn enhancing one's communion with God. The ritual of fasting is never to be replacement for righteous behavior!

Patterson - Deeply moved, Joel wanted the leadership to experience his same spiritual concern. They were to lead the people in genuine repentance, calling on God for his forgiveness in order to avoid a still greater calamity (cf. Joel 2:15–20). Like the citizens of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5), those of Jerusalem were to confess their sins publicly. Fasting ought not to be simply routine or a matter of ritual (Matt 6:16–18-[note](#)). Rather, it should reflect the kind of anguish of heart that results from acknowledging sins committed (1 Sam 7:6) or recognizing a dire threat (2 Chr 20:1–3; Esth 4:1–3-[note](#)) or experiencing deep concern for another (e.g., Ps 35:13; Dan 6:18-note). Trying to achieve spiritual insight or make a spiritual decision can also be an occasion for fasting (Dan 9:1–19; 10:1–3; Acts 13:2; 14:23). Above all, it should be accompanied by a consistent lifestyle of righteous conduct (Isa 58:5–12; cf. Matt 6:16–18). ([Ibid](#))

Wiersbe - The Jews were required to observe only one fast, and that was on the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31). But the religious leaders could call a fast whenever the people faced an emergency and needed to humble themselves and seek God's face (Jud. 20:26; 2 Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Neh. 9:1–3; Jer. 36:9). This was such an emergency. (Be Amazed)

Brian Bell on fasting - When did people in scripture fast, and why? Usually it was during times of calamity, disaster, or catastrophe. The purpose was to focus their attention on God and to demonstrate their change of heart and true devotion. What are the benefits of fasting?

[1] Fasting increases our dependence on the Lord. For our hunger and physical weakness continually remind us how we are not really strong in ourselves but need the Lord.

[2] Fasting allows us to give more attention to prayer. For we are not spending time on eating.

[3] Fasting is a simple sacrifice of personal comfort. Which reminds us we must continually sacrifice all of ourselves to Him.

[4] Fasting is good exercise in self-discipline. As we refrain from eating food...it also strengthens our ability to refrain from sin, to which we would otherwise be tempted to yield.

[5] Fasting also heightens spiritual & mental alertness. As we focus less on food, the energies of our body are freed from digesting & processing food. So, we can focus on eternal spiritual realities that are much more important. We are saying no to the physical & yes to the spiritual.

[6] Fasting expresses earnestness & urgency in our prayers. If we continued to fast we would die. Therefore, in a symbolic way, fasting says to God that we are prepared to lay down our lives that the situation be changed rather than continue. ([Sermon](#))

Fast (Also in Joel 2:12, 2:15-note)([06685](#))(**tsom** from **tsum** = to abstain from food, to fast) is a masculine noun indicating a fast, fasting and refers to the act or time of fasting, an act of worship in mourning, despairing while entreating God. Fasting is depriving the body of nourishment and is generally used as a sign that one is experiencing great sorrow and so it is often accompanied by mourning manifest by weeping, lamenting and donning sackcloth and ashes (e.g., Est 4:3). Not used in Pentateuch. First use describes David fasting when his first child with Bathsheba was deathly ill (2 Sa 12:16). Frequently associated with "**proclaim**" - 1 Ki 21:9, 21:12, 2 Chr 20:3, Ezra 8:21 (cf Neh 9:1). In Esther 4:3 Jews everywhere fasted because of the decree orchestrated by wicked Haman "to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day." (Esther 3:13). Fasting is associated with humbling (Ps 35:13, chastening one's soul (Ps 69:10), making one weak (Ps 109:24), combined with scratchy sackcloth (Da 9:3), to be with weeping (Joel 2:12). Pagan king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast upon hearing Jonah's warning (Jonah 3:5). God is critical of Israel's sham fasting (Isa 58:3, 5, 6)

Gilbrant - In all cases (of fasting), the sovereignty of God has to be recognized and appreciated, even as David responded, after his child died, with restoration of normal life and glorification of the wisdom of God (2 Sam. 12:18-24). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary).

Eugene H. Merrill - The purpose of fasting is never explicitly stated in Scripture but its connection to penitence, mourning, and supplication suggests a self-denial that opens one to God and to the immaterial aspects of life. Inasmuch as food and drink typify life in the flesh and all its demands and satisfactions, their absence or rejection speaks to the reality of a higher dimension, one in which the things of the spirit predominate. The theology of fasting, then, is a theology of priorities in which believers are given the opportunity to express themselves in an undivided and intensive devotion to the Lord and to the concerns of the spiritual life. ([Fast. Fasting in Baker Evangelical Dictionary - recommended article](#))

John Hartley on tsom and fasting in general - One could fast in behalf of another, e.g., the Psalmist for his enemies during their illness (Psalm 35:13). The fast most often lasted from sunrise until sunset (cf. 2 Samuel 1:12), and it could be total or partial abstinence (Psalm 35:13; Daniel 10:3). Fasting accompanied mourning for the dead, and for severe grief it lasted seven days (1 Samuel 31:13). One also fasted to gain the attention of God on behalf of his suffering in sickness. David's illegitimate son by Bathsheba was critically ill; therefore David fasted and mourned many days (2 Samuel 12:16ff.). On the seventh day David learned that the child had died; then he arose, washed, anointed himself and changed his clothing, for he perceived that he could accomplish nothing now that the child was dead (2 Samuel 12:20-23). Another occasion for fasting was making a critical decision or following an ominous course of action. Esther, intending to seek the king's favor in reversing the decree of Haman, placed herself under the king's mercy and possible wrath which could end in her death. Therefore she requested that all the Jews fast and entreat God for her mission (Esther 4:16). Nehemiah fasted upon learning of the sorrowful condition of Jerusalem (Neh. 1:4), and then proceeded to work to correct the situation. Apparently before a person was stoned for blasphemy, the people mourned the sin and coming execution with fasting. Jezebel proclaimed such a fast for Naboth (1 Kings 21:9, 12). Also upon learning of one's sin, fasting is in order. When Elijah condemned Ahab for Naboth's death, he mourned in sackcloth and fasted. God had mercy on him and delayed the punishment on his house (1 Kings 21:27ff.). An individual could intercede in supplication and fasting for an entire nation. Daniel confessed his sin and his people's sins that had led them into captivity (Daniel 9:3-19). Gabriel answered his prayer, assured him of the ending of the captivity and promised the establishing of a new covenant (Daniel 9:22-27). National fasting was called during times of extreme crisis, such as a plague, a military threat or the death of a king. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast because the kings of Moab and Ammon were planning a campaign against Judah. The people assembled at Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat led the assembly in prayer. Then Jahaziel, a Levite, under the inspiration of the Lord's Spirit, proclaimed an assurance of salvation. Prayer and enthusiastic praising followed. Afterwards Jehoshaphat led the army to war, but Yahweh had already discomfited the enemies, the army had only to collect the spoil (2 Chron. 20:1-29). In 604 when the Babylonian army was camped against Ashkelon about a three day march from Jerusalem, King Jehoiakim proclaimed a fast. Jeremiah used this occasion to have Baruch read his prophecies from a scroll before the people near the New Gate of the temple (Jeremiah 36:1-10). Jeremiah wanted the people to move from an outward show of contrition to true repentance. On another occasion, Joel foresaw the coming of the Day of Yahweh; therefore he exhorted the people to sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly (Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15). He proclaimed that if the people would truly repent in mourning and fasting, then God would be gracious and postpone the day of judgment (Joel 2:12-14). The case of Nineveh shows God's desire to extend mercy and not judgment. On hearing the proclamation of judgment by Jonah, the Ninevites proclaimed a fast and repented. Thereby they averted for a time the day of judgment (Jonah 3:5-10). Certain days in the calendar were for national fasting, the most prominent being the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29, 31; Leviticus 23:27-32; fasting is indicated in the phrase "afflict oneself," 'nh npsh). The number of these days appears to have grown in the post-exilic period. Zech. 8:19 lists four fast days during the year. A fast day precedes the celebration of Purim (Esther 9:31). By the time of the NT the pious fasted on Monday and Thursday of every week (cf. Luke 18:12). Fasting in itself did not cause Yahweh to turn to his people. He did not succumb merely to the afflictions of the body. A true fast had to indicate that the people were intent on seeking righteousness, which included taking care of the poor and needy (Isaiah 58; cf. Jeremiah 14:12; Zech. 7:5). However, when the Lord brings final salvation to his people, the months of fast will be turned into feasts of joy and gladness (Zech. 8:19). ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

Tsom - 26x in 22v - fast(17), fasted*(1), fasting(7), times of fasting(1).

2 Sa 12:16; 1 Ki. 21:9; 1 Ki. 21:12; 2 Chr. 20:3; Ezr. 8:21; Neh. 9:1; Est. 4:3; Est. 9:31; Ps. 35:13; Ps. 69:10; Ps. 109:24; Isa. 58:3; Isa. 58:5; Isa. 58:6; Jer. 36:6; Jer. 36:9; Dan. 9:3; Joel 1:14; Joel 2:12; Joel 2:15; Jon. 3:5; Zech. 8:19

Related Resources on fasting:

- [Recommended articles](#) on fasting from Desiringgod.org
- [A Hunger for God](#) John Piper (book)
- [Sharpen Your Affections with Fasting](#) David Mathis
- [Fasting for Beginners](#) David Mathis
- [What is the connection between prayer and fasting?](#)
- [Christian fasting - what does the Bible say?](#)

- [What are the different types of fasting?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the parables of fasting at the wedding feast, the old cloth, and the wineskins?](#)
- [Why don't Christians fast the same as Muslims? What is Ramadan?](#)
- [How to fast—what does the Bible say?](#)
- [Why did Jesus fast?](#)
- [What is the meaning of Lent?](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Fasting](#)
- Nave Topical Bible [Fasting](#) - nice Scriptural summary
- American Tract Society [Fasting](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Fast, Fasting](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Fast](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Fasting](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Fasting \(2\)](#) [Fasting](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Fasting](#) [Fast](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Fasts](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Fast, Fasting](#) [Fast](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Fasting](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Fasts and Feasts](#) [Fast; Fasting](#) [Feasts, and Fasts](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Fasts](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Fasting and Fast-Days](#)

Quotes on Prayer and Fasting

- Since this is a holy exercise both for the humbling of men and for their confession of humility, why should we use it less than the ancients did? John Calvin
- Fasting is the voluntary denial of a normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity. Richard Foster
- Prayer is one hand with which we grasp the invisible; fasting the other, with which we let loose and cast away the visible. Andrew Murray
- By fasting, the body learns to obey the soul; by praying the soul learns to obey the body. William Secker
- Fasting is calculated to bring a note of urgency and importance into our praying, and to give force to our pleading in the court of heaven. The man who prays with fasting is giving heaven notice that he is truly in earnest. Arthur Wallis
- Few disciplines go against the flesh and the mainstream of culture as this one. Donald S. Whitney
- Without a purpose, fasting can be a miserable, self-centred experience. Donald S. Whitney

Proclaim (qara) - Joel 1:14, 19, 2:15, 2:32, 3:9.

Patterson - Such fasts customarily lasted for a day (1 Sam 14:24) and were called in order to seek God's favor (Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6). National fasts were extraordinary (Neh 9:1–3; Jer 36:9), but this was an unprecedented emergency. ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

Finley - It is interesting that Joel should call for a fast in 1:14. The prophets rarely mentioned fasting except to condemn it (Isa. 58:3, 4; Jer. 14:12; Zech. 7:5). (Ibid)

Disaster should always stimulate prayer. Recall 911 in America when in the days immediately following the disaster, the God in Heaven was frequently extolled, churches were filled and prayer to Him was passionate and frequent.

We are reminded of God's promise to Israel in 2 Chr 7:13-14

“If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, 14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

In the psalms we recall

(Ps 34:18) The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

(Ps 51:17) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

There is a similar idea in several of the prophets:

(Isa 55:7) Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

(Isa. 66:2) - "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

(Ezek. 18:21) "But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

(Joel 2:13) And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.

MacArthur on **solemn assembly** - Directives for calling an assembly, generally for festive purposes (cf. 2Ch 7:9; Neh 8:18), are given in Nu 10:3. Parallel in thought to "consecrate a fast," no work was permitted on such days (Lv 23:36; Nu 29:35; Dt 16:8). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Solemn Assembly in the Bible - Nu. 29:35; Dt. 16:8; 2 Ki. 10:20; 2 Chr. 7:9; Neh. 8:18; Isa. 1:13; Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15; Amos 5:21

Solemn Assembly (06116)(**atsarah** from **atsar** = to restrain, retain) is a feminine noun that means assembly, and in most contexts has a religious connotation which is why it is most often translated as "solemn assembly." Solemn assemblies included those prescribed by God such as the Feast of Passover (Dt. 16:8) and the all-day gathering at the end of the Feast of Booths (Neh 8:18) Other assemblies were either for the worship of Baal (2 Ki 10:20) or were detestable to God because Israel's heart was not right before the LORD (Isa 1:13; Amos 5:21)..

Atsarah - 11x in 11c - assembly(2), solemn assemblies(1), solemn assembly(8).

Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35; Deut. 16:8; 2 Ki. 10:20; 2 Chr. 7:9; Neh. 8:18; Isa. 1:13; Jer. 9:2; Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15; Amos 5:21

Gather the elders - The leaders were to lead out by example as **all the inhabitants of the land** came together and poured out their heart cries to Jehovah, to **cry out to the LORD**. This Hebrew verb "**gather**" (**asaph**) is used 4 times in Joel - Joel 1:14, Joel 2:10 ("lose"), Joel 2:16 (Twice), Joel 3:15 ("lose").

Cry out (02199)(**za'aq**) means to cry out, to call out for help (especially when in distress), to appeal (even making public sounds of physical and/or emotional anguish - Ex 2:23, 2Chr 20:9, Job 35:9). **Za'aq** can be summoned in the sense of to be assembled (Jos 8:16; Jdg 6:34, 35; 18:22, 23) Finally, **za'aq** can mean to issue a proclamation by sending out an official written document with instructions or principles (Jonah 3:7). The Septuagint translates Joel 1:14 with the verb **krazo** which means to cry out (in a loud voice, scream like the demons in Mk 5:5) and in this context reflected an urgent appeal for help as in Mt 15:23.

Judges 5:2NLT gives a historical example of the spiritual dynamic when leaders lead, recording that "Israel's leaders took charge, and the people gladly followed. Praise the LORD!"

To the house of the LORD your God- To the Temple in Jerusalem, where the [Shekinah glory cloud](#) of the LORD still dwelt (God's glory did not depart until just prior to the third Babylonian invasion and destruction of the Temple in 586 BC - departure of the [Glory of God](#)).

F B Meyer Our Daily Homily

Joel 1:14 Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders, and cry unto the Lord. (r.v., marg.)

It was a terrible invasion. The locusts had lighted down upon the land of Israel; so that the seeds rotted under the clods; garners were desolate; the barns were broken down. Despair took hold of the husbandman; and the herds and flocks panted out their anguish. At this juncture the prophet called for a national fast.

Whenever our life is visited by special trials and perplexities, we should withdraw ourselves from common pursuits, and lay bare our heart-secrets, so that we may learn the cause of God's controversy with us. There is a reason and a needs-be; because He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men.

From time to time a call for prayer has issued from the hearts of men closest in touch with heaven. In the middle of the eighteenth

century Jonathan Edwards issued such an appeal; and this led to that union of prayer, which played so significant a part in the origination of the great missionary societies. It was notably the effect of that appeal on Sutcliffe, Rylands, Fuller, and Carey, that led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society at the close of the eighteenth century.

It may be that a wave of prayer is again about to break over the Church. There are many signs of it. We hear Christian people saying on all hands that they want to get back to God; and surely it would be one of the most significant signs of the unity of the Church and the power of the Holy Spirit, if such a prayer wave were to lift us all on to a new level of intercession for the Church of God and the world around us. We need not wait for the Church to appoint.

Joel 1:15 - Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand.

Joel was, a prophet to Judah. His message, as found in this book, seems to be one; rather than the notes of a long period of ministry as in the case of Hosea to Israel. The occasion of its delivery was that of the desolation of the land by a locust plague. In the beginning of this chapter, we have his description of that desolation, and from it we learn how terrible it was. It was an hour in which men would be likely to brood upon the calamity, moved very largely by pity for themselves. Then the prophet spoke, and his word interpreted the situation, and called men to recognize the real meaning of the calamities in the midst of which they were living. This was the Day of Jehovah, which meant that it was the Day of Divine government and activity. The coming of the locusts was no accident. They came in ranks, in order; and they wrought the will of God. Therefore the prophet called the priests and the people to humiliation. Here then is the first note of this prophecy. The burden of Joel from first to last was that of the Day of Jehovah, that is, the fact of the Divine government of human affairs; and his first application of that burden was that of calling the people to a recognition of the fact that the Day of Jehovah • was then present, it was at hand: that is, it was near, not in the sense of approaching, but rather in the sense of actual and immediate activity. There is more to say—as we shall see—but let this first fact be carefully noted. The Day of Jehovah is here and now. He is reigning today. The calamities through which men pass, are all under His control. Instead of mourning over sorrow, men should mourn over sin, and cry unto Jehovah. - G Campbell Morgan

Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

- **Alas:** Joe 2:2 Jer 30:7 Am 5:16-18
- **the day of the LORD is near:** Joe 2:1 Ps 37:13 Isa 13:6-9 Eze 7:2-12 12:22-28 Zep 1:14-18 Lu 19:41-44 Jas 5:9 Rev 6:17

NET How awful that day will be! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come as destruction from the Divine Destroyer.

THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NEAR

The "day of the Locusts" is now envisioned as a harbinger of the greater "Day of the LORD."

In Joel 1:15-18 we have the lament of the entire nation, followed by the prayer of the prophet in Joel 1:19-20 interceding for his nation.

Brian Bell asks "What is Joel's main message? Turn back to God before an even greater judgment comes! God is coming to settle accounts! If you didn't pay your landlord for your monthly apartment fee, wouldn't you expect Him to come and pay you a visit, to "settle up!" Be assured the Lord will return and settle all of His accounts. When he settles up His punishment for sin it will be overwhelming, dreadful, and unavoidable! One day we must all reckon with Him! {Are you ready?} This locust plague was only an "appetizer" to the meal the Lord will one day serve up!" ([Sermon](#))

W A Criswell on **ALAS** - "Alas for the day!" is a powerful, moving statement. It begins a lament (Joel 1:15-20) in light of the approaching day of the Lord, and is the cry of the prophet that reflects the burden that he bore for the people of God. The sin of the land, especially the sin of the priests, demanded repentance on the part of all. Before Joel calls them specifically to repentance (Joel 2:12, 13), he calls the priests to proclaim a fast (Joel 1:14) and to sound an alarm (Joel 2:1). Where are they who cry "Alas!"? Where are they who "fast" (Joel 1:14)? Where are they who sound the alarm and take seriously the sins of God's people in these latter days (Da 10:14)? The first responsibility for this rests with the spiritual leaders of God's people.

MacArthur: This is the first occurrence of the theme. Later in the book (Joel 2:18ff.; 3:1,18–21), the Day of the Lord (the occasion when God pours out His wrath on man) results in blessing and exoneration for God's people and judgment toward Gentiles (Isa 13:6; Ezek 30:3), but here Joel directs the warning toward his own people. **The Day of the Lord** is speedily approaching; unless sinners repent, dire consequences await them. See 2Th 2:2,3 ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Alas for the day - The word "**alas**" in this context clearly conveys a negative sense, sense of "Woe is me!" It anticipates a day of doom, not hope (at least not at the outset). What is fascinating is that the Septuagint has not one but three repetitions of the Greek equivalent (oimmoi = alas, woe, not in NT) of the Hebrew **Alas** (ahah), thus the English translation of the Septuagint reads "Alas, Alas, Alas for the day!" The Latin Vulgate also has the injection is triplicate.

oimmoi = alas, woe, not in NT - 18x in 13v in the Septuagint of the following passages - Jdg. 11:35; 1 Ki. 17:20; Job 10:15; Ps. 120:5; Jer. 4:31; Jer. 15:10; Jer. 22:18; Jer. 45:3; Ezek. 9:8; Ezek. 11:13; Joel 1:15; Mic. 7:1

Alas (0162)(**ahah**) is an interjection usually rendered ah! oh! or alas! indicating great emotion, such as grief or despair (Josh. 7:7; Jdg. 11:35; Ezek. 11:13). **Ahah** can also signify a strong sense of marvel with fear (Jdg. 6:22), a feeling of inability (Jer. 1:6), a sense of confusion (Jer. 4:10; Ezek. 4:14). In the present context ahah introduces the announcement of the Day of the LORD (Joel 1:15).

Most of the uses of **ahah** entail a sense of the speaker being overwhelmed by impending doom (Josh. 7:7; Jdg. 6:22; 2 Ki. 3:10; 6:15; Joel 1:15, etc.).

In English the term "**ah**" means an expression of surprise, delight, disgust, or pain in nearly all Indo-European languages. The English word "**alas**" is used to to express unhappiness, sorrow or regret.

Alas, ah in most places is used with "**Lord GOD**" (Josh 7:7; Jdg 6:22; Jer 1:6; Jer 4:10; Jer 14:13; Jer 32:17; Ezek 4:14; Ezek 9:8; Ezek 11:13).

Ahah - 15 verses - Ah(5), alas(10).

Jos. 7:7; Jdg. 6:22; Jdg. 11:35; 2 Ki. 3:10; 2 Ki. 6:5; 2 Ki. 6:15; Jer. 1:6; Jer. 4:10; Jer. 14:13; Jer. 32:17; Ezek. 4:14; Ezek. 9:8; Ezek. 11:13; Ezek. 20:49; Joel 1:15

For the day of the LORD is near- So playing off of the horrors of the "day of the locusts" described in the preceding passages, the Spirit inspires Joel to sweep down the corridors of time to the last days, to the terrible and awesome **Day of the LORD**. Even as the "day of the locusts" was a picture of God's righteous wrath, it was but a faint picture compared to **Day of the LORD's** final judgment on the earth!

The **Day of the LORD** is mentioned five times in this short book:

Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! **For the day of the LORD** is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Joel 2:1-note Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, **For the day of the LORD** is coming; Surely it is near,

Joel 2:11-note The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. **The day of the LORD** is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?

Joel 2:31-note "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before **the great and awesome day of the LORD** comes.

Joel 3:14-note Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For **the day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision.

The "day of the locusts" was like a giant finger ominously pointing to the **Day of the LORD**, and emphasizing that the dread **Day** is "at hand," or **imminent** (cf use of the same Hebrew word **qarob** in Joel 2:1). The etymology of the English word **imminent** gives us an incredible picture of the idea Joel is attempting to convey. The English word **imminent** is from the Latin word **imminens** in turn from **imminere** a verb which means to hang or project over. The picture of the Day of the LORD is that it is "hanging over" the heads of the readers, that it is **impending**. Joel wants to make absolutely sure his readers do not miss this point so three times, once in each chapter, he says "**the day of the LORD is NEAR**" (Joel 1:15, Joel 2:1-note, Joel 3:14-note).

Hampton Keathley IV -- If one assumes that Joel was written around 850 BC, then the coming army could be the Assyrians or Babylonians. The following diagram would depict this view (See more on [Joel Commentary](#))

McComiskey on the **Day of the LORD** - In the prophetic traditions of the Old Testament, the day of the Lord was the **day of Yahweh's holy war** against evil, particularly against the Gentile nations that had opposed or oppressed Israel. However, the prophets were quick to show that the day of the Lord came against all evil, not just evil among the Gentiles, but evil within the

covenant people, so that Israel too would experience periodic judgment that anticipated that terrible day. As this theme is developed in Joel's prophecy, the day of the Lord threatens the continued existence of the covenant people (Joel 1:2-2:11); but it is a day whose consequences can be averted through repentance (Joel 2:12-17), so that it becomes instead a day of blessing for God's people (Joel 2:18-32) and judgment on their enemies (Joel 3:1-2). During her history prior to the time of Joel, Israel had experienced periodic outbreaks or foretastes of the day of the Lord in the invasions of foreign nations; the locusts are likened to such a foreign invader in Joel 1:6 and Joel 2:6. The Babylonian invasion leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 b.c. had been the day of the Lord in the eyes of exilic and postexilic Judah, but the postexilic community was not now beyond the threat of divine punishment due to its own wickedness (Ezra 9:13-15; see Allen, Joel, p. 60). ([The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary](#))

David Guzik - The idea behind the phrase the day of the LORD is that this is Gods' time. Man has his "day," and the LORD has His day. In the ultimate sense, the day of the LORD is fulfilled with Jesus judges the earth and returns in glory. In a lesser sense, a time of judgment as Judah experienced with the locusts and drought is also an example of the day of the LORD.

Henry Morris - "The day of the LORD," in contrast to "man's day," refers to a coming time of judgment. The Lord, in severe judgment, after a long time of patient forbearance, will take strong control of the world and its inhabitants. This will be followed by cleansing and blessing. Such prophecies often refer to a current situation, such as the plague of locusts, then span over the centuries to the future end-time judgments. Sometimes it refers to the entire period of judgment, sometimes to the specific day on which that period will begin. In the prophets, it occurs first in Isaiah 2:12, last in Malachi 4:5. There are other phrases that are used synonymously--"the day of wrath," "the day of God," "that day." (Defender's Study Bible)

Patterson on the **Day of the LORD**- The Day of the Lord can refer to a judgment in the near future (Jer 46:10; Amos 5:18–20) or to a more distant, comprehensive judgment (3:14–15; Zech 14:1–21; 2 Pet 3:10–13). Often the two blend into one future scene (Obad 1:15; Zeph 1:7, 14–18). The Scriptures teach that the Day of the Lord is one of judgment, whether for God's people (Isa 2:12–22; 13:5) or for their enemies (Isa 13:6, 9; Jer 46:10; Mal 4:5–6 [3:23–24]). Prophecies describe it as a day of unprecedented warfare and cosmological events set in a scene of dark clouds. It will be accompanied by a mood of despair and pervading gloom (Zeph 1:14–15; cf. Rev 6:12–17). These same oracles are often accompanied by promises of deliverance for God's faithful people (e.g., Isa 59:15b–21; Zeph 3:8–20). All of these features, already attested from the eighth century BC onward, provide elements for the emerging apocalyptic corpus both of the Scriptures and the extrabiblical writings of Judeo-Christian literature. The Day of the Lord thus stands as a vivid reminder to all that God does judge sin, and he will ultimately bring earth's history to its proper and just culmination. ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

Related Resources on Day of the LORD:

- [Day of the Lord](#) - on site discussion
- [What is the day of the Lord?](#) - The phrase "day of the Lord" usually identifies events that take place at the end of history (Isaiah 7:18-25) and is often closely associated with the phrase "that day." One key to understanding these phrases is to note that they always identify a span of time during which God personally intervenes in history, directly or indirectly, to accomplish some specific aspect of His plan. Most people associate the day of the Lord with a period of time or a special day that will occur when God's will and purpose for His world and for mankind will be fulfilled.
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Day of the lord](#) - Israelites of Old Testament times looked for the day when God would intervene in the affairs of the world, righting the wrongs and establishing his just rule on the earth. They called this divine intervention the day of the Lord (Isaiah 2:12-19; Isaiah 13:6; Isaiah 13:9; Zephaniah 1:14-16; Zechariah 14:9).
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Day of the Lord](#) - The time when God reveals His sovereignty over human powers and human existence.
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Day of the Lord](#) The day in which Jehovah was expected to punish sinful Hebrews and the enemies of Israel, and to establish at least the righteous remnant of His people in political supremacy.
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Day of the Lord](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Day of the Lord \(Yahweh\)](#) - The idea is a common Old Testament one. It denotes the consummation of the kingdom of God and the absolute cessation of all attacks upon it (Isaiah 2:12 ; Isaiah 13:6 , Isaiah 13:9 ; Isaiah 34:8 ; Ezekiel 13:5 ; Ezekiel 30:3 ; Joel 1:15 ; Joel 2:11 ; Amos 5:18 ; Zephaniah 1:14 ; Zechariah 14:1) It is a "day of visitation" (Isaiah 10:3), a day "of the wrath of Yahweh" (Ezekiel 7:19), a "great day of Yahweh" (Zephaniah 1:14). The entire conception in the Old Testament is dark and foreboding.
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Day of the Lord](#) - An essential factor in the prophetic doctrine of divine judgment at the end of time (see Eschatology), generally, though not always, involving both punishment and blessing.

Near ([07138](#)) ([qarob](#) from the verb [qarab](#) = to come near) is an adjective meaning near, close by, closely related. **Qarob** refers to nearness in time or space: something is about to happen, is near at hand, e.g., judgment, calamity (Dt. 32:35) or something that is not near at hand, referring to its prophetic fulfillment as in Balaam's prophecy of the Messiah "I see him (MESSIAH), but not now; I

behold him, but not **near**; A star (MESSIAH) shall come forth from Jacob." (Nu 24:17) The first use of qarob is in Ge 19:20 which describes the "town is **near** enough to flee to" from the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Clearly in the three uses of qarob by Joel, the idea of near is that it is **imminent**, (as discussed above), in other words at a point in time close to another point of time as Moses writes

Vengeance is Mine, and retribution (Ro 12:19-[note](#) and Heb 10:30-[note](#) quote [Lxx](#)), In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is **near**, and the impending things are hastening upon them. (Dt 32:35 - This was the text for Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon "[Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God](#)." - as noted the text was specifically addressed to unbelieving Israelites, but is applicable to all wicked people.)

Comment: Dt 32:35 is the bad news for Israel much like the message of the "Day of the LORD" would first bring bad news to Israel [e.g., the [Time of Jacob's Distress](#) -Jer 30:7] but it is followed by Dt 32:36 which is a promise to restore Israel much like the promise in Joel 3:1-note)

Qarob is translated in the Septuagint with the adverb [eggus](#), which means near. David offers a great prayer (we would all do well to keep on our heart so that it is **near** our lips) "Be not far from me, for trouble is **near** (qarob; Lxx = [eggus](#)); For there is none to help ([boetheo](#))." (Psalm 22:11)

A SHATTERING FROM SHADDAI

The Almighty is the Hebrew word **Shaddai** which gives us our wonderful name of God, [EL Shaddai - God Almighty](#). There is clearly a play on words with the word **destruction** (**shod** from **shadad**) and the word for **Almighty** (Shaddai). The destruction is from the Almighty, the "Shattering from Shaddai"! In the present context this name does not at first glance appear so "wonderful," but as is always the case, before the LORD can heal, He has to break and the end result for the nation of Israel will indeed be "wonderful" in the last days. (cf Joel 3:16-17 "then you will know that I am the LORD your God.")

And it will come as destruction from the Almighty (Shaddai) - So here we learn the **Day of the LORD is** (1) imminent (**near**), (2) that it will include **destruction** and (3) that this destruction is wrought by the hand of the omnipotent Almighty God.

The Septuagint is interesting in this passage as it translates destruction from the Almighty as "**trouble upon trouble**," giving us a picture of God piling up Israel's trouble!

Destruction ([07701](#))(**shod** from **shadad** = to deal violently with, despoil, devastate, ruin) is a masculine noun meaning violence, destruction, desolation, robbery, spoil, wasting. The primary meaning of **shod** is violence or destruction and is used to describe an "act of violence or oppression." In Job the idea is not to fear coming violence - "And you will not be afraid of violence when it comes" (Job 5:21). **Shod** is used in Ps 12:5 to designate a reason for God's arising to protect the weak. Isaiah weeps over Israel (reminiscent of Jesus' words in Mt 23:37, Lk 13:34-note) - "Therefore I say, "Turn your eyes away from me, Let me weep bitterly, Do not try to comfort me concerning the **destruction** of the daughter of my people." (Isa. 22:4). **Shod** was also used by Jeremiah and Amos to describe violence and havoc as social sins (Jer 6:7; Amos 3:10).

The primary meaning of **destruction** was used by Hosea and here by Joel to express God's reason for the coming Day of the LORD which will bring destruction on His Chosen People (Hos. 7:13 = "Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.").

Victor Hamilton adds that "the verb **shādad** has an interesting usage. In one sense it is applied to Babylon (in the Jeremiah passages obviously) as the "destroyer" of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 6:26; Jeremiah 12:12, inter alia). This militaristic world power, far from being an independent entity, is an actor chosen for the cast by God. Its function is to be the medium through which God's holy anger is outpoured on his own covenant children. Babylon itself will subsequently become the object of equal devastation (Jeremiah 51:48, 53, 55, 56; Psalm 137:8). The ferocity of **shādad** is indicated by its coupling with the activities of a wolf (Jeremiah 5:6) who pursues, attacks, and mauls its victim." ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

Shod - 25x in 24v - destroyed(1), destruction(12), devastation(7), violence(5).

Job 5:21; Job 5:22; Ps. 12:5; Prov. 21:7; Prov. 24:2; Isa. 13:6; Isa. 16:4; Isa. 22:4; Isa. 51:19; Isa. 59:7; Isa. 60:18; Jer. 6:7; Jer. 20:8; Jer. 48:3; Ezek. 45:9; Hos. 7:13; Hos. 9:6; Hos. 10:14; Hos. 12:1; Joel 1:15; Amos 3:10; Amos 5:9; Hab. 1:3; Hab. 2:17

NET Note adds that - There is a wordplay in Hebrew here with the word used for "destruction" (שָׁדַד, **shod**) and the term used for God (שַׁדַּי, **shaddai**). The exact meaning of "Shaddai" in the OT is somewhat uncertain, although the ancient versions and many modern English versions tend to translate it as "**Almighty**" (e.g., Greek παντοκράτωρ [pantokratōr], Latin omnipotens). Here it might

be rendered "Destroyer," with the thought being that "destruction will come from the Divine Destroyer," which should not be misunderstood as a reference to the destroying angel. The name "Shaddai" (outside Genesis and without the element "El" ["God"]) is normally used when God is viewed as the sovereign king who blesses/protects or curses/brings judgment. The name appears in the introduction to two of Balaam's oracles (Num 24:4, 16) of blessing upon Israel. Naomi employs the name when accusing the Lord of treating her bitterly by taking the lives of her husband and sons (Ruth 1:20–21). In Ps 68:14, Isa 13:6, and the present passage, Shaddai judges his enemies through warfare, while Ps 91:1 depicts him as the protector of his people. In Ezek 1:24 and 10:5 the sound of the cherubs' wings is compared to Shaddai's powerful voice. The reference may be to the mighty divine warrior's battle cry which accompanies his angry judgment. ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

Joel 1:16 Has not food been cut off before our eyes, gladness and joy from the house of our God?

- **Has not food been cut off before our eyes** Joe 1:5-9, 13 Am 4:6, 7
- **Gladness and joy from the house of our God:** De 12:6, 7, 11, 12 16:10-15 Ps 43:4 105:3 Isa 62:8,

JOEL REVERTS TO EFFECTS OF LOCUST PLAGUE

Has not food been cut off before our eyes- A rhetorical question to cause the people to take inventory and to stimulate the people to gather for prayer and fasting.

NET Note - "Has not the food been cut off right before our eyes?" This rhetorical question expects an affirmative answer; the question has been translated as an affirmation for the sake of clarity and emphasis. ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

Gladness and joy from the house of our God - "joy and gladness from the house of our God?" Verse 16b is a continuation of the rhetorical question begun in v. 16a, but has been translated as an affirmative statement to make the meaning clear. The words "There is no longer any" are not in the Hebrew text, but have been supplied in the translation for clarity. **Gladness and joy** normally characterized the offerings of **the house of our God**, the Temple, as the people thanked God for His provisions, but now that offerings had ceased so had the celebrating.

We see the relationship between offerings to the LORD and gladness and joy in Deuteronomy...

Deuteronomy 12:6; "There you shall **bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices**, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. 7 "There also you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and **rejoice in all your undertakings** in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

Deuteronomy 12:11 then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: **your burnt offerings and your sacrifices**, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the LORD. 12 **"And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God**, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

Deuteronomy 16:10-11 Then **you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD** your God with a tribute of a **freewill offering** of your hand, which you shall give just as the LORD your God blesses you; 11 **and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God**, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name.

APPLICATION: In the NT the greatest offering we can make each day is our self, our body (Ro 12:1 [note](#)), and when we do so, we should experience **gladness and joy**. Perhaps your **gladness and joy** is at low ebb these days. Have you recently offered your body as "a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship?" If not, take a moment to humbly bow in worship (whether at work or school or home) and confess your failure to present yourself to the God Who rightly owns you (1 Cor 6:19-20 [note](#)), seeking His forgiveness and His Spirit's energization of the fruit of **gladness and joy** in your heart (Gal 5:22 [note](#)). You may be surprised at how much difference it makes in the rest of your day! And don't forget that integrally related to your offering is your subsequent conduct. Therefore "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro 12:2 [note](#)).

Joel 1:17 The seeds shrivel under their clods; The storehouses are desolate, The barns are torn down, For the grain is dried up.

- **seed:** Heb. grains, Ge 23:16

NET The grains of seed have shriveled beneath their shovels. Storehouses have been decimated and granaries have been torn down, for the grain has dried up.

ESV The seed shrivels under the clods; the storehouses are desolate; the granaries are torn down because the grain has dried up.

NLT The seeds die in the parched ground, and the grain crops fail. The barns stand empty, and granaries are abandoned.

CSB The seeds lie shriveled in their casings. The storehouses are in ruin, and the granaries are broken down, because the grain has withered away.

NIV The seeds are shriveled beneath the clods. The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up.

The seeds shrivel under their clods - Joel 1:20 describes conditions that suggest drought, but the ESV Bible marginal note reads "The meaning of the Hebrew line is uncertain." In any event, in a drought seeds would not be able to germinate.

NET Note adds "These two lines of v. 17 comprise only four words in the Hebrew; three of the four are found only here in the OT. The translation and meaning are rather uncertain. A number of English versions render the word translated "shovels" as "clods," referring to lumps of soil (e.g., KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV)." ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

The **NLT** paraphrase has "The seeds die in the parched ground, and the grain crops fail. The barns stand empty, and granaries are abandoned.

Joel 1:18 How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle wander aimlessly because there is no pasture for them; Even the flocks of sheep suffer.

- Joe 1:20 1Ki 18:5 Jer 12:4 14:5,6 Ho 4:3

THE MISERY OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

Groan...wander...suffer - Expresses the misery the locusts plague has wreaked - people, plants, animals, nothing left unaffected by the devastation.

The herds of cattle wander aimlessly because there is no pasture for them -Hebrew "the herds of cattle are confused." The verb בִּיחַ (bukh, "be confused") sometimes refers to wandering aimlessly in confusion (cf. Exod 14:3). (NET) They are desperately looking for food.

The animals groaning and suffering remind us of Paul's description in Romans 8

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 **For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.** (Ro 8:18-22-[note](#) a reflection of Ge 3:17-19)

Wiersbe - Creation longs for that day when the Creator will return to earth and set it free from sin's shackles, and then "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad ... and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose" (Isa. 35:1). (Be Amazed)

Even the flocks of sheep suffer - Why are the sheep separated? They are foraging machines and require less grass than other grazing animals. Nevertheless it was so bad that even the sheep were without adequate grasses upon which to nibble!

Joel 1:19 To You, O LORD, I cry; For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.

- **To You, O LORD, I cry** Ps 50:15 91:15 Mic 7:7 Hab 3:17,18 Lu 18:1,7 Php 4:6,7
- **For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness** Joe 2:3 Jer 9:10 Am 7:4

PROPHET'S PLEA OF INTERCESSION

To You, O LORD, I cry - It is interesting that Joel did not give Jehovah a specific request (petition) but simply explained the reason for his intercession for the suffering land.

Cry ([0398](#)) (**qara**) is used in Joel 1:14, Joel 1:19, Joel 2:15, Joel 2:32 and Joel 3:9. The Greek word used in Joel 1:19 to translate "cry" is the verb [boao](#) from **boé** ([995](#)) means raise a cry, call or shout of joy, pain, etc, by using one's voice with unusually high volume. In several of the NT contexts (and many more of the [Septuagint = LXX](#) uses) crying out was in the context of one seeking help or assistance.

Pusey points out the impossibility of remedying their situation without divine help: "All sin stupefies the sinner. All intoxicate the mind, bribe and pervert the judgment, dull the conscience, blind the soul and make it insensible to its own ills."

Patterson - Did the people not understand what all of this meant? The dryness and barrenness of the land reflected the spiritual dearth of their hearts (cf. Jer 23:10). Worship and service had given way to a mere routine that left their lives devoid of spiritual vitality. Surely they needed to realize that the present devastation was but a portent of a still greater catastrophe should they not repent and return to the Lord. ([Ibid](#))

For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness- Joel refers to uncultivated lands where animals previously were able to graze. Fire here and in Joel 1:20 is probably not to be understood in a literal sense. "The locust plague, accompanied by conditions of extreme drought, has left the countryside looking as though everything has been burned up (so also in Joel 2:3). This fire was one of the effects of the drought. (NET)

Patterson - Smith (1929:394) cites the following testimony: "Bamboo groves have been stripped of their leaves and left standing like saplings after a rapid brush fire, and grass has been devoured so that the bare ground appeared as if burned." For the appearance of fields blackened by the destructive locusts, Finley (1990:38) points out that the OT uses of fire in connection with divine judgment "highlights the judgmental nature of the locusts and drought." ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

MacArthur rightly points out "As the first to call to repentance, the prophet had to be the first to heed the warning. He had to lead by example and motivate the people to respond. In the midst of proclaiming judgment, God's prophets often led in intercessory prayer for mercy and forgiveness (cf. Ex 32:11-14; Jer 42:1-4; Da 9:1-19; Am 7:1-6)." ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Joel 1:20 Even the beasts of the field pant for You; For the water brooks are dried up And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

- **Even the beasts of the field pant for You** Job 38:41 Ps 104:21 145:15 147:9
- **For the water brooks are dried up** 1Ki 17:7 18:5

EVEN SUFFERING ANIMALS LOOK TO GOD FOR RELIEF

Even the beasts of the field pant for You- The suffering in this day spares no one. **Pant** is used only one other time in Ps 42:1 (occurring twice) "As the deer **pants** for the water brooks, So my soul **pants** for You, O God." The idea is that the beasts pant for the water which is supplied by God. The animals panting for Jehovah set a good example for the people to do likewise!

NET Note on the beasts of the field pant for You - Animals of course do not have religious sensibilities as such; they do not in any literal sense long for Yahweh. Rather, the language here is figurative (metonymy of cause for effect). The animals long for food and water, the ultimate source of which is Yahweh. ([Net Notes Joel 1](#))

For the water brooks are dried up - Explains why the beasts are panting.

And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness- The plain reading suggests literal fire but most writers feel this is figurative. However the fact that water brooks had dried up suggests there was drought, which would make the gnawed, withering stubble ripe for wildfires. In either case the effect was the same - total consumption of the pastures.

ESV Study Bible - Fire is sometimes an expression of divine judgment (Gen. 19:24; Num. 11:1; Deut. 32:22; Jer. 4:4; Hos. 8:14; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8).

Warren Wiersbe sums up Joel 1 - Too often we drift along from day to day, taking our blessings for granted, until God permits a natural calamity to occur and remind us of our total dependence on Him. When water is rationed and food is scarce, and when prices for necessities escalate, then we discover the poverty of our artificial civilization and our throwaway society. Suddenly, necessities become luxuries, and luxuries become burdens. God didn't have to send great battalions to Judah to bring the people to their knees. All He needed was a swarm of little insects, and they did the job. Sometimes He uses bacteria or viruses so tiny that you need a special microscope to see them. He is the "Lord of hosts," the Lord of the armies of heaven and earth. He is "the Almighty" (Joel 1:15) and none can stay His powerful hand. (Be Amazed)

Patterson applies the truths of Joel 1 - God should be given his rightful place in the believer's life. It is one thing to confess one's faith in God; it is another to surrender to him as God in everyday life. May our worship not be one of empty formality but that which is experienced in truth (1 Chr 16:29; John 4:24). May our lives not be merely routine; rather, let us give God his rightful place as Lord so that what we think and do is to the glory of God and thus for our own good (Ps 84:11; Rom 8:28-30; 15:17; Phil 2:13; Heb 13:20-21; Jas 1:5). The passage also is a reminder that believers have a real need for constant prayer (Luke 18:1; cf. Acts 1:14; 1 Thess 5:17). While this is particularly true in times of need, danger, and difficulty (cf. Ps 32:6), such as the case was in Joel's day, believers always need to have a consistent prayer life. Believing prayer, together with confession of sin, can bring cleansing to the soul (1 John 1:9). Moreover, prayer is important for daily guidance and direction in every aspect of life (Phil 4:6; Jas 5:13-16; see the commentary on Jonah 2:1-10 and Zeph 2:1-3). Such a habit of life will pay eternal dividends and assure the believer of a continuing fellowship with God, free from sin's dominance (Pss 66:17-20; 73:23-26; 1 Pet 3:12). ([Cornerstone Bible Commentary](#))

"Jerusalem's Locust Plague"

J. D. Whiting

National Geographic 28 (December 1915): 511-50

NOTE: This article is from a file in archive.org and which had numerous typographical errors including unusual characters and letters that represent the "pictures" in the article. Bolding is mine for emphasis.

[HERE IS A COPY OF ORIGINAL NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ARTICLE FROM 1915 WHICH WILL ALLOW YOU TO SEE THE PICTURES ALLUDED TO IN THE ARTICLE - SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURES.](#) I

JERUSALEM'S LOCUST PLAGUE Being a Description of the Recent Locust Influx into Palestine, and Comparing Same with Ancient Locust Invasions as Narrated in the Old World's History Book, the Bible By John D. Whiting Author of "From Jerusalem to Aleppo" and "Village Life in the Holy Land," in the National Geographic Magazine (Source: Archive.org, Public Domain)

HEAR ye this, ye elders, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land, - hath this ever happened in your days? or in the days of your fathers? Concerning it to your children tell ye the story, - and your children to their children, and their children to the generation following: - That which was left by the creeping locust hath the swarming locust eaten, and that which was left by the swarming locust hath the grass locust eaten; and that which was left by the grass locust hath the corn locust eaten. Awake . . . and weep and howl . . . For a nation hath come up over my land, bold and without number" (Joel 1:2-6).

Thus Joel, writing some seven or eight hundred years B. C, begins his description of a locust plague, which then as now must have laid waste this land. We marvel how this ancient writer could have given so graphic and true a description of a devastation caused by locusts in so condensed a form.

FORMER LOCUST INVASIONS

One often finds among the old peasant men those who are gifted with telling stories, whether true or imaginary, and thus, as in Joel's days, history is still handed down to the children, children's children, and another generation. The oldest men have thus been recounting the stories of havoc caused by flying locusts fifty years ago that used to sound like "Arabian Nights" tales. Still there is no doubt that the present visitation eclipses any in the memory of the present generation, and probably equals in severity any former one.

Since 1865, so commonly called "sent el jarad" (year of the locusts), locusts have at intervals reappeared in Syria, but in smaller areas and causing nothing like a general disaster or distress, the more recent of these having occurred in 1892, in the Jordan Valley near Jericho, where waving fields of tall green barley and wheat were eaten down to the very stump in a remarkably short time. In 1899 they were found in small quantities in Galilee, and in 1904 in the southern desert, also visiting Egypt. The present influx covered all of Palestine and Syria - that is. from the borders of Egypt to the Taurus Mountains.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 512](#): THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE LOCUSTS

"Attention was drawn to them by the sudden darkening of the bright sunshine, and then by a veritable shower of their excretions, which fell thick and fast and resembled those of mice, especially noticeable on the white macadam roads. At times their elevation was in the hundreds of feet; at other times they came down quite low, detached members alighting" (see text, page 513).

ADULT FLIERS FIRST APPEAR

It was one of the last days of February, 1915, that Air. Lewis Larson, to whose skill and energy we are indebted for the superb collection of locust pictures appearing on these pages, returned from the picturesque Ain Fara gorge, which borders on the Wilderness of Judea and is only a few miles east of Jerusalem, with word that **swarms of locusts had flown overhead in such thick clouds as to obscure the sun for the time being.**

However, before they were seen, a loud noise, produced by the napping of myriads of locust wings, was heard, described as resembling the distant rumble of waves, or, as St. John has it, "the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running into battle" (Rev 9:9), the picture on page 512 vividly portraying Joel's word picture

"A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people"
(Joel 2:2)

Immediately rumors poured in from the Christian towns of Es Salt, on the uplands east of the Jordan, and Bethlehem, that similar swarms had also visited them, causing much destruction.

In Jerusalem the first were seen one Monday of the first days of March, at noon. Attention was drawn to them by the sudden darkening of the bright sunshine, and then by a veritable shower of their excretions, which fell thick and fast and resembled those of mice, especially noticeable on the white macadam roads. At times their elevation was in the hundreds of feet ; at other times they came down quite low, detached members alighting. The clouds of them would be so dense as to appear quite black, with the edges vignetted till they thinned down and faded away into the clear blue sky around.

For several days Jerusalem was thus visited. **Predictions were rampant as to the terrible results which would accrue, but now we can see that not even the worst pictured the actual ravages as severe as we now see them.** They did not settle in Jerusalem, evidently seeking greener and less populated districts; so that after the first few days nothing more was seen of these adults here, while at Bethlehem they were brought to the earth by heavy showers of the late rains.

Quantities were now gathered by the poorer Bethlehemites. A few ate them roasted, describing the taste as delicious, especially the females full of eggs. Still the main reason for collecting them was in order to secure the small bonus offered by the local government of Bethlehem. Thus tons were destroyed, being buried alive till several ancient abandoned cisterns were filled, while in surrounding villages each family was required to produce a stipulated weight. Likewise in Jaffa they were destroyed by being thrown into the Mediterranean and, when washed ashore dead and dried on the beach, were collected and used as fuel in the public "Turkish baths" and ovens.

FROM WHENCE COME THE LOCUSTS?

These clouds of flying locusts, in Jerusalem at least, invariably came from the northeast going toward the southwest, and it was observed that when strong winds arose, too stiff for them to resist, rather than be carried they seemed to settle till the storm passed over.

Students of Joel, who assert that the first two chapters up to the 28th verse picture an actual invasion of locusts and not Judah's human enemies, as the Assyrians and Chaldeans, find a difficulty in the verse, "And the northerner will I remove far from you," since locusts were reported to invade Palestine from the south: the present experience not only removes this difficulty but establishes the accuracy of Joel's account.

As to the exact region from which they migrated to visit Palestine, it is now difficult to say, especially in view of the disorganization of mails and news channels caused by the present cruel European war.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 514](#) NATURAL ENEMIES OF LOCUSTS

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 515](#) **THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM**

With these adult locusts, the [Acridium peregrinum](#), more commonly termed *Schistocerca peregrina*, the males and females are readily distinguished, for, like most creatures, human beings excepted, the males are by far the handsomer. Both are about 2 inches long, the female being slightly larger. The wings are semi-transparent and filled with veins, or, more correctly, strengthening tissues, and are white with brown spots. The male has a vivid yellow body, while that of the female is a deep brown.

LAYING THE: EGGS AND DYING

At once these numberless hosts began to prepare for the destruction that was to follow. Each female, now loaded with eggs, seeks a place suitable to deposit them, and with her ovipositors is able to sink a hole as much as 4 inches deep, through hard compact soil, such as would try the strength of human muscles even with iron tools (see also page 521). How so small and frail a creature can bore in such hard ground and to such a depth seems a marvel which only nature can accomplish or explain. While boring the hole the female sits, wings outstretched, upon the earth, and possibly moistens the soil to facilitate the work. She evidently has the ability to stretch or lengthen her annulea, pressing her body into the hole till the depth required is attained.

The eggs, averaging about a hundred in number, are now deposited in the bottom of this hole, not haphazard, but neatly arranged in a long cylindrical mass and enveloped in a sticky glutinous secretion, with which frothy substance the top of the hole is also sealed to prevent enemies encroaching, and at the same time of such a nature as to allow the newly hatched brood to get out readily. It was found, in digging for these eggs, that when newly laid they could with ease be removed from the soil in one piece over an inch long and as thick as a slate pencil; but once a few days had passed, they crumbled apart when touched.

The eggs require a certain amount of moisture, for once dried or exposed to air they never hatch, which no doubt accounts for the depth to which the mother parent at times deposits them into the ground. Once the female locust has laid the eggs, her life mission is done; she flies away - where to one cannot say - and soon dies.

One remarkable feature is the variety of soils and climatic conditions under which these eggs were laid. In the Jordan Valley, earth's lowest spot, 1,300 feet below the Mediterranean, we find them deposited on the very banks of this historic river, notably at "the Ford," where it is supposed the Children of Israel passed over into Canaan (Josh. 3) ; also farther down toward the Dead Sea, in soil heavily impregnated with alkali, where are the "slime pits" into which probably, during their retreat, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell when in full flight from Chedorlaomer and his allies (Gen. 14).

Then they were to be found on the highest mountain tops ; in the beautiful olive groves about Bethlehem and Zelzah, birthplaces of David and Saul, Israel's first kings ; also in the vicinity about the fields and village of the Shepherds, where, eighteen hundred years ago, mortal ears heard an angel chorus ; in the chalky soil of Wad el Nar (Valley of Fire), which is the extension of the Vale of Hinnom, a place where Israel caused "his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech" (2 Kings 23: 10).

They were deposited in the barren districts of the wilderness of the "scape goat" (Lev. 16:7-26), as well as in the richest soil of the Philistine Plain, where Samson turned loose the 300 foxes with firebrands into his enemies' wheat fields (Judges 15:4, 5) ; also in the soft, moving sand-dunes along the seacoast of Tyre, Sidon, Askelon, and Gaza, cities once ranking with the greatest of the earth ; among the world - famed Jaffa orange orchards ; in the rocky and rugged valley between Mickmash and Gibeah, on whose precipitous sides "Jonathan climbed up on his hands and his feet" into the Philistine garrison and slew a score of them (1 Sam. 14:4-14). In fact, in all parts of the country so laden with historic events, whether in open fields or standing grain, in the plain or in the sterile and rocky mountains, whether it be damp grounds or those absolutely parched and dry, there seemed to be little difference.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 517:](#) **THE TOWER OF DAVID** "Did not Joel then see the already ancient walls of Jerusalem in his day, as we do now, form so slender an obstacle to tiny soldiers composing immense armies, causing him to so graphically exclaim : 'They shall run like mighty men ; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his wars, and they shall not break their ranks!'" (Joel 2: 7) (see text, page 526).

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 518](#) **A YOUNG LOCUST IN THE LARVA STAGE**

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 519](#) **THE LOCUST LARVA AS FIRST SEEN NEAR JERUSALEM**

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 520:](#) **A VINEYARD STRIPPED BY LOCUSTS OF ALL ITS LEAVES** "Once entering a Vineyard/ the sprawling vines would in the shortest time be nothing but bare bark, the long, dark stems lying flat on the ground much resembling snakes" (see text, page 529). Note how even some of the shoots have been barked, leaving them snow- white."

While going to the Samaritan Passover we observed in the valleys we passed between Bethel and Mount Gerizim swarms of the adult locusts flying about. At Zahtara the entire mountain side, a rocky slope facing south, with sparse wheat patches between the

boulders, was simply covered with locusts preparatory to laying eggs. On the homeward trip the next day they were still there, and while climbing a short-cut on foot we each trod to death several hundreds, so thick were they. Five days later, returning for the ceremony on the last day of the Passover, not a trace of one was to be found.

COLLECTING THE LOCUST EGGS

Once the alarming extent to which these eggs were laid was realized, the authorities issued a proclamation, dated April 19, requiring each male person from 16 years to 60 to gather eleven pounds of the eggs.

To be among the first to set a good example, the young men of the American colony at once began the work of collecting; for so steeped are the natives in fatalism (Allah has sent the "jarad" and they are helpless to fight them) that, unless forced or shown how to, few would turn a finger over in self-defense. The fields chosen for our work were those last mentioned about "Gabah" (Gibeah), now a poor village, possibly the very Gibeah whose inhabitants were once the cause of the first Israelitish civil war, in which the tribe of Benjamin all but perished (Judges 20).

As we started out, loaded with small knapsacks of food and blankets, and armed with small picks, the clouds gathered and the winds blew. It was so late in the year that hard rains had not been anticipated ; but when the party got to Ain Farah, where headquarters were to be established with "Abid el Waleh," a character few who have been to Ain Farah do not know, sleeping outdoors had to be abandoned because of the downpour.

* The party mentioned were the three responsible for the present article- Air. Lewis Larson, photographer ; Mr. Lars Lind, and the author.

Seemingly the only alternative was to accept the host's hospitality in his sheep- fold, a large natural cave with but a small opening, of which the precipitous cliffs here are full. Such were the "sheep-cotes," by the way, at Engedi, in which the pursuing King Saul lay asleep at the mercy of his fugitive David, who even now refrained from killing his life- long enemy, but, instead, only "cut off the skirt of Saul's robe" (1 Samuel 24).

But not relishing the enjoyment of passing the night in a flea-infested cave, the like of which kings in the past had not despised, Yankee ingenuity constructed instead a small roof out of a few sheets of corrugated iron, which were Abid el Waleh's share of booty from a recent pillage, and although the rain beat down relentlessly, it afforded some little protection. After two such nights and rainy days the party returned home with but a handful of eggs; but, better still, with fields for future egg hunting well located. The storm once over, a little tent afforded protection for the second campaign. Most of the locust eggs we discovered were in uncultivated fields of the hardest dark-red soil, covered with a thin sod. A small patch would be found only a few meters in extent literally honeycombed and filled with the eggs; then for a space no more would be found till a new spot was located. A warm, sunny place with a southern exposure seemed to be the rule.

It is estimated by competent authorities that as many as 65,000 to 75,000 locust eggs are concentrated in a square meter of soil, and allowing for a loss of 30 per cent in hatching, some 60,000 destroyers can emerge from a space 39 inches square (see also page 516).

NATURAL ENEMIES OF LOCUSTS

Locusts are not, however, without their own enemies provided by nature. Large flocks of storks flew past Jerusalem during the early days when the adults arrived and after the larvae were hatched, consuming abnormal quantities, for which reason the natives have always given "Abo Saad" a warm welcome (see page 514). (Abo Saad - Father of Good Luck - the Arabic name for the stork)

While collecting these eggs many of the cells were found to contain eggs laid by certain species of flies, probably the *Ida lumata* Fabr. and the *Anthomya cana* Macq., the young worm or larva of which, when hatched, lives upon the locust eggs, sucking them dry, till developed into the chrysalis and emerging a full-fledged fly. Wild birds and domestic fowls developed a ravenous appetite for locusts, while with the smaller larvae and pupae turkeys and chickens simply gorged themselves, with the result that the yolk of their eggs became a deep-red color.

At breakfast one morning Allie brought on a most gorgeously tinted omelet, when little Spafford, fixing his astonished eyes on it and hearing that the chickens feeding on locusts were responsible for the change in color, broke out with "Mama, if we hatched those eggs, would locusts come out with the chicks ?"

But while countless numbers thus fall prey to the appetites of tiny worms or these larger birds, it is said that the locust is its own worst enemy, as later we shall see (pages 544 and 547).

A TRICK IN EVERY TRADE

Of late the city natives have revived an old dish called "ishareyeh," a sort of macaroni rolled by hand from dough into small particles

which exactly resemble locust eggs. While many forms of evading the law were sought, one of the trickiest ways was by a certain Jerusalemite who, not wishing to exert himself in collecting the locust eggs, shirked the burden in true Oriental style onto his wife. She, procuring some white clay, rolled it like "ishareyeh" into forms so like the locust eggs that, when presented to the officer in charge, they readily passed for the genuine article. She, of course, could not keep the secret; it was too good to keep, and that is how it is now known.

THE CREEPERS REACH JERUSALEM

Scarcely had Jerusalem gotten over the excitement of the search for eggs, scarcely had they relapsed into a sense of something like safety from disaster as a result of those efforts, than word poured in that first the lowlands, or Plain of Sharon, and then the hill country to the west of the city, were teeming with the young larvae.

At Jerusalem proper no eggs had been laid, as above noted, the nearest fields being in the Valley of the Roses, out of which the railroad emerges on approaching Jerusalem. From here, then, and from the Bethlehem district came the forces to attack the "Holy City."

When first hatched they were quite black and resembled large ants, having no signs of wings; but as they developed, passing through one stage and into another, they cast their little outer skins, now no longer large enough to contain the growing body. Thus they pass through several molts, of which, however, but three stages are plainly distinguishable - the larva or wingless stage (see page 518), the pupa, with small wings, or properly wing sacks developing (see pages 536 and 543), and the full-fledged flying locust (see page 538).

Once hatched the little fellows seemed to hold together for a few days, till a little developed and in sufficient numbers, when they would start their forward march of from 400 to 600 feet per day, clearing the ground of any vegetation before them. It was observed that these new broods instinctively went in the reverse direction to that from which their flying parents had come, making practically for the northeast. None but those who have seen them can begin to imagine their countless multitudes and the destruction to follow. No wonder, then, that the writer of the book of Judges likens the hordes of the Midianites, who had for years devastated Israel's land, to locusts, and to "the sand which is upon the sea-shore for multitude" (Judges 7:12) (see page 519). "For they (Midian) came up with their cattle and their tents; they came in as locusts for multitude; both they and their camels were without number: and they came into the land to destroy it" (Judges 6:5).

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURES ON PAGE 524](#) **A FIG TREE JUST BEFORE THE LOCUSTS ATTACKED IT** (COMPARE WITH NEXT PHOTO)

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 525:](#) **A FRESHLY ATTACKED FIG TREE** In an inconceivably short time every leaf is consumed, leaving bare and barked twigs only.

LOCUSTS CAUSE SEASICKNESS

One evening it was heard that the locusts had already reached the German colony and the railroad station, and as we went out the next day to see them, scarcely had our carriage swung around from the Jaffa Gate than we found the white road was already black with them. Ever in the same direction they pushed up the "Western Hill," still commonly called Zion, even entering the houses about the "Tomb of David." The roads now became so slippery from the masses of the little, greasy bodies crushed beneath the horses' hoofs that the horses could scarcely keep a footing and had consequently to be driven slowly and with great care. Afterward it was heard that likewise trains throughout the country had been stopped for hours at a time, notably on the Damascus-Haifa line near the Lake of Galilee.

Below the Lower Pool of Gihon old olive trees, yesterday green, were now nothing but bare trunks and twigs, and further up the valley a couple of beautiful mulberry trees had just been attacked, the leaves falling like rain, and already the ground was deeply strewn with them, and long before evening they, too, were leafless. This, however, proved to be but a sample of coming things.

The locusts, when advanced into the second or pupa stage, walk like ordinary insects, leaping only when frightened into a quicker pace, which they readily accomplish by the use of their two long and powerful posterior legs. However, while still in the first or larva stage, they seemed to hop much like fleas, so that when anything neared their thickened masses it seemed as if the entire surface of the ground moved, producing a most curious effect upon one's vision and causing dizziness, which in some was so severe as to produce a sensation not unlike seasickness. The same was also true when watching them undisturbed on tree or field.

SCALING THE TOWER OF DAVID

One of our most interesting experiences, while noting the locusts' methodical but stubborn moves, occurred when they first reached Jerusalem. Countless numbers of the young locusts poured into the broad, walled road leading into the city from the west, past the United States Consulate to the Jaffa Gate. For three or four days an incessant and unending stream filled the road from side to

side, like numberless troops marching on parade, and in spite of the traffic at this junction, which to this city is like lower Broadway to New York, their ranks, although thinned, entered the ancient gateway and the New Breach. "Though in among the weapons they fall they shall not stop" (Joel 2:2)

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 526](#) "He hath...barked my fig tree; he hath made it clean bare... The branches thereof are made white" (Joel 1:7). This photograph was taken about two weeks after the locusts had destroyed the tree (see text, page 529).

Thus the moat around "David's Tower" was so filled that the dry earth seemed to be a living mass. Up and up the city walls and the castle they climbed to their very heights.

The origin of this tower, as all will infer, has been attributed to King David ever since the Middle Ages, and while it may not be the very "Castle of Zion," the foundations, and especially the site as a natural defense, must have dated back many centuries, if not to the days when Jerusalem was created an Israelitish city from the older Jebus, wrested from the Jebusites by David. The castle now affords a fine example of the ancient style of fortifications (see page 517).

Did not Joel then see the already ancient walls of Jerusalem in his day, as we now do, form so slender an obstacle to tiny soldiers composing immense armies, causing him to so graphically exclaim: "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march everyone on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks"? (Joel 2:7). What should have impelled them thus, against odds, to make for the old walled town; for, as all who have been here know, "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together" (Psalm 122:3), affording nothing in the way of forage for them? Seemingly it can only be explained by their instinct leading them in a definite direction.

After a few days' effort, however, they reversed their course, and for several days streams of them made for the opposite direction, but only far enough to* escape the barrier which the city afforded; and, this once attained, they swung around into the very direction heretofore pursued. Again, what could have instructed them thus to escape the difficulty? Solomon, the first naturalist, if we may thus call him, says of them: "The locust hath no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands" (Prov. 30:27). ' At the consulate the fight was taken up to save the garden. It lay, as we have seen, in the main path of the locusts. The enclosure, about the size of an ordinary American city lot, required five men to keep incessantly brushing the locusts down from the walls on the three sides attacked. At the southern end, so persistent were they that but a few seconds after being cleaned the wall would again become a living mass.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 527: THE ATTACKING HOSTS](#) 'Disastrous as they were in the country, equally obnoxious they became about the homes, crawling up thick upon the walls" (see text, page 533) Photo by Dr. P. Muhlen "and they shall, fill thy houses, and the houses of thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians"

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 528](#) Thus during the Egyptian plagues we find Moses announcing the locust scourge in terms of which our recent experience was such an exact duplicate (Exodus 10:4-6) (see text, Page 533).

It was the 28th of May when the larvae, already passing into the pupa stage, reached the quiet of Gethsemane, now in its full summer bloom; but scarcely had a day passed before every tender thing was consumed, and even the leaves of the woody cypress and of the olive trees, the latter about 1,000 years old, were threatened. "The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness ; yea, and nothing shall escape them" (Joel 2:3). But now, after passing up this narrow defile between the city and Olivet, and to the west of the city, making through the more sparsely built new Jerusalem, they at last reached the northern suburbs ; so that the entire town, with the exception, as before noted, of the portion within the walls, fell a prey to their ravages. We shall now try to depict what was here seen and befell the entire land from "[Dan to Beersheba](#)"* (SCROLL DOWN TO see map).

VINES AND FIG TREES FIRST ATTACKED

Fortunately by the time these young broods had hatched the grain crops were too far advanced to be much hurt. The reaper had already thrust in his sickle. But alas for the fruits and summer crops! The native vineyards and orchards are always planted here in perfect confusion. Between the vines one finds figs, olives, pomegranates, quinces, and other trees. These were the places at which the locusts naturally halted, for the rapidity of their marches and the frequency of their stops seemed to be regulated by the amount of forage encountered.

Once entering a "vineyard," the sprawling vines would in the shortest time be nothing but bare bark, the long dark stems lying flat on the ground, much resembling snakes (see page 520). Fig leaves perhaps of all things best suited their taste, and when once a tree fell a prey to them the ground about would be literally layers deep, and the trunk so covered with crawlers as to make it a bright yellow color. On every leaf dozens would be perched (see page 523). They first ate away the tender parts, leaving a perfect

skeleton of the large broad leaves.

*An expression taking in all of the land once belonging to the Hebrews (1 Kings 4:25).

But soon these, too, were devoured, and usually after one day's work the tree stood naked of any leaves, with nothing but the hard-unripe fruit protruding stiffly from the branches (see page 525).

When the daintier morsels were gone the bark was eaten off the young topmost branches, which, after exposure to the sun, bleached snow-white. Then, seemingly out of malice, they would gnaw off small limbs, perhaps to get at the pith within. The effect thus caused was a weird one, resembling white candles on a dried-up Christmas tree (see illustration on page 526).

"He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away ;* the branches thereof are made white" (Joel 1:7).

In the same manner all fruit and many shade trees were deprived of all that made them attractive and useful. The quinces (probably the "apple" of the Bible) were stripped of leaves, and, like the figs, the fruit was left on to wither, harden, and fall off, while the pitted fruits, like the apricots, had the meat of the fruit consumed and the seed left still adhering mockingly to the tree; so that, in but a few days, Jerusalem, although never too verdant in summer, presented a sad and desolate aspect. But worse was yet to come.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MARKETS EMPTY

The vegetable and fruit seasons were just setting in as the young brood was hatching. Even to one looking over the local desolation the vastness of the destruction could not be realized. One-day David's Street markets were full of fresh vegetables at the usual low prices. The commoner apricots from Ramleh made their first appearance that day and were not seen again. The better ones from near Bethlehem likewise only on that day made their appearance, and it was not difficult to perceive that they had been prematurely and hurriedly plucked to save them.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 530: AMERICAN'S FIGHTING LOCUSTS](#)

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 531](#) **A LOCUST TRAP** "As long as they came in these endless chains, with but a little guiding, their ranks could be narrowed and practically driven from morning to night into the sunken box" (see preceding picture and text on page 535).

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 532](#) **A LOCUST MOLTING AND HIDING PLACE**

But these are but drops in the bucket. Miles and miles of water- and muskmelon fields fell a prey to the locusts on the plains. Likewise were destroyed the cucumber, vegetable marrow and tomato fields, and the truck gardens in plain and hill, to say nothing of the absolute annihilation of the grape and fig crops. Thousands of acres of dura, or native corn, still but a few inches tall, were eaten to the ground.

In fact, nothing escaped their ravages except the orange gardens at Jaffa, due to the heavy sea breezes and strenuous human efforts, while those of the suburbs were entirely eaten. The only vegetables now entering the Jerusalem markets came from Jericho. Here the eggs laid in the alkali fields seemed not to hatch, while those near the Jordan were thoroughly dug out; so that not a single wingless locust was seen there, and the crops remained undisturbed, till suddenly enveloped by the new fliers, as we shall see later (see page 544). The only vegetables and fruits now available came from the Jaffa gardens, but instead of being, as usual, the food for the poor, they were so rare that none but the richest could pay the price at which they sold.

INVADING THE HOMES

Disastrous as they were in the country, equally obnoxious they became about the homes, crawling up thick upon the walls and, squeezing in through cracks of closed doors or windows, entering the very dwelling rooms (see page 528). When unable to find an entrance they often scaled the walls to the roofs, and then got into the houses by throwing themselves into the open courts, such as most Oriental houses are built around. Women frantically swept the walls and roofs of their homes, but to no avail.

In Nazareth it required several hundred men to sweep the locusts together and to destroy them, and many donkeys to carry away to near-by fields the miniature carcasses. Stores were closed and some houses abandoned, for there it seemed as if the locusts were even more active than in other towns.

During the Egyptian plagues we find Moses announcing the locust scourge in terms of which our present experience is such an exact duplicate, as follows : "Behold tomorrow will I bring the locusts into thy coasts : and they shall cover the face of the earth, . . . and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped . . . every green tree which groweth. . . . And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians" (Ex 10: 4-6).

About our houses they became so thick that one could not help crushing them with every step. They even fell into one's shirt collar

from the walls above and crawled up onto one's person. Women were especially troubled with them, and on one occasion a lady, after being away from home for half a day, returned with no of them concealed within the skirts. Whenever touched, or especially when finding themselves caught within one's clothes, they exuded from their mouth a dark fluid, an irritant to the skin and soiling the garments in a most disgusting manner. Imagine the feeling (we speak from experience) with a dozen or two such creatures over an inch long, with saw-like legs and rough bodies, making a race-course of your back!

One warm, breathless night they were found crawling thick into our windows, which were left open after sundown, for usually during the cool nights they never moved. "They shall run to and fro in the city ; they shall run upon the wall ; they shall climb up upon the houses ; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief" (Joel 2:9).

A FELLAH PESSIMIST

One evening of the first days of June, while fighting the locusts on Scopus, the mountain adjoining Olivet to the north, and the very ground on which Titus' Roman army pitched camp in 70 A. D., when Jerusalem was entirely destroyed (Mark 13:2), an aged fellah walked up, and notwithstanding the wholesale capture befalling the locusts, broke out with : "All this is no use ; go home and rest ; you can do nothing. They are Allah's army, and once they fly they will destroy everything. So it was 'sent el jarad' (year of the locusts) when I was young. In four minutes they left all the olive trees as wood."

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 534](#) - AN OLIVE ORCHARD JUST AFTER THE LOCUST INVASION

He walked away seemingly amused at our optimism, while we smiled, not knowing from experience, as he did, the truth of his apparent exaggerations.

ALLAH'S ARMIES

It is interesting to note that the natives all speak of them as "Jaish Allah" (God's army), they even finding the word "askar" (soldier) written in the Arabic characters upon the wings of the invading locusts. In the same way they were looked upon by the Hebrews of old. Thus : "The Lord shall utter his voice before his army : for his camp is very great" (Joel 2:11).

From the "Hadith," or books containing the collected oral sayings of Mohammed, with explanations, we translate the following: "Do not kill the locusts because they are the host of God the Most Mighty." It was so said (thus it is explained) provided they did not attempt to spoil the grain fields (that is, of the Mohammedans). For (so the story runs) a locust fell between the two hands of the Apostle (Mohammed), and it was written on its two wings in Hebrew: "We are the host of God the Most Mighty, and we have ninety-nine eggs, and had the hundredth remained to us we should have eaten the world with all that is in it." Therefore the "Apostle" said: "Our God, destroy the locust; kill its great ones and cause to die its little ones, and corrupt its eggs, and close their mouths against the plantings of the Mohammed-ans and their places of getting a living."

FIGHTING THE LOCUSTS

A few words of our personal experience fighting locusts may not be amiss.

At first the locusts, already having marched a considerable distance from the place of hatching, were found in endless columns "as a strong people set in battle array" (Joel 2:5). It was now easy to entrap them. In their path was sunk a bottomless box, the inside lined with shining tin, up which the locusts could not crawl, while on each side a wing was provided, similarly prepared with a smooth metal face, with the object of directing them into the box.

The fighters now made two long lines, one on each side of the trap. To noise and racket the locusts seemed only to turn a deaf ear ; but a large flag - the darker the better - with which to cast a deep shadow upon the ground, proved to be the most formidable tool one could employ to make them move in the desired direction ; in fact, countless numbers could thus be guided and held in check if one but anticipated the general direction they wished to go (see page 530).

As long as they came in these endless chains, with but a little guiding their ranks could be narrowed and practically driven from morning to night into the sunken box (see page 531). Now and then the trap would have to be emptied ; or if the place the trap was set was to be abandoned in favor of a better position, it was an easy matter when this bottomless box was almost full to raise it out of the ground, leaving the locusts behind in the hole, and then hurriedly bury the contents. It was found by actual test that when thus buried in great masses they quickly died, and in 24 hours would develop into a putrid mass.

As the evening advanced they became sluggish and hard to move, and would crawl under individual stones, such as the fields are full of, or into small piles of rock and the common rubble walls ; but by the morning again instinct would have rejoined them into bands moving together on their plans of destruction.

However, toward the end of their pupa stage their columns became shorter and less constant. They seemed to form into smaller

pillaging groups, with only the acquisition of food in view. Now it became more troublesome to trap them, as they had grown large and wary. Often, after anticipating their course and while sinking the trap into the hard and rocky soil, they would become alarmed and, turning tail, escape in all directions.

TRAPPING THE LOCUSTS

One evening while trapping them on the upper side of the hill we learned just in time that an immense number were just about to enter the property from the opposite side. At once all efforts were turned in this direction, and the trap was sunk into the lower edge of the field toward which they were making; but no sooner had it been set in place than the locusts again changed their course. Notwithstanding the laborious task involved, the trap had to be moved, during which process it was nip and tuck to keep the locusts from escaping. Once, however, they made in the right direction, they jumped, hundreds at a time, into this death trap.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 536: THE locust \(pupa\) just before its final molt and transformation into the full-grown flying insect](#) The large wings of its future state are fully developed and neatly folded up in the four membranous cases, resembling tiny wings (see text, pages 522 and 543)

The evening hours were now upon us; the locusts, weary from being driven and benumbed from the cool breezes, seemed to near the trap exhausted, while those behind kept piling up till the earth for a small space was covered layers deep. To facilitate matters, with spade and rake they were scraped into the trap, now constantly being emptied.

Thus in about an hour's time four large sacks full were caught and destroyed, each containing no less than 100,000 of these insects. Many escaped and made for a near-by thorny patch, on which was now piled more dry sticks and thistles, which when set afire burned alive many thousands more. The above is but an average example showing how and in what quantities they were caught.

To overcome the difficulty of the labor and time required in shifting the sunken trap, Yankee ingenuity again came to the rescue. An old box, tin-lined, was set on top of the ground, with an inclined plane leading up to it. The locusts, which can make ascents so much easier than descents, were driven into it just as easily as into the sunken trap. It was so quickly and easily placed that it proved to be a great success, the only drawback, as with the older type, being the labor of emptying it and the numbers that unavoidably escaped. The next development was a tin hopper set on legs high enough to admit of fastening a sack below. To this the inclined plane was similarly attached. Thus the locusts jumped directly into the bag, which, when full, was readily detached and replaced with another, while the full sacks, not a locust of which could escape, were so handy to carry away for destruction.

After over two weeks' steady and relentless work, after faces were crimson and peeling and hands blackened from wind and sun, the fight to save the fields was given up and efforts concentrated upon protecting our homes and garden plots. Was it a losing fight? The aged fellah who predicted that it was useless to combat "Allah's army" surely would have said it was. From the standpoint of dollars and cents' worth saved to ourselves, it certainly was. But when we calculated the tons' weight and countless numbers of the pests eliminated from the coming stages of disaster, to say nothing of the value of a good example and the engrossing interest in observing their habits and development, we felt that the results more than outweighed the costs and efforts.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 537 - SKELETON WHICH THE LOCUST SHOWN ON THE PRECEDING PAGE LEAVES BEHIND IT AFTER ITS FINAL MOLT.](#)

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 538: DRYING THE WINGS](#) The locust now has its wings in their normal shape and is ready to try to fly. As the new flying locust casts its nymph skin the colors of its body are the most delicate hues, but after a couple of days of flying they deepen into a pronounced red effect.

ESSA'S PARABLES

During the latter stages of the fight Essa had stayed at home protecting a garden from the locusts that by this time were encroaching upon the newer residential sections of Jerusalem. One evening Essa was found perched upon a rubble wall, two flags in hand, mechanically waving off the stubborn intruders. He looked as if he had an attack of something akin to St. Vitus' dance, for having been on the job for about two weeks his motions seemed automatic and almost without effort. Up to that time the locusts had tried to get into our garden only by the back wall, and at the time the writer was ignorant of their fresh efforts from other directions.

"Well, Essa, the Wrestler (for such is his nick-name), are you losing wrestler?" Essa dropped his flags a moment as if to rest, stroked his shaggy beard and adjusted his clumsy headgear, and then added with a twinkle of his small, dark eyes:

"Master, a certain son of evil on a lonely road met a peasant taking to market two large goatskins of oil, and, coveting the superior donkey carrying them, bethought himself of a method by which to get possession of it. Pretending to be anxious to buy the oil, the owner was persuaded to unload the two skins upon the ground and to open one for the supposed customer to see and taste. Once this son of evil had sampled the first skin he got the owner to hold the mouth shut while he should examine its mate. Having done so, he now pretended to wish to retaste the contents of the first skin, for which reason the owner held the second closed

with his other hand. Thus the oil vendor found himself, both hands engaged, squatting between the two skins of oil, while the son of evil rode away on the donkey."

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 539: A PALM FALLING PREY TO THE FULL-GROWN LOCUSTS](#) "Even on the scarce and prized palms they had no pity, gnawing off the tenderer ends of the sword like branches, and, diving deep into the heart, they tunneled after the juicy pith" (see text, page 543).

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 540 - A NYMPH CAMP](#)

Essa smiled and his beady eyes again twinkled. "'You see," he added, "while I am holding the locusts at bay on this west side, they are entering over the south wall, and I am in the same dilemma as the fellah who had both hands occupied holding the oil skins shut, and should he drop them to rescue the don- key the oil would naturally spill."

Visiting Essa the next day, it was observed that half the bean patch had dis- appeared, for despite Essa and our combined efforts the tenderer plants through- out the garden were slowly vanishing. Charring Essa in fun for thus yielding the bean patch to the ravages of so weak a foe, he again stopped his work (few Arabs can work and talk at the same time, the hands being needed to gesticulate with) and answered with a parable, which ran thus :

"A certain hunter secured a living by making shepherds' flutes of bones taken from eagles' wings. One day, being with- out his gun, by chance he stumbled upon a carcass on which a number of eagles were perched, stupefied from overeating. Crawling stealthily up, he seized the legs of the two largest birds. They struggled to escape ; then, flapping their wings, started raising the hunter gently from the ground. Still so riveted were his thoughts upon the eight flutes he was going to make from their bones and the two megedies* (*A megedie is a Turkish dollar, equaling about 83 cents) he would get for each, that he did not realize his danger till too late. Looking down, he now saw the earth slowly receding from below him, when he heard a faint voice from a passer-by saying : 'Let go of one and hold on to one.' He did so, and one eagle, unable alone to sustain his weight, brought him to the earth safely, with one eagle bagged. So you see," Essa drew the lesson, "half a bean patch is better than none, just like the common saying, 'Half a stomach full removes the necessity of having a full one.' "

HAVOC CAUSED BY YOUNG FLYING LOCUSTS

In the early days of June a few scattered locusts of a decided red color were seen about the tree-tops. Some sup- posed them to be a kind of grasshopper, for they were so different in color to the fliers that first came and laid their eggs that it was difficult to detect in them the resemblance to the parents.

On the 10th of June the air all at once was filled with quantities of these new flying locusts, with the thin transparent wings, producing the effect of a large- flaked snow-storm. It was at first hard to realize that these had not, as most sup- posed, flown in from elsewhere, but right under our eyes had been transformed from the small, creeping locusts - a process we shall soon describe {see page 543}.

During the day they kept busily hovering about from tree to tree or alighting on some green patch, while toward evening they settled for the night by myriads upon the olive trees, almost covering them and transforming the dark green foliage into a distinctive red appearance. At once they attacked the small berries, which fell to the ground like hail, along with occasional leaves, and as the fliers wrought destruction above, the creepers devoured what fell below: so that on the trees attacked often not a berry was to be found in the morning.

Up to this time the olive orchards had suffered comparatively little. The creeping locusts had not seemed to care for the tough, bitter leaves while better things were at hand, and as a rule only severely damaged individual trees where other food was scarce. But now that these ravenously hungry, freshly molted fliers appeared, food had already become scarcer, obliging the creepers to seek the heretofore despised olive, crawling up the trunks layers deep. Between the two they stripped every leaf, berry, and even the tender bark, leaving only, where such existed, the green tufts of the poisonous mistletoe.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 542](#) **MAP SHOWING THE REGION OF THE LOCUST PLAGUE WHICH RAVAGED THE ENTIRE LAND FROM "DAN TO BEER-SHEBA"** (SEE PAGE 529)

Likewise every variety of tree was attacked and stripped, with the sole exception of the Persian lilac (*Melia azedar- ach* L.) and oleander bushes (*Nerium oleander* L.). "The succulent cactus (*Opuntia Ficiis-indica* L.) they seemed very fond of, but instead of commencing on the edge of the large leaves, they ate away layer after layer over the whole surface, giving the leaves the effect of having been jack-planed. Even on the scarce and prized palms they had no pity, gnawing off the tenderer ends of the sword-like branches, and, diving deep into the heart, they tunneled after the juicy pith (see page 539).

LAMPS NEVER BEFORE DIM ARE BEING EXTINGUISHED FROM LACK OF OLIVE OIL

Last spring the olive trees were over- loaded with bloom and a fine crop was anticipated. Now the majority of the groves have been

so severely injured as to render them fruitless for several years (see page 534). As last year was the off or bad year, olive oil, usually so plentiful, is now high-priced and almost unprocurable, and being one of the food staples of the poor, taking the place of meat and butter, the loss of this crop, combined with the grapes, no doubt will outweigh, economically and commercially, the destruction caused to all other crops combined.

From days immemorial olive oil in this land has been used as fuel for lighting sacred lamps. Because of the locusts, lamps never before dim, hanging in Christian churches in front of icons and altars, are daily being extinguished, just as the sacrifices of Judah's Temple were unwillingly suspended after the locust devastation described by Joel: "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests : howl, ye ministers of the altar, - for the meat offering and drink offering is withholden from the house of your God" (Joel 1:13KJV).

One bright spot, the only silver lining to the cloud yet seen, was indirectly caused by the annihilation of the grape crop, viz., already "drinks" have doubled in price; so that it is unnecessary with Joel to say, "Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine," because they are already doing it (Joel 1:5).

CHANGING THE NYMPH SKINS

At first the finding of a creeping locust in the act of changing its skin was a distinct novelty, for usually the process was effected during the early hours of the morning (see also page 522).

The pupa now had its entire growth. The large wings of its future state were fully developed and neatly folded up in the four membranous cases, resembling tiny wings (see page 536).

As the pupa neared this last molt it seemed to lose all appetite and seek a refuge from its brother locusts, for reasons we shall later see. To this end dry bushes and trees entirely devastated of any green or locust food were the usual nymph camps, while rubble walls and stone piles often formed substitutes - all such situated in a sunny, warm place (see page 532).

Just as it is about to molt the small body becomes much inflated with air; the bright yellow color of its skin seems to fade away and give place to a somber brownish red, the fact being that the outer skin, just about to be shed, as it loosens from the body, becomes semi-transparent, and we can actually look through it onto the outer skin of the future flier.

As the locust labors to release itself from the old shell, we see the new eyes emerging, leaving behind their old transparent films resembling miniature automobile goggles. With much shoving and pushing, the head alone emerges, the long wings slowly unfold from the sacks containing them, and the entire body, legs and all, drops out of its old shell.

Instead of depending upon a framework of bones within its body to give it the required strength and stiffness, the locust relies upon its tough outer skin, and therefore, now that it has lost its old shell, it cannot be otherwise than limp and soft, so that it has to remain still until the hot sun and dry air have hardened and stiffened it anew.

As the locusts molt and dry they begin to try their wings - first a few feet from the ground, then into the tree-tops, where they spend about two days and nights, and with insatiable appetites build up solidly their frail bodies, till, at some unknown and unheard signal, they fly skyward, collecting like a cloud of dust in a whirlwind, and migrate. Thus every few days, after great numbers have molted, the air all at once would be thickened by the countless numbers leaving the country, while others of the creepers molted and took their places, finally ending in the complete clearance of the land of the pupa.

It was noticed that these new fliers never collected for migration except when a strong west wind was blowing, which therefore carried them due east.

THEY COVERED THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH, SO THAT THE LAND WAS DARKENED

Twice Bedouins from En-gedi, the historic spring situated on the western shores of the Dead Sea, reported that in passing many locusts had fallen into this salt lake and were washed ashore in huge piles, which news, however, lacks confirmation. One thing seems certain from the course they took when leaving here - that they must have been making for the great desert just east of the arable range of Moab.

Similar must have been the case in Joel's experience, for we read from his minute and graphic narrative : "And the Northerner will I remove far from you, and drive him into a land parched and desolate, with his face towards the eastern sea (Dead Sea), and his rear towards the hinder sea (Mediterranean),- then shall come up his ill odor, yea his stench shall ascend" (Joel 2:20).

That Joel depicts faithfully, if not even mildly, the bad smell of the dead locusts, no one who has got even a whiff of their putrid masses can ever doubt. In Nazareth, to which we have before alluded, where so many were crushed to death in the narrow streets, actual observers state that the air for awhile was so putrid and vile as to be almost unbearable

We have before noted that Jericho escaped the ravages of the creeping locusts (see page 533), but now, in passing the Jordan V r

alley, these fliers of recent date came in clouds sufficiently dense to darken the sun and cleared this Jericho oasis of its vegetable gardens and' the leaves from the fruit trees, rendering it for a while as barren as the parched wilderness encircling it. Unlike the rest of the country, where the fliers (not to mention them in the creeping stages) remained for a couple of weeks, here the entire devastation was wrought by two visits lasting but a day or so each, after which diligent search could not produce a single locust.

Similarly, at the time of the Israelitish exodus, they formed one of the most grievous of the Egyptian

"And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, . . . and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt; . . . very grievous were they. . . . For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened ; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees, . . . and there remained not any green thing through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh . . . said I have sinned . . . entreat the Lord, that he may take away from me this death only. . . . And the Lord turned a mighty west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea ; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt" (Ex 10:13-19)-

LOCUST CANNIBALISM

One strange revelation while watching the fascinating insects was to find that, contrary to expectations, locusts are not strictly vegetarians, being especially fond of the taste of flesh of their own kind. While on the usual march, vegetable food being still abundant, it would often be seen that a larger locust would, without provocation or warning, walk up to a smaller one and with one bite nip off one of the long back legs. The victim seemed not to care, unless it happened to be a signal, as usually was the case, for dozens more to pounce on it, consuming the entire insect in a few moments. Sometimes a mightier one happened by and carried off the entire prey to devour by itself.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 545: THE RIVER JORDAN, WHERE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE CROSSED INTO THE PROMISED LAND](#) "One remarkable feature is the variety of soils and climatic conditions under which these eggs were laid. In the Jordan Valley, earth's lowest spot, 1,300 feet below the Mediterranean, we find them deposited on the very banks of this historic river, notably at 'the Ford/ where it is supposed the Children of Israel passed over into Canaan (Josh. 3) ; also farther down toward the Dead Sea, in soil heavily impregnated with alkali, where are the 'slime pits' into which probably, during their retreat, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell when in full flight from Chedorlaomer and his allies" (Gen. 14) (see text, page 516).

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 546: A TYPICAL JERUSALEM STREET SCENE](#) One morning Allie brought on a most gorgeously tinted omelet, when little bpaftord, fixing his astonished eyes on it and hearing that the chickens feeding on locusts were responsible for the change in color, broke out with 'Mama, if we hatched those eggs, would locusts come out with the chicks?' " (see text, page 522)

Similarly scarcely had a locust been hurt or crushed before its fellows would be found fighting over it like dogs with a bone. At times injured locusts would be found eating away at their own bruised bodies, and not uncommon was it to find a locust minus its annuli and entrails, running about seemingly unmindful of its deficiencies.

Nor was the craving for flesh restricted to locusts themselves, for they entered into beehives, and are reported to have spoiled them by eating both bees and honey. They likewise were seen eating ants. Still more remarkable was a story told by a doctor friend who personally treated the case in question. It ran thus : A peasant woman on the plain of Sharon, during the locust pest, employed herself in trying to drive the creeping locusts out of her orchard. She took a tiny baby with her, and laying it in the shade of a tree, proceeded to her work. Returning shortly after, she found the child literally covered with the insects and its eyes already consumed out of the sockets. The writer's little boy also was bitten on the throat by one sufficiently to draw the blood.

LOCUSTS AS HUMAN FOOD

Since in Palestine and Syria locust visitations are very rare, the eating of them is practically unknown by the Arabs, while in Arabia, where the locusts make their appearances frequently, locust flesh is even found among the articles of trade. The natives dismember the insects, pulling off legs and wings, but not the head, and while still alive roast them in a pan over a hot fire; and after being thoroughly dried in the sun, they can be stored away in sacks. The taste is said by them to be akin to that of fish.

In the Levitical law locusts are mentioned among the clean and edible animals, as follows : "These ye may eat, of all creeping things that fly, that go on all fours, such as have legs above their feet to leap therewith (i. e., jointed hind legs). . . . These of them ye may eat : the swarming locust after its kind," etc. (Lev 2:21, 22). It will be recalled that John the Baptist is pictured as in the desert subsisting upon "locusts and wild honey" (Matt. 3:1-4)

LOCUSTS IN ARABIC HISTORY AND FOLK-LORE

In "Hiyat el Hiwan" (Life of the Animals), by Sheik Kamal el Din el Damari, written in the year 773 of the Hegira (560 years ago), we find many a novel anecdote about the locusts, their medical properties, sayings of Mohammed and his caliphs concerning them, with primitive description of the locust itself.

The following are selected quotations from this old writer, translated to preserve, as far as possible, the original author's style: "Jarad (locust, from ujrud, meaning to scrape clean). "When locusts come out of their eggs they are called debbi; when their wings appear they are called gowga, and when the color begins to appear in them, and the males become yellow and the females black, they are termed jarad. They are of different kinds - some large, some small, some red, some yellow, some white. When they want to lay eggs they choose hard places and rocks where cultivation is impossible. It strikes the place with its tail and the place opens, and in there it lays its eggs and here they are hatched and reared. The locust has six legs - two arms in the chest, two supports in the middle, and two legs on the body - and the edges of its legs are two saws. And they are of the animals that are led by a leader, and collect themselves like soldiers, and follow those which go first, whether up or down; and their spittle is pure poison for the plants ; whatsoever it falls on it destroys.*

MADE OF THE SAME CLAY AS ADAM

"It was also said of Omar Ibn el Khat-tabf (may Allah be pleased with him!), when he was caliph (that he said), 'I heard the Sent of Allah (on whom be the blessings of God and peace!) (referring to Mohammed) say that God (to whom be ascribed all honor and glory!) created one thousand nations (multitudes or hosts), six hundred of these on sea and four hundred on land, and the first to be destroyed of these nations are the locusts, and if the locusts are destroyed the (other) nations shall follow.

* Much of the above is quoted by Sheik Kamal el Din from the Koran.

Omar, the second caliph, who in 637 conquered Syria and Palestine and received the keys of Jerusalem.

"The above was translated (explained) by Mehmed Ibn Essa el Abdi (to mean) that the locust was the first to be destroyed because it was created from the clay that was left over from the piece Adam was made of."

According to Tibrani, author of one of the works known as the "Hadith," or oral sayings of Mohammed, the latter is credited with saying, concerning the locusts : "There is written on it 'I am Allah ; there is no other God but me, the Lord of the locusts. I provide for it when I wish and send it to some as a blessing, and to others as a woe when I choose.' "

WRITTEN CHARMS TO KEEP LOCUSTS AWAY

"To keep locusts away from a field the following is used: Take a hollow reed and place in it the following inscription, and bury it in the field or vineyard, and the locusts will not harm the place by Allah's permission : 'Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures, the Most Merciful. Blessing be on our Lord Mohammed, and upon the prophets who are associates with our Lord Mohammed, and say peace. Destroy their little ones, and kill their big ones, and corrupt their eggs, and take away their mouths from our sources of living and from our goods! Thou art the one who answers prayer. I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. There is not an animal but he looks after it. Keep me in the right path. Oh thou above all the merciful ones art the Most Merciful, grant our prayer.'

"This recipe is good and tried. One of the ulama (learned men), whose name at present escapes me, told me that 'if locusts infest a country, and you want to get rid of them by the help of the Almighty God, take four of those locusts and write on each of the four wings of each (locust) four texts from the Holy Book of the Most High God; then take the locusts and let the first go, saying: 'Depart from here; Allah shall suffice you ; he is the all-knowing listener ;' and then the second, saying: Tut a hindrance between them and what they desire;' then the third, saying: 'Depart, may Allah cause your hearts to depart ;' then the fourth, saying '(go) to where you are destined, or, if it so be, to your comrades.' "

The author of "El Maarif (an Arabic Encyclopedia) gives a simpler method of fighting them, and this is found as follows : "If you see locusts advancing towards a village, hide and let none appear, and if they see no one they will pass on, and if anything is burned and it smells the burning, it will not come to that village. And they have said other things beside these."

LOCUSTS IN ARABIAN PROVERBS

"A Bedouin saying is, 'A date is better than a locust.' "

"The enemy came like wide-spread locusts."

"More barren than the locusts" (can make them).

"More noisy than the winged locusts."

"You can't catch him like Avar's locust." (Ayar was roasting a locust and put it to his mouth before it got totally burned, and it got

loose and flew away.)

"To take away freckles, anoint them with the eggs of locusts."

"If one sees locusts in their dreams, it means torment, because locusts were one of the plagues that Moses tormented the Egyptians (with)."

"If you see creepers, then you will meet bad men."

"If locusts fall somewhere and you eat of them, then it means plenty and abundance."

"If you see it in kettles and in (cooking) pots, then you will have lots of money."

"If you see it rain locusts of gold on you, then it means that God will restore to you what has been lost to you, like he did to Job, on whom be peace."

The following is a description of the locust as found in these old Arabic works and which is still commonly repeated by the natives :

"The locust has the form of ten of the...

[SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PICTURE ON PAGE 549](#) **A CIRCUMCISION PROCESSION** Such events are the time for much feasting and joy. The little boy is dressed up and paraded around, riding in front of his father giants of the animal world, weak as he is - face of a mare, eyes of an elephant, neck of a bull, horns of a hart, chest of a lion, stomach of a scorpion, wings of an eagle, thighs of a camel, legs of an ostrich, and tail of a serpent."

A SPEAKING LOCUST

Since the present locust invasion has left the country other cures than those here related have been vouched for. According to an elderly sheik, when the locusts appeared here fifty years ago a certain Persian brought bottles of water with him from his country and suspended them in the two large mosques, and right away black birds, like pigeons, called "Samarmar," collected in endless numbers and miraculously devoured the locusts.

While the winged locusts were still here Aisha brought the news that a native of the Mount of Olives had caught a locust, and as he held it between his fingers it spoke, advising mankind not to fight the locusts; for if they did a worse calamity would befall them ; and so frightened was the peasant that he took it to one of the highest officials, where it repeated what it had previously said, and at once orders were sent out to stop the locust fighting.

It is needless to say that no such orders were ever heard of. Aisha repeated the story to us as if she was ashamed to be found fully believing it, but still as if she was afraid not to, while Abu Baddir stood by and boldly placed himself as thoroughly crediting the tale.

THE FRUITFUL PALM TREK

One morning while watching the fascinating process of a locust molting on the dry twigs of a tree (a once beautiful pomegranate in a corner of the yard), Essa was called to look on, and viewing the process for the first time, he broke out, saying, with many gesticulations : "Subhannk ya Rub" (Thy majesty, Oh Creator!), "Amant b'ism Allah" (I believe on the name of God), etc., etc.

An Occidental present mused on what might happen if these newly winged creatures should remain in the country and lay their eggs. The young larvae would then be here just in time to destroy the coming grain crops, which this year so mercifully escaped. We shuddered at the thought, for not yet had any of them migrated, which they did subsequently, thus allaying such fears.

Essa, no longer able to contain his feelings, broke out with "Don't be foolish! Have you not been told the story of Moses and the black dog? Well, the prophet Moses (on whom be peace) once asked Allah which of all beasts he most despised, and 'the black dog' was the re- ply. Moses, thereupon securing a black dog, removed it into the wilderness where no one passed by and left it chained to a rock. Returning a considerable period later, Moses was surprised to find the dog well and fat, with a pure fountain of water filled with fish, on which it had been subsisting, before it.

"When Moses wondered at the sight, Allah answered : 'Oh Moses, with all life which I have created I have also created the necessary livelihood, and while I despise the black dog, yet will I not allow it to hunger.' " Thus Essa drew an optimistic moral that even should the locusts return, the "Almighty" would provide.

A story is told of an aged man planting a young date palm and of the king passing by and wonderingly questioning the peasant as to his reasons for doing so, as he never could live to see it fruit. The planter replied : "Our fathers planted for their children and we plant for our children," which answer so pleased the king that he ordered 100 gold "dinars" to be given him as a reward. Immediately

the old man said : "See, oh king ! the date palm has already borne fruit." The king, doubly pleased at this second reply, ordered another gift, to which again the old man replied: "See, oh king! this newly planted date slip has already borne two crops."

In like manner Essa's optimism has already borne fruit. A ship loaded with flour, sugar and rice, and a few other edibles has since arrived, sent by kind hearts and hands in America to the needy here, irrespective of creed, color, or religion. Thus the locust evil has been in part mitigated, and undoubtedly the palm tree will still continue to bear fruit.