

“Major Issues in the Minor Prophets”

3) “A destruction from the Almighty”

Joel: living in or near Jerusalem

- An alarm is to be sounded (2:1,15).
- The city is in danger (2:9).
- Joel addresses the inhabitants of Jerusalem (2:23).
- He speaks about the captivity of Judah & Jerusalem ending (3:1), Mount Zion & Jerusalem being delivered (2:32), and Judah & Jerusalem dwelling for ever (3:20).
- NB. Joel does not refer to the Northern Kingdom at all.

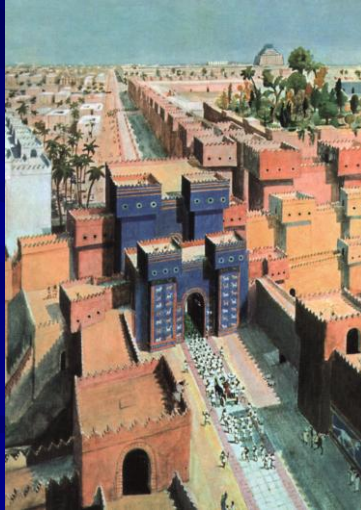
“A great lion” (Joel 1:6)

- “Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones” (Jeremiah 50:17).
- “The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant” (Jeremiah 4:7).
- See also Psalm 57:4.

The Ishtar Gate (Pergamon Museum, Berlin)



Artist's impression of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way



Joel 1:6

- *"A nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion" (Joel 1:6).*
- Probably the looming Babylonian threat.
- In this case the lion would be identified with Jeremiah 4:7 and 50:17.
- Note also Psalm 57:4, where the sharp teeth of the lion represent the arrows and spears of the wicked.



A picture of impending distress

- A strong, lion-like power would invade (1:6).
- The Temple in Jerusalem still existed (2:13,14) and its services were taking place, but they were either beginning to decline, or prophetically would do so in the near future (1:9,16).
- The people were wayward and hypocritical. The plea to turn to the LORD their God, rending their hearts and not their garments (2:12,13), implies outward piety alone – reformation within was urgently needed.
- There was famine (1:9,10,17) and drought (1:18,20).
- All these factors point to a time near to the end of the state of Judah.

Zephaniah and Joel (1)

Zephaniah	Joel
1:2 – “I will utterly consume all things from off the land”	1:10 – “The field is wasted ...the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth”
1:7 – “The day of the LORD is at hand”	1:15 – “The day of the LORD is at hand”
1:14,15 – “The great day of the LORD is near ... a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness”	2:1,2 – “The day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh ... a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness”

Zephaniah and Joel (2)

Zephaniah	Joel
1:16 – “A day of the trumpet and alarm”	2:1 – “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain”
1:18 – “The whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy”	2:3,5 – “A fire devoureth before them ... a flame that devoureth the stubble”
2:1 – “Gather yourselves together”	1:14 – “Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land”
2:7 – “The LORD their God shall visit them and turn away their captivity”	3:1 – “I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem”

Zephaniah and Joel (3)

Zephaniah	Joel
3:8 – “My determination is to gather the nations”	3:2 – “I will also gather all nations”
3:13 – “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity”	2:32 – “The remnant whom the LORD doth call”
3:14 – “Sing, O daughter of Zion ... be glad and rejoice”	2:23 – “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice”

Zephaniah and Joel (4)

Zephaniah	Joel
3:15 – “The LORD is in the midst of thee”	2:27 – “And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God”
3:19 – “I will undo all that afflict thee”	3:8 – “I will sell your sons and your daughters (i.e. those of Judah’s enemy) into the hand of the children of Judah”

Josiah’s reformation (1)

- “And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers” (2 Chronicles 34:33).

Josiah's reformation (2)

- The majority of the people did not share the king's enthusiasm.
- The elders of the land secretly worshipped pagan gods, "every man in the chambers of his imagery" ("every man in the room of his idols", NKJV).
- Zephaniah condemns the princes, judges, prophets and priests (3:3,4) – even the king's children (1:8).
- Jeremiah says that Judah had pretended to turn to God: "Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD" (Jer. 3:10).

Joel 1:4

- Palmerworm: *gazam*
- Locust: *arbeh*
- Cankerworm: *yelek*
- Caterpillar: *chesil*
- The Hebrew in this verse is very abrupt. The *Century Bible* translates as follows:
"Shearer's remnant, swarmer eats, swarmer's remnant, lapper eats, lapper's remnant, devourer eats."

A call to repentance

- Joel 1:5 – “Awake”! The people had been lulled into a false sense of security by the false prophets (see Jeremiah 23:16,17; cp. also 1 Thessalonians 5:7,8; Romans 13:11-13).
- Note the sequence: “awake” (verse 5); “lament” (verse 8); “sanctify a fast” (verses 14,15).
- No half measures: “With *all* your heart ... rend your heart, and not your garments” (Joel 2:12,13).

A wayward people – Zephaniah 1

Idol worship (1:4,5)	“I will cut off the remnant of Baal”
Divided allegiance (1:5)	“That swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham (Molech)” – see Jeremiah 7:8-10
Indifference (1:6,12)	“That have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him”