CHAPTER ONE

WORD STUDIES

The book of Joel does not give us any clear statement concerning its time as is the case in most pre-exilic prophetical books. An investigation of Joel must, therefore, deal very much with the problem of its time using all indications there are in the book as well as external ones. Thus the language of the book must be seriously taken into consideration in order to see whether it can give us some hints about the time Joel delivered his message.

Usually the phenomenon of Aramaisms has been cited as an argument in favor of a late and post-exilic date of the book of Joel. This argument is, however, a dubious one. It ought to be emphasized that what has often been called Aramaisms can more often be understood as dialectical phenomena originally north-Canaanite-Israelite or northwest-Semitic and therefore mostly of an early date. To mention a few examples we can begin with the form הָדַר in 4:11 which one has usually counted to the category of Aramaisms. It should be noted that the verb הָדַר, “go down”, is found in such a text as Psalm 18:35 and its parallel in 2 Sam. 22:35. This psalm is probably pre-exilic and parts of it could indicate a north-Israelite provenance. Further occurrences of the root הָדַר can be found in Pss. 38:3, 65:11, Job 21:13, 17:16, 2 Kings 6:8, Isa. 30:30. The stem is also found in Ugaritic, UT 52:37, 68:11, 18. Thus it would be possible to conclude that this

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2 Cf. H. Holzinger, “Sprachcharakter und Abfassungszeit des Buches Joel”, ZAW 9, 1889, pp. 95 f., K. Marti, Der Prophet Joel (HSAT 3 II), 1910, p. 25. In 4:11 H. W. Wolff prefers to change the text saying that it is very improbable that in this context we should find “eine Rede Jahwes”, Joel (BK XIV:5), 1963, p. 88. We are, however, not told why it is improbable.

particular verb is rather old and cannot be used in a chain of indications for the language in Joel being typically post-exilic.

The same is true of the verb "דוס", "to sigh", Joel 1:18, which also occurs in an Ugaritic text, 2 Agqt 1:18.1 In the Old Testament we found it in Isa. 24:7, Jer. 22:23, Ezek. 9:4, 21:11 f., Prov. 29:2, Lam. 1:4, 8, 11, 21, Ex. 2:23. From this stem we also find a noun, סרויל, which occurs in Pss. 6:7, 31:11, 38:10, 102:6, Job 3:24, 23:2, Isa. 21:2, 35:10, 51:11, Jer. 45:3 and Lam. 1:22. It is evident that not all of these texts can be assigned to the period after the Exile.

The designation of סרויל as a late word of Aramaic origin, Joel 2:20, is argued from its occurrence in 2 Chr. 20:16 and Ec. 3:11, 7:2, 12:13.2 It occurs in the Aramaic part of Daniel in 4:8, 19, 6:27, 7:26, 28. It should be noted, however, that in the Hebrew part of Daniel the term סרויל does not occur at all which makes us understand that סרויל "was by no means pre-dominant in later times".3 In place of the assumed late סרויל the Hebrew part of Daniel uses the term יִסּוֹ, 8:17, 19, 9:25 f., 11:6, 13, 27, 35, 40, 45, 12:4, 6, 9, 13, 13:9. It is doubtful whether, as has been maintained, סרויל must always be understood as an Aramaism for יִסּוֹ.4 As a matter of fact the term יִסּוֹ means the end of something with the understanding that it will cease to exist, a meaning which סרויל also has in Aramaic. The phrase יִסּוֹ כִּלּ דֶּבֶשׁ in Gen. 6:13 does not mean the physical limit of every person but the end, the finish or termination of mankind. There will be no more human beings. The same usage is found in Jer. 51:13—Babel will cease to exist, cf. Ps. 39:5, Lam. 4:18. There is an aspect of time in this term. It can designate the end of an epoch as is shown also by Am. 8:2, Hab. 2:3 and Ezek 7:2 f. and by almost every other usage in the Old Testament, as well as by its occurrences in the DSS and in the Damascus Scroll.5

1 Concerning סרויל Holzinger considered it an old verb of Aramaic origin which via poetry came into use in Hebrew in later times, ZAW 9/89, pp. 91 ff.
2 Thus, for example, Holzinger, Bewer (ICC 26, p. 57), Sellin (SKAT XII:1, p. 166), Wolff.
3 Kapelrud, Joel Studies, p. 112.
4 Cf. Gesenius-Buhl and Köhler-Baumgartner.