CHAPTER FOUR

JOEL’S USE OF SCRIPTURE IN 3:1-4:21

Eschatological Announcements of Salvation in Zion at the Coming of the Day of the Lord

4.1. Introduction to Joel 3-4

The intertextual hermeneutics of this chapter are systemically connected with the previous one (2:18-27) through Yahweh’s covenantal constituency with his people and land. This unit looks at the function of scripture’s resignification from a proto-apocalyptic perspective of the DOL (4:9-17). On either side of this topic Joel inserts two eras, which are the pneumatic Zwischenzeit in 3:1-5 and the paradisiacal Urzeit-Endzeit era of Yahweh’s dwelling in Zion in 4:18-21. It is within these three spheres of eschatological time that the scripture’s second voice is examined.

The focus of this section is Joel’s second liturgical Erkenntnisformel (3:1-4:17), together with the paradisiacal era which follows (4:18-21). The temple, as Yahweh’s Wohnort, unites the two sections through the topic of the DOL. Below is an overview of the themes and structures of chs. 3-4. Exploring this material facilitates the proper understanding of the context in which Joel situates his use of scripture.

Chapter 3 marks a significant transition point in the Jahwerede. The function of the chronological notation (יהשך) is to shift the focus onto the topic of the Day of Yahweh. The material that follows separates Yahweh’s speech conceptually in terms of its eschatological horizon. Joel begins the second half of his book with a bifurcated introductory answer to the people’s laments (2:18-20). This deals with the reversal of the locust and drought plagues in v. 18-19a, and also the reversal of the DOL threat in v. 19b-20. This latter topic is now taken up in 3:1 ff., which is the second Erkenntnisformel, bringing to a close the announcement of salvation.1 The Gattung of

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this portion of the book (3:1-4:17) is properly understood to be a
Heilsankündigung, because it pertains to the distant future. The differ-
centation between the two types of oracles in 2:21-27 (Heilsverheißung)
and 3:1-4:17 shows that the conjunctive formula (יְאִירֵהַ יְהוֹ הָאָדָم) is
meant to be understood as both a temporal (Zwischenzeit) and topical
(eschatological DOL) transition point (chronoptope) in Joel’s second
two-staged Erkenntnisformel. This announcement of salvation follows
with five discernible units in 3:1, 4:1-3, 4:4-8, 4:9-17, and 4:18-21.

Chapter 3 is a clearly defined unit covering three topics. The
phrase: יְאִירֵהַ יְהוֹ הָאָדָמ in 3:1 functions as a chronological
formula that begins the second half of Yahweh’s oracle. This unit announces
an eschatological Zwischenzeit before the Day of Yahweh, in which
every member of Israelite society becomes a vessel of pneumatic
revelation. The second part underscores that this pneumatological era
precedes the Day of Yahweh. It is marked by cosmological portents
in the sun, moon and heavens, which presage Yahweh’s theophanic
approach preceding the DOL. The third section is centralized around
a Zitationsformel from Obadiah, concerning Yahweh’s deliverance of
Zion in conjunction with a confession formula of Yahweh’s name
(יְאִירֵהַ יְהוֹ הָאָדָמ).

The second unit in 4:1-3 begins with another chronologi-
cal notation formula that is made to parallel the previous unit
(אָרְבָּא בִּיהוָה יִהְיֶהוֹ הָאָדָם). The phrase is an eschatological for-
formula that Joel has adapted to his pneumatic Zwischenzeit, which deals
with the time frame set out in 3:1-5. This unit describes Yahweh’s
gathering of the nations to Jerusalem for judgment, because of their
enslavement and abuse of his people.

The third unit is an oracle against three nations in vv. 4-8. It
announces the imminent destruction of Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia.

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2 See Westermann, Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament, 103, 42. See
also Bergler, Joel als Schriftinterpret, 88-89.
3 Ahlström, Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem, 85.