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 (דָּבָר עָתָנוּ הָיָה חָרְבֵּה) 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

this portion of the book (3:1-4:17) is properly understood to be a *Heilsankündigung*, because it pertains to the distant future.\(^2\) The differentiation between the two types of oracles in 2:21-27 (*Heilsverheißung*) and 3:1-4:17 shows that the conjunctive formula (יִתְנַחֲמֵם אֶל יְהוָה) is meant to be understood as both a temporal (*Zwischenzeit*) and topical (eschatological DOL) transition point (chronooptope) 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: יִתְנַחֲמֵם אֶל יְהוָה 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.\(^3\) 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 (יִתְנַחֲמֵם אֶל יְהוָה סָרַד בְּכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל יָמֵי יְהוָה). The second unit in 4:1-3 begins with another chronological notation formula that is made to parallel the previous unit (יִתְנַחֲמֵם אֶל יְהוָה). The phrase is an eschatological 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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\(^3\) Ahlström, *Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem*, 85.