1 The word of the LORD which came to Joel son of Pethuel.

The day of the LORD

2 Listen, you elders; hear me, all you who live in the land: has the like of this happened in all your days or in your fathers’ days? Tell it to your sons and they may tell theirs; let them pass it on from generation to generation.

3 What the locust has left the swarm eats, what the swarm has left the hopper eats, and what the hopper has left the grub eats.

4 Wake up, you drunkards, and lament your fate; mourn for the fresh wine, all you wine-drinkers, because it is lost to you.

5 For a horde has overrun my land, mighty and past counting; their teeth are a lion’s teeth, they have the fangs of a lioness.

6 They have ruined my vines and left my fig-trees broken and leafless, they have plucked them bare and stripped them of their bark; they have left the branches white.

7 Wail like a virgin wife in sackcloth, wailing over the bridegroom of her youth: the drink-offering and grain-offering are lost to the house of the LORD.

Mourn, you priests, ministers of the LORD, the fields are ruined, the parched earth mourns; for the corn is ruined, the new wine is desperate, the oil has failed.

9 Despair, you husbandmen; you vinedressers, lament, because the wheat and the barley, the harvest of the field, is lost.

10 The vintage is desperate, and the fig-tree has failed; pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the country-side are parched, and none make merry over harvest.

11 Priests, put on sackcloth and beat your breasts; lament, you ministers of the altar;
come, lie in sackcloth all night long, you ministers of my God;
for grain-offering and drink-offering
are withheld from the house of your God.
14Proclaim a solemn fast, appoint a day of abstinence.
You elders, summon all that live in the land
to come together in the house of your God,
and cry to the LORD.
15Alas! the day is near,
the day of the LORD: it comes,
a mighty destruction from the Almighty.
16Look! it stares us in the face;
the house of our God has lost its food,
lost all its joy and gladness.
17The soil is parched,
the dykes are dry,
the granaries are deserted,
the barns ruinous;
for the rains have failed.
18The cattle are exhausted,
the herds of oxen distressed
because they have no pasture;
the flocks of sheep waste away.
19To thee I cry, O LORD;
for fire has devoured the open pastures
and the flames have burnt up all the trees of the country-side.
20The very cattle in the field look up to thee;
for the water-channels are dried up,
and fire has devoured the open pastures.

21Blow the trumpet in Zion,
sound the alarm upon my holy hill;
let all that live in the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD has come,
surely a day of darkness and gloom is upon us,
a day of cloud and dense fog;
like a blackness spread over the mountains
a mighty, countless host appears;
their like has never been known,
nor ever shall be in ages to come;
3their vanguard a devouring fire,
their rearguard leaping flame;
before them the land is a garden of Eden,
behind them a wasted wilderness;
nothing survives their march.
4On they come, like squadrons of horse,
like war-horses they charge;
5bounding over the peaks they advance with the rattle of chariots,
like flames of fire burning up the stubble,
like a countless host in battle array.
6 Before them nations tremble, 
every face turns pale.
7 Like warriors they charge, 
they mount the walls like men at arms, 
each marching in line, 
no confusion in the ranks,
8 none jostling his neighbour, 
none breaking line. 
They plunge through streams without halting their advance; 
9 they burst into the city, leap on to the wall, 
climb into the houses, 
entering like thieves through the windows.
10 Before them the earth shakes, 
the heavens shudder, 
sun and moon are darkened, 
and the stars forbear to shine.
11 The LORD thunders before his host; 
his is a mighty army, 
countless are those who do his bidding. 
Great is the day of the LORD and terrible, 
who can endure it?
12 And yet, the LORD says, even now 
turn back to me with your whole heart, 
fast, and weep, and beat your breasts.
13 Rend your hearts and not your garments; 
turn back to the LORD your God; 
for he is gracious and compassionate, 
long-suffering and ever constant, 
always ready to repent of the threatened evil,
14 It may be he will turn back and repent 
and leave a blessing behind him, 
blessing enough for grain-offering and drink-offering 
for the LORD your God.

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, 
proclaim a solemn fast, appoint a day of abstinence; 
16 gather the people together, proclaim a solemn assembly; 
summon the elders, 
gather the children, yes, babes at the breast; 
bid the bridegroom leave his chamber and the bride her bower.
17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, 
stand weeping between the porch and the altar and say, ‘Spare thy people, O LORD, thy own people, 
expose them not to reproach, 
lest other nations make them a byword and everywhere men ask, 
“Where is their God?”’
Then the LORD’s love burned with zeal for his land, and he was moved with compassion for his people. He answered their appeal and said, I will send you corn, and new wine, and oil, and you shall have your fill; I will expose you no longer to the reproach of other nations. I will remove the northern peril far away from you and banish them into a land parched and waste, their vanguard into the eastern sea and their rear into the western, and the stench shall rise from their rotting corpses because of their proud deeds! Earth, be not afraid, rejoice and be glad; for the LORD himself has done a proud deed. Be not afraid, you cattle in the field; for the pastures shall be green, the trees shall bear fruit, the fig and the vine yield their harvest. O people of Zion, rejoice and be glad in the LORD your God, who gives you good food in due measure [Or gives you a sign pointing to prosperity] and sends down rain [prob. rdg, Heb adds spring rain and autumn rain] as of old. The threshing-floors shall be heaped with grain, the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. So I will make good the years that the swarm has eaten, hopper and grub and locust, my great army which I sent against you; and you shall eat, you shall eat your fill and praise the name of the LORD your God who has done wonders for you [prob. rdg, Heb adds and my people shall not again be brought to shame (cp v27)], and you shall know that I am present in Israel, that I and no other am the LORD your God; and my people shall not again be brought to shame. Thereafter the day shall come when I will pour out my spirit on all mankind; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men see visions; I will pour out my spirit in those days even upon slaves and slave-girls. I will show portents in the sky and on earth,
blood and fire and columns of smoke;
and the sun shall be turned into darkness
before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

32 Then everyone who invokes the LORD by name
shall be saved,
for when the LORD gives the word
there shall yet be survivors on Mount Zion
and in Jerusalem a remnant [a remnant: prob. rdg, Heb among the remnant]
whom the LORD will call [Or when the LORD calls].

31 When that time comes, on that day
when I reverse the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,
I will gather all the nations together
and lead them down to the Valley of the LORD’s Judgement
and there bring them to judgement
on behalf of Israel, my own possession;
for they have scattered my people
throughout their own countries,
have taken each their portion of my land
and shared out my people by lot,
bartered a boy for a whore,
and sold a girl for wine and drunk it down.

What are you to me, Tyre and Sidon and all the districts of Philistia? Can you pay me back for anything I have done? Is there anything that you can do to me? Swiftly and speedily I will make your deeds recoil upon your own heads; 5 for you have taken my silver and my gold and carried off my costly treasures into your temples; 6 you have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, and removed them far beyond their own frontiers. 7 But I will rouse them to leave the places to which you have sold them. I will make your deeds recoil upon your own heads: 8 I will sell your sons and your daughters to the people of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabaeans, a nation far away. The LORD has spoken.

9-12 [The order of lines in vv9-12 has been re-arranged in several places] Proclaim this amongst the nations:
Declare a holy war, call your troops to arms!
Beat your mattocks into swords
and your pruning-hooks into spears [Beat ... spears: cp Isa. 2.4; Mic. 4.3].
Rally to each other’s help, all you nations round about.
Let the weakling say, ‘I am strong’,
and let the coward show himself brave [and let ... brave: prob. rdg, Heb O LORD bring down thy warriors].
Let all the nations hear the call to arms
and come to the Valley of the LORD’s Judgement;
let all the warriors come and draw near
and muster there;
for there I will take my seat
and judge all the nations round about.

13Ply the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, tread the grapes, for the press is full and the vats overflow; great is the wickedness of the nations.
14The roar of multitudes, multitudes, in the Valley of Decision! The day of the LORD is at hand in the Valley of Decision;
15sun and moon are darkened and the stars forbear to shine.
16The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; heaven and earth shudder, but the LORD is a refuge for his people and the defence of Israel.

17Thus you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain; Jerusalem shall be holy, and no one without the right shall pass through her again.
18When that day comes, the mountains shall run with fresh wine and the hills flow with milk. All the streams of Judah shall be full of water, and a fountain shall spring from the LORD’s house and water the gorge of Shittim,
19but Egypt shall become a desert and Edom a deserted waste, because of the violence done to Judah and the innocent blood shed in her land;
20-21and I will spill their blood, the blood I have not yet spilt. Then there shall be people living in Judah for ever, in Jerusalem generation after generation; and the LORD will dwell in Zion.