Title: From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel

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Abstract: This dissertation examines Joel through the lens of rhetorical criticism and seeks to demonstrate that Joel is a unified work of prophetic literature that moves from scenes of devastation to promises of restoration through its persuasive evocation of divine and human responses in order to articulate the necessity of calling and relying upon YHWH in all circumstances. This study orientates itself in the broader context of Joel studies before examining rhetorical critical methodologies. This study discusses the model of George A. Kennedy and Karl Moller and proposes modifications so that it will better engage with the rhetoric of Joel. This dissertation then seeks to apply Kennedy's and Moller's model in a detailed study of Joel. The body of this study considers different text units within Joel, discussing how the text constructs the rhetorical situations into which it places its persuasive strategies. This dissertation then considers the potential effectiveness of these strategies in their situations. It traces how Joel uses a series of crises in order to persuade the text's implied audience that its only hope is found in crying out to YHWH amidst desperate circumstances. This leads to the consideration of the gap between Joel 2:17, 18, where the tenor of the text changes from devastation to restoration secured by the powerful actions of YHWH. This study notes how the latter half of Joel evokes restorative responses from YHWH culminating in the promise of YHWH's protective presence in Zion, which should further persuade the implied audience that it ought to heed the text's appeal to cry out to YHWH. This dissertation concludes with a summary of the persuasive elements of the individual rhetorical units within Joel, while also considering the rhetorical trajectory of Joel as a literary whole. It then offers suggestions for further rhetorical study of prophetic literature.

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