

Joel 2:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

Analysis

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God (Hebrew *uvnei-Tsiyyon giluv vesimchu baYHWH Eloheikhem*)—after addressing land (v. 21) and animals (v. 22), Joel turns to people. The phrase "children of Zion" designates covenant community members, those identified with Jerusalem, God's dwelling place. The dual command *giluv vesimchu* (גִּלוּ וְשִׂמְחוּ, "be glad and rejoice") intensifies joyful response. Critically, joy is directed "in the LORD your God" (*baYHWH Eloheikhem*)—not merely in blessings received but in the Giver Himself. True joy finds its source in God's character, not circumstances.

For he hath given you the former rain moderately (Hebrew *ki-natan lakhem et-hammorah litsdaqah*)—this phrase is notoriously difficult to translate. *Moreh* (מורה) can mean "early rain," "teacher," or "righteousness." *Litsdaqah* (לִצְדָּקָה) means "for/according to righteousness." Possible translations:

1. "the early rain for righteousness" (fulfilling covenant promises)
2. "a teacher for righteousness" (possibly messianic—Joel shifting from agricultural to spiritual restoration)
3. "the former rain in due measure/moderation" (KJV).

Each interpretation enriches understanding: God sends rain according to righteousness (covenant faithfulness), provides teaching, and gives measured

blessing.

And he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month—the yoreh (יֹרֵחַ, early/former rain, October-November) and malqosh (מַלְקוֹשׁ, latter/spring rain, March-April) were essential for agriculture. Early rain softened soil for plowing and planting; latter rain matured crops before harvest. Their coming "in the first month" suggests abundance and perfect timing. James 5:7 uses this imagery: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." The agricultural imagery points to spiritual outpouring—the early rain at Pentecost, the latter rain before Christ's return.

Historical Context

Palestine's agriculture depended entirely on seasonal rainfall. No river systems like Egypt's Nile or Mesopotamia's Tigris-Euphrates provided irrigation. Deuteronomy 11:10-14 contrasts Egypt (watered by foot, i.e., irrigation) with the Promised Land (watered by rain from heaven). This made Israel utterly dependent on God for rain—a designed dependency teaching covenant faithfulness. Withholding rain was explicit covenant curse (Deuteronomy 11:17, 28:23-24, 1 Kings 17:1, Amos 4:7). Restoration of rain fulfilled covenant blessing promises (Leviticus 26:4, Deuteronomy 11:14, 28:12).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Joel's command to rejoice "in the LORD your God" rather than merely in blessings challenge shallow gratitude?
2. What does the dual imagery of physical rain and spiritual teaching reveal about God's comprehensive care for both material and spiritual needs?
3. How does understanding dependence on God for rain (beyond human control) apply to modern self-sufficient cultures?

Interlinear Text

וְכֵן י' then ye children H1121	צִיּוֹן of Zion H6726	גִּילוֹ Be glad H1523	וְשִׂמְחוּ and rejoice H8055	בַּיהוָה in the LORD H3068	אֱלֹהֵיכֶם your God H430	כִּי H3588
נָתַן for he hath given H5414	לְכֶם H0	אֶת H853	מִזְרָה the former rain H4175	לְצִדְקָה moderately H6666		
וַיֹּדֶד and he will cause to come down H3381		לְכֶם H0	גִּשְׁמֵם for you the rain H1653	מִזְרָה the former rain H4175		
וְיִמְלֵק and the latter rain H4456	בְּרִאשֹׁן in the first H7223					

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 26:4 (Parallel theme): Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

Philippians 4:4 (References Lord): Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

Hosea 6:3 (References Lord): Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

Deuteronomy 11:14 (Parallel theme): That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

Isaiah 41:16 (References Lord): Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

Psalms 149:2 (Parallel theme): Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Zechariah 10:1 (References Lord): Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

Philippians 3:1 (References Lord): Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

Psalms 28:7 (References Lord): The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Isaiah 30:23 (Parallel theme): Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.