

# Zephaniah

## Introduction

**1:1** This is the prophetic message that the LORD gave to<sup>1</sup> Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah. Zephaniah delivered this message during the reign of<sup>2</sup> King Josiah son of Amon of Judah:

## The Lord's Day of Judgment is Approaching

**1:2** "I will destroy<sup>3</sup> everything from the face of the earth," says the LORD.

**1:3** "I will destroy people and animals; I will destroy the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea.

(The idolatrous images of these creatures will be destroyed along with evil people.)<sup>4</sup>

I will remove<sup>5</sup> humanity from the face of the earth," says the LORD.

**1:4** "I will attack<sup>6</sup> Judah and all who live in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

I will remove<sup>8</sup> from this place every trace of Baal worship,<sup>9</sup>

as well as the very memory<sup>10</sup> of the pagan priests.<sup>11</sup>

**1:5** I will remove<sup>12</sup> those who worship the stars in the sky from their rooftops,<sup>13</sup> those who swear allegiance to the LORD<sup>14</sup> while taking oaths in the name of<sup>15</sup> their 'king,'<sup>16</sup>

**1:6** and those who turn their backs on<sup>17</sup> the LORD and do not want the LORD's help or guidance."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* "name." Here the "name" is figurative for the memory of those who bear it.

<sup>11</sup> **tc** *Heb* "of the pagan priests and priests." The first word (בְּקָרִים, *k<sup>o</sup>marim*) refers to idolatrous priests in its two other appearances in the OT (2 Kgs 23:5, Hos 10:5), while the second word (בְּהִנִּים, *kohanim*) is the normal term for "priest" and is used of both legitimate and illegitimate priests in the OT. It is likely that the second term, which is omitted in the LXX, is a later scribal addition to the Hebrew text, defining the extremely rare word that precedes (see J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* [OTL], 167-68; cf. also NEB, NRSV). Some argue that both words are original; among the modern English versions that include both are NASB and NIV. Possibly the first word refers to outright pagan priests, while the second has in view once-legitimate priests of the Lord who had drifted into idolatrous practices. Another option is found in Adele Berlin, who translates, "the idolatrous priests among the priests," understanding the second word as giving the general category of which the idolatrous priests are a part (*Zephaniah* [AB 25A], 75).

<sup>12</sup> **tn** The words "I will remove" are repeated from v. 4b for stylistic reasons. In the Hebrew text vv. 4b-6 contain a long list of objects for the verb "I will remove" in v. 4b. In the present translation a new sentence was begun at the beginning of v. 5 in keeping with the tendency of contemporary English to use shorter sentences.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* "those who worship on their roofs the host of heaven." The "host of heaven" included the sun, moon, planets, and stars, all of which were deified in the ancient Near East.

<sup>14</sup> **tc** The MT reads, "those who worship, those who swear allegiance to the LORD." The original form of the LXX omits the phrase "those who worship"; it may have been accidentally repeated from the preceding line. J. J. M. Roberts prefers to delete as secondary the phrase "those who swear allegiance" (J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* [OTL], 168).

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* "those who swear by."

<sup>16</sup> **tn** The referent of "their king" is unclear. It may refer sarcastically to a pagan god (perhaps Baal) worshiped by the people. Some English versions (cf. NEB, NASB, NRSV) prefer to emend the text to "Milcom," the name of an Ammonite god (following some LXX mss, Syriac, and Vulgate) or "Molech," a god to whom the Israelites offered their children (cf. NIV, NLT). For a discussion of the options, see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A), 75-77.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* "turn back from [following] after."

<sup>18</sup> **tn** *Heb* "who do not seek the LORD and do not inquire of him." The present translation assumes the first verb refers to praying for divine help and the second to seeking his revealed will through an oracle. Note the usage of the two verbs in 2 Chr 20:3-4.

<sup>1</sup> **tn** *Heb* "The word of the LORD which came to."

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "in the days of." The words "Zephaniah delivered this message" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** The Hebrew text combines the infinitive absolute of אָסַף (*asaf*, "gather up, sweep away") with a Hiphil prefixed first person form of סִיף (*suf*, "come to an end"; see Jer 8:13 for the same combination). This can be translated literally, "Sweeping away, I will bring to an end." Some prefer to emend the text so that the infinitive and finite form of the verb are from the same root ("I will certainly sweep away," if from אָסַף [cf. NEB, NIV, NRSV]; "I will certainly bring to an end," if from סִיף). For a discussion of proposals see J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 167, 169.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* "And the stumbling blocks [or, "ruins"] with the evil"; or "the things that make the evil stumble." The line does not appear in the original form of the LXX; it may be a later scribal addition. The present translation assumes the "stumbling blocks" are idolatrous images of animals, birds, and fish. See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 167, and Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB), 73-74.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* "cut off."

<sup>6</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will stretch out my hand against," is an idiom for hostile action.

<sup>7</sup> **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* "cut off."

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the remnant of Baal."

1:7 Be silent before the Lord God,<sup>1</sup> for the LORD's day of judgment<sup>2</sup> is almost here.<sup>3</sup>

The LORD has prepared a sacrificial meal;<sup>4</sup>

he has ritually purified<sup>5</sup> his guests.

1:8 "On the day of the LORD's sacrificial meal,

I will punish the princes<sup>6</sup> and the king's sons,

and all who wear foreign styles of clothing.<sup>7</sup>

1:9 On that day I will punish all who leap over the threshold,<sup>8</sup>

who fill the house of their master<sup>9</sup> with wealth taken by violence and deceit.<sup>10</sup>

1:10 On that day," says the LORD, "a loud cry will go up<sup>11</sup> from the Fish Gate,<sup>12</sup>

wailing from the city's newer district,<sup>13</sup> and a loud crash<sup>14</sup> from the hills.

1:11 Wail, you who live in the market district,<sup>15</sup>

for all the merchants<sup>16</sup> will disappear<sup>17</sup> and those who count money<sup>18</sup> will be removed.<sup>19</sup>

1:12 At that time I will search through Jerusalem with lamps.

I will punish the people who are entrenched in their sin,<sup>20</sup>

those who think to themselves,<sup>21</sup>

"The LORD neither rewards nor punishes."<sup>22</sup>

1:13 Their wealth will be stolen and their houses ruined!

They will not live in the houses they have built,

nor will they drink the wine from the vineyards they have planted.

1:14 The LORD's great day of judgment<sup>23</sup> is almost here;

it is approaching very rapidly!

There will be a bitter sound on the LORD's day of judgment;

at that time warriors will cry out in battle.<sup>24</sup>

1:15 That day will be a day of God's anger,<sup>25</sup>

a day of distress and hardship,

a day of devastation and ruin,

a day of darkness and gloom,

a day of clouds and dark skies,

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Heb "Lord LORD." The phrase אֲדֹנָי יְיָהוָה (*'adonay yehyvh*) is customarily rendered by Jewish tradition as "Lord God."

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Heb "the day of the LORD."

**sn** The origin of the concept of "the day of the LORD" is uncertain. It may have originated in the ancient Near Eastern idea of the sovereign's day of conquest, where a king would boast that he had concluded an entire military campaign in a single day (see D. Stuart, "The Sovereign's Day of Conquest," *BA-SOR* 221 [1976]: 159-64). In the OT the expression is applied to several acts of divine judgment, some historical and others still future (see A. J. Everson, "The Days of Yahweh," *JBL* 93 [1974]: 329-37). In the OT the phrase first appears in Amos (assuming that Amos predates Joel and Obadiah), where it seems to refer to a belief on the part of the northern kingdom that God would intervene on Israel's behalf and judge the nation's enemies. Amos affirms that the Lord's day of judgment is indeed approaching, but he declares that it will be a day of disaster, not deliverance, for Israel. Here in Zephaniah, the "day of the Lord" includes God's coming judgment of Judah, as well as a more universal outpouring of divine anger.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Or "near."

<sup>4</sup> **tn** Heb "a sacrifice." This same word also occurs in the following verse.

**sn** Because a *sacrificial meal* presupposes the slaughter of animals, it is used here as a metaphor of the bloody judgment to come.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Or "consecrated" (ASV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV).

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Or "officials" (NRSV, TEV); NLT "leaders."

<sup>7</sup> **sn** The very dress of the royal court, *foreign styles of clothing*, revealed the degree to which Judah had assimilated foreign customs.

<sup>8</sup> **sn** The point of the statement *all who hop over the threshold* is unclear. A ritual or superstition associated with the Philistine god Dagon may be in view (see 1 Sam 5:5).

<sup>9</sup> **tn** The referent of "their master" is unclear. The king or a pagan god may be in view.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Heb "who fill...with violence and deceit." The expression "violence and deceit" refers metonymically to the wealth taken by oppressive measures.

<sup>11</sup> **tn** The words "will go up" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>12</sup> **sn** The *Fish Gate* was located on Jerusalem's north side (cf. 2 Chr 33:14; Neh 3:3; 12:39).

<sup>13</sup> **tn** Heb "from the second area." This may refer to an area northwest of the temple where the rich lived (see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* [AB 25A], 86; cf. NASB, NRSV "the Second Quarter"; NIV "the New Quarter").

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Heb "great breaking."

<sup>15</sup> **tn** Heb "in the Mortar." The Hebrew term מַכְתֵּשׁ (*makhtesh*, "mortar") is apparently here the name of a low-lying area where economic activity took place.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** Or perhaps "Canaanites." Cf. BDB 489 s.v. I and II מַכְתֵּשׁ. Translators have rendered the term either as "the merchant people" (KJV, NKJV), "the traders" (NRSV), "merchants" (NEB, NIV), or, alternatively, "the people of Canaan" (NASB).

<sup>17</sup> **tn** Or "be destroyed."

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Heb "weigh out silver."

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Heb "be cut off." In the Hebrew text of v. 11b the perfect verbal forms emphasize the certainty of the judgment, speaking of it as if it were already accomplished.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Heb "who thicken on their sediment." The imagery comes from wine making, where the wine, if allowed to remain on the sediment too long, will thicken into syrup. The image suggests that the people described here were complacent in their sinful behavior and interpreted the delay in judgment as divine apathy.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** Heb "who say in their hearts."

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Heb "The LORD does not do good nor does he do evil."

<sup>23</sup> **tn** Heb "The great day of the LORD." The words "of judgment" are supplied in the translation here and later in this verse for clarity. See the note on the expression "day of judgment" in v. 7.

<sup>24</sup> **tn** Heb "the sound of the day of the LORD, bitter [is] one crying out there, a warrior." The present translation does four things: (1) It takes מָר (*mar*, "bitter") with what precedes (contrary to the accentuation of the MT). (2) It understands the participle צָרַח (*sarakh*, "cry out in battle") as verbal with "warrior" as its subject. (3) It takes שָׁם (*sham*, "there") in a temporal sense, meaning "then, at that time." (4) It understands "warrior" as collective.

<sup>25</sup> **tn** Heb "a day of wrath." The word "God's" is supplied in the translation for clarification.

1:16 a day of trumpet blasts<sup>1</sup> and battle cries.<sup>2</sup> Judgment will fall on<sup>3</sup> the fortified cities and the high corner towers.

1:17 I will bring distress on the people<sup>4</sup> and they will stumble<sup>5</sup> like blind men, for they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dirt; their flesh<sup>6</sup> will be scattered<sup>7</sup> like manure. 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's angry judgment. The whole earth<sup>8</sup> will be consumed by his fiery wrath.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed,<sup>10</sup> he will bring terrifying destruction<sup>11</sup> on all who live on the earth.<sup>12</sup>

### The Prophet Warns the People

2:1 Bunch yourselves together like straw,<sup>13</sup> you undesirable<sup>14</sup> nation,  
2:2 before God's decree becomes reality<sup>15</sup> and the day of opportunity disappears like windblown chaff,<sup>16</sup>

before the LORD's raging anger<sup>17</sup> overtakes<sup>18</sup> you – before the day of the LORD's angry judgment overtakes you!  
2:3 Seek the LORD's favor,<sup>19</sup> all you humble people<sup>20</sup> of the land who have obeyed his commands!<sup>21</sup> Strive to do what is right!<sup>22</sup> Strive to be humble!<sup>23</sup> Maybe you will be protected<sup>24</sup> on the day of the LORD's angry judgment.

### Judgment on Surrounding Nations

2:4 Indeed,<sup>25</sup> Gaza will be deserted<sup>26</sup> and Ashkelon will become a heap of ruins.<sup>27</sup> Invaders will drive away the people of Ashdod by noon,<sup>28</sup> and Ekron will be overthrown.<sup>29</sup> 2:5 Those who live by the sea, the people who came from Crete,<sup>30</sup> are as good as dead.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>1</sup> tn Heb "a ram's horn." By metonymy the Hebrew text mentions the trumpet ("ram's horn") in place of the sound it produces ("trumpet blasts").

<sup>2</sup> sn This description of the day of the LORD consists of an initial reference to *anger*, followed by four pairs of synonyms. The joining of synonyms in this way emphasizes the degree of the characteristic being described. The first two pairs focus on the *distress* and *ruin* that judgment will bring; the second two pairs picture this day of judgment as being very dark (*darkness*) and exceedingly overcast (*gloom*). The description concludes with the pairing of two familiar battle sounds, the blast on the ram's horn (*trumpet blasts*) and the war cries of the warriors (*battle cries*).

<sup>3</sup> tn Heb "against." The words "judgment will fall" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>4</sup> tn "The people" refers to mankind in general (see vv. 2-3) or more specifically to the residents of Judah (see vv. 4-13).

<sup>5</sup> tn Heb "walk."

<sup>6</sup> tn Some take the referent of "flesh" to be more specific here; cf. NEB ("bowels"), NAB ("brains"), NIV ("entrails").

<sup>7</sup> tn The words "will be scattered" are supplied in the translation for clarity based on the parallelism with "will be poured out" in the previous line.

<sup>8</sup> tn Or "land" (cf. NEB). This same word also occurs at the end of the present verse.

<sup>9</sup> tn Or "passion"; traditionally, "jealousy."

<sup>10</sup> tn Or "for."

<sup>11</sup> tn Heb "complete destruction, even terror, he will make."

<sup>12</sup> tn It is not certain where the LORD's words end and the prophet's words begin. It is possible that Zephaniah begins speaking in the middle of v. 17 or at the beginning of v. 18 (note the third person pronouns referring to the LORD).

<sup>13</sup> tn The Hebrew text combines a Hitpolel imperative of קָשַׁשׁ (*qashash*) with a Qal imperative of the same root. Elsewhere this root appears in the *poel* stem with the meaning "gather stubble." Zephaniah's command is ironic, implying the people are like stubble or straw. As such, they are vulnerable to the LORD's fiery judgment that will quickly consume them (see 1:18). See Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A), 96.

<sup>14</sup> tn Some relate this word to an Aramaic cognate meaning "to be ashamed." With the negative particle it would then mean "unashamed" (cf. NIV "shameful"; NRSV "shameless"). However, elsewhere in biblical Hebrew the verb means "to desire," or with the negative particle "undesirable." Cf. also NEB "unruly."

<sup>15</sup> tn Heb "before the giving birth of a decree." For various alternative readings, see J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 187-88.

<sup>16</sup> tn The second half of the line reads literally, "like chaff it

passes by a day." The translation above assumes the "day" is the brief time God is giving the nation to repent. The comparison of this quickly passing opportunity to chaff is consistent with the straw imagery of v. 1.

<sup>17</sup> tn Heb "the fury of the anger of the LORD." The synonyms are combined to emphasize the extreme degree of the LORD's anger.

<sup>18</sup> tn Heb "comes upon." This phrase occurs twice in this verse.

<sup>19</sup> tn Heb "seek the LORD," but "favor" seems to be implied from the final line of the verse.

<sup>20</sup> tn Or "poor." The precise referent of this Hebrew term is unclear. The word may refer to the economically poor or to the spiritually humble.

<sup>21</sup> tn The present translation assumes the Hebrew term מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) here refers to God's covenantal requirements and is a synonym for the Law. The word can mean "justice" and could refer more specifically to the principles of justice contained in the Law. In this case the phrase could be translated, "who have promoted the justice God demands."

<sup>22</sup> tn Heb "Seek what is right."

<sup>23</sup> tn Heb "Seek humility."

<sup>24</sup> tn Heb "hidden." Cf. NEB "it may be that you will find shelter"; NRSV "perhaps you may be hidden."

<sup>25</sup> tn Or "for" (KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV).

<sup>26</sup> tn There is a sound play here in the Hebrew text: the name Gaza (גֵּזָה, 'azzah) sounds like the word translated "deserted" (עֲזוּבָה, 'azubah).

<sup>27</sup> tn Or "a desolate place."

<sup>28</sup> tn Heb "[As for] Ashdod, at noon they will drive her away."

<sup>29</sup> sn The reference to *noon* may suggest a sudden, quick defeat (see Jer 6:4; 15:8).

<sup>30</sup> tn Heb "uprooted." There is a sound play here in the Hebrew text: the name "Ekron" (עֲקֵרוֹן, 'eqron) sounds like the word translated "uprooted" (תֵּעָקַר, 'te'aqer).

<sup>31</sup> tn Heb "Kerethites," a people settled alongside the Philistines in the coastal areas of southern Palestine (cf. 1 Sam 30:14; Ezek 25:16). They originally came from the island of Crete.

<sup>32</sup> tn Heb "Woe, inhabitants of the coast of the sea, nation of Kerethites." The Hebrew term הוֹי (*hoi*, "ah, woe"), is used to mourn the dead and express outwardly one's sorrow (see 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18; 34:5). By using it here the prophet mourns in advance the downfall of the Philistines, thereby emphasizing the certainty of their demise ("as good as dead"). Some argue the word does not have its earlier connotation here and is simply an attention-getting interjection, equivalent to "Hey!"

The LORD has decreed your downfall,<sup>1</sup>  
Canaan, land of the Philistines:  
“I will destroy everyone who lives  
there!”<sup>2</sup>

2:6 The seacoast<sup>3</sup> will be used as pasture  
lands<sup>4</sup> by the shepherds  
and as pens for their flocks.

2:7 Those who are left from the kingdom  
of Judah<sup>5</sup> will take possession of it.<sup>6</sup>

By the sea<sup>7</sup> they<sup>8</sup> will graze,  
in the houses of Ashkelon they will lie  
down in the evening,  
for the LORD their God will intervene for  
them<sup>9</sup> and restore their prosperity.<sup>10</sup>

2:8 “I have heard Moab’s taunts  
and the Ammonites’ insults.  
They<sup>11</sup> taunted my people  
and verbally harassed those living in  
Judah.<sup>12</sup>

2:9 Therefore, as surely as I live,” says  
the LORD who commands armies, the  
God of Israel,

“be certain that Moab will become like  
Sodom  
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah.  
They will be overrun by weeds,<sup>13</sup>  
filled with salt pits,<sup>14</sup>  
and permanently desolate.

Those of my people who are left<sup>15</sup> will  
plunder their belongings;<sup>16</sup>  
those who are left in Judah<sup>17</sup> will take  
possession of their land.”

2:10 This is how they will be repaid for  
their arrogance,<sup>18</sup>  
for they taunted and verbally harassed<sup>19</sup>  
the people of the LORD who commands  
armies.

2:11 The LORD will terrify them,<sup>20</sup>  
for<sup>21</sup> he will weaken<sup>22</sup> all the gods of the  
earth.

All the distant nations will worship the  
LORD in their own lands.<sup>23</sup>

2:12 “You<sup>24</sup> Ethiopians<sup>25</sup> will also die by  
my sword!”<sup>26</sup>

2:13 The LORD<sup>27</sup> will attack the north<sup>28</sup>  
and destroy Assyria.  
He will make Nineveh a heap of ruins;  
it will be as barren<sup>29</sup> as the desert.

<sup>1</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the word of the LORD is against you.”

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* “I will destroy you so there is no inhabitant [remaining].”

<sup>3</sup> **tn** The NIV here supplies the phrase “where the Kerethites dwell” (“Kerethites” is translated in v. 5 as “the people who came from Crete”) as an interpretive gloss, but this phrase is not in the MT. The NAB likewise reads “the coastland of the Cretans,” supplying “Cretans” here.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** The Hebrew phrase here is נֹתְרֵי בָרָה (*nōṭrēi bārāh*, “pasture”). The first word is probably a plural form of נֹתֵר (*nāṭar*, “pasture”). The meaning of the second word is unclear. It may be a synonym of the preceding word (cf. NRSV “pastures, meadows for shepherds”); there is a word כָּר (*kar*, “pasture”) in biblical Hebrew, but elsewhere it forms its plural with a masculine ending. Some have suggested the meaning “wells” or “caves” used as shelters (cf. NEB “shepherds’ huts”); in this case, one might translate, “The seacoast will be used for pasturelands; for shepherds’ wells/caves.”

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the remnant of the house of Judah.”

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Or “the coast will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah.”

<sup>7</sup> **tc** *Heb* “on them,” but the antecedent of the masculine pronoun is unclear. It may refer back to the “pasture lands,” though that noun is feminine. It is preferable to emend the text from עַל־יָם (*alēhem*) to עַל־הַיָּם (*al-hayyam*, “by the sea”) an emendation that assumes a misdivision and transposition of letters in the MT (cf. NEB “They shall pasture their flocks by the sea”). See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 192.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** The referent of the pronominal subject (“they”) is unclear. It may refer (1) to the shepherds (in which case the first verb should be translated, “pasture their sheep,” cf. NEB), or (2) to the Judahites occupying the area, who are being compared to sheep (cf. NIV, “there they will find pasture”).

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Or “will care for them.”

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Traditionally, “restore their captivity,” i.e., bring back their captives, but it is more likely the expression means “restore their fortunes” in a more general sense (cf. NEB, NASB, NIV, NRSV).

<sup>11</sup> **tn** *Heb* “who.” A new sentence was begun here in the translation for stylistic reasons.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and they made great [their mouth?] against their territory.” Other possible translation options include (1) “they enlarged their own territory” (cf. NEB) and (2) “they bragged about [the size] of their own territory.”

<sup>13</sup> **tn** The Hebrew text reads מִמְשָׁק כְּרָרוֹר (*mimshaq kharur*, “[?] of weeds”). The meaning of the first word is unknown. The present translation (“They will be overrun by weeds”) is speculative, based on the general sense of the context. For a defense of “overrun” on linguistic grounds, see R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (WEC), 347. Cf. NEB “a pile of weeds”; NIV “a place of weeds”; NRSV “a land possessed by nettles.”

<sup>14</sup> **tn** The Hebrew text reads וּמִכְרֵי מֶלַח (*umikreh-melakh*, “and a [?] of salt”). The meaning of the first word is unclear, though “pit” (NASB, NIV, NRSV; NKJV “saltpit”), “mine,” and “heap” (cf. NEB “a rotting heap of saltwort”) are all options. The words “filled with” are supplied for clarification.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** Or “The remnant of my people.”

<sup>16</sup> **tn** *Heb* “them.” The actual object of the plundering, “their belongings,” has been specified in the translation for clarity.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* “[the] nation.” For clarity the “nation” has been specified as “Judah” in the translation.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** *Heb* “this is for them in place of their arrogance.”

<sup>19</sup> **tn** *Heb* “made great [their mouth?] against” (cf. the last phrase of v. 8).

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Heb* “will be awesome over [or, ‘against’] them.”

<sup>21</sup> **tn** Or “certainly.”

<sup>22</sup> **tn** The meaning of this rare Hebrew word is unclear. If the meaning is indeed “weaken,” then this line may be referring to the reduction of these gods’ territory through conquest (see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* [AB 25A], 110-11). Cf. NEB “reduce to beggary”; NASB “starve”; NIV “when he destroys”; NRSV “shrivel.”

<sup>23</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and all the coastlands of the nations will worship [or, ‘bow down’] to him, each from his own place.”

<sup>24</sup> **sn** Though there is no formal introduction, these words are apparently spoken by the LORD (note *my sword*).

<sup>25</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Cushites.” This is traditionally assumed to refer to people from the region south of Egypt, i.e., Nubia or northern Sudan, referred to as “Ethiopia” by classical authors (not the more recent Abyssinia).

<sup>26</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Also you Cushites, who lie dead by my sword.”

<sup>27</sup> **tn** *Heb* “He”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

<sup>28</sup> **tn** *Heb* “he will stretch out his hand against the north.”

<sup>29</sup> **tn** Or “dry.”

2:14 Flocks and herds<sup>1</sup> will lie down in the middle of it, as well as every kind of wild animal.<sup>2</sup> Owls<sup>3</sup> will sleep in the tops of its support pillars; they will hoot through the windows.<sup>4</sup> Rubble will cover the thresholds;<sup>5</sup> even the cedar work<sup>6</sup> will be exposed to the elements.<sup>7</sup>

2:15 This is how the once-proud city will end up<sup>8</sup> – the city that was so secure.<sup>9</sup> She thought to herself,<sup>10</sup> “I am unique! No one can compare to me!”<sup>11</sup> What a heap of ruins she has become, a place where wild animals live! Everyone who passes by her taunts her<sup>12</sup> and shakes his fist.<sup>13</sup>

*Jerusalem is Corrupt*

3:1 The filthy,<sup>14</sup> stained city is as good as dead; the city filled with oppressors is finished!<sup>15</sup>

3:2 She is disobedient;<sup>16</sup> she refuses correction.<sup>17</sup> She does not trust the LORD; she does not seek the advice of<sup>18</sup> her God.

3:3 Her princes<sup>19</sup> are as fierce as roaring lions;<sup>20</sup> her rulers<sup>21</sup> are as hungry as wolves in the desert,<sup>22</sup> who completely devour their prey by morning.<sup>23</sup>

3:4 Her prophets are proud,<sup>24</sup> they are deceitful men. Her priests defile what is holy;<sup>25</sup> they break God’s laws.<sup>26</sup>

3:5 The just LORD resides<sup>27</sup> within her; he commits no unjust acts.<sup>28</sup> Every morning he reveals<sup>29</sup> his justice. At dawn he appears without fail.<sup>30</sup> Yet the unjust know no shame.

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Heb “flocks.” The Hebrew word can refer to both flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Heb “[and] all the wild animals of a nation.” How נִי (goy, “nation”) relates to what precedes is unclear. It may be a corruption of another word. See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 193.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** The Hebrew text reads here נְזִיפָתַי נְזִיפָתַי (gam-qa’at gam-qippod). The term נְזִיפָתַי refers to some type of bird (see Lev 11:18; Deut 14:17) that was typically found near ruins (Isa 34:11); one of the most common translations is “owl” (cf. NEB “horned owl”; NIV, NRSV “desert owl”; contra NASB “pelican”). The term נְזִיפָתַי may also refer to a type of bird (cf. NEB “ruffed bustard”; NIV, NRSV “screech owl”). Some suggest a rodent may be in view (cf. NASB “hedghehog”); this is not unreasonable, for a rodent or some other small animal would be able to sleep in the tops of pillars which would be lying in the ruins of the fallen buildings.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** Heb “a sound will sing in the window.” If some type of owl is in view, “hoot” is a more appropriate translation (cf. NEB, NRSV).

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Heb “rubble [will be] on the threshold.” “Rubble” translates the Hebrew word חֲרֵב (khorev, “desolation”). Some emend to עֲרֵב (“orev, “raven”) following the LXX and Vulgate; Adele Berlin translates, “A voice shall shriek from the window – a raven at the sill” (*Zephaniah* [AB 25A], 104).

<sup>6</sup> **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word translated “cedar work” (so NASB, NRSV) is unclear; NIV has “the beams of cedar.”

<sup>7</sup> **tn** Heb “one will expose.” The subject is probably indefinite, though one could translate, “for he [i.e., God] will lay bare.”

<sup>8</sup> **tn** Heb “this is the proud city.”

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Heb “the one that lived securely.”

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Heb “the one who says in her heart.”

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Heb “I [am], and besides me there is no other.”

<sup>12</sup> **tn** Heb “hisses”; or “whistles.”

<sup>13</sup> **sn** Hissing (or whistling) and shaking the fist were apparently ways of taunting a defeated foe or an object of derision in the culture of the time.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** The present translation assumes מוֹרָא (mor’ah) is derived from רוֹא (ro’i, “excrement”; see Jastrow 1436 s.v. רוֹא). The following participle, “stained,” supports this interpretation (cf. NEB “filthy and foul”; NRSV “soiled, defiled”). Another option is to derive the form from מוֹרָא (marah, “to rebel”); in this case the term should be translated “rebellious” (cf. NASB, NIV “rebellious and defiled”). This idea is supported by v. 2. For discussion of the two options, see HALOT 630 s.v. מוֹרָא and J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 206.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** Heb “Woe, soiled and stained one, oppressive city.” The verb “is finished” is supplied in the second line. On the Hebrew word הוּי (hoy, “ah, woe”), see the note on the word “dead” in 2:5.

**sn** The following verses show that Jerusalem, personified as a woman (“she”), is the referent.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** Heb “she does not hear a voice” Refusing to listen is equated with disobedience.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** Heb “she does not receive correction.” The Hebrew phrase, when negated, refers elsewhere to rejecting verbal advice (Jer 17:23; 32:33; 35:13) and refusing to learn from experience (Jer 2:30; 5:3).

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Heb “draw near to.” The present translation assumes that the expression “draw near to” refers to seeking God’s will (see 1 Sam 14:36).

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Or “officials.”

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Heb “her princes in her midst are roaring lions.” The metaphor has been translated as a simile (“as fierce as”) for clarity.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** Traditionally “judges.”

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Heb “her judges [are] wolves of the evening,” that is, wolves that prowl at night. The translation assumes an emendation to עֲרָבָה (“aravah, “desert”). For a discussion of this and other options, see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A), 128. The metaphor has been translated as a simile (“as hungry as”) for clarity.

<sup>23</sup> **tn** Heb “they do not gnaw [a bone] at morning.” The precise meaning of the line is unclear. The statement may mean these wolves devour their prey so completely that not even a bone is left to gnaw by the time morning arrives. For a discussion of this and other options, see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A), 129.

<sup>24</sup> **sn** Applied to prophets, the word פִּחְזִיּוֹם (pokhazim, “proud”) probably refers to their audacity in passing off their own words as genuine prophecies from the LORD (see Jer 23:32).

<sup>25</sup> **tn** Or “defile the temple.”

**sn** These priests defile what is holy by not observing the proper distinctions between what is ritually clean and unclean (see Ezek 22:26).

<sup>26</sup> **tn** Heb “they treat violently [the] law.”

<sup>27</sup> **tn** The word “resides” is supplied for clarification.

<sup>28</sup> **tn** Or “he does no injustice.”

<sup>29</sup> **tn** Heb “gives”; or “dispenses.”

<sup>30</sup> **tn** Heb “at the light he is not missing.” Note that NASB (which capitalizes pronouns referring to Deity) has divided the lines differently: “Every morning He brings His justice to light; // He does not fail.”

*The Lord's Judgment will Purify*

3:6 "I destroyed<sup>1</sup> nations;  
their walled cities<sup>2</sup> are in ruins.  
I turned their streets into ruins;  
no one passes through them.  
Their cities are desolate;<sup>3</sup>  
no one lives there.<sup>4</sup>  
3:7 I thought,<sup>5</sup> "Certainly you will re-  
spect<sup>6</sup> me!  
Now you will accept correction!  
If she had done so, her home<sup>7</sup> would not  
be destroyed<sup>8</sup>  
by all the punishments I have threatened.<sup>9</sup>  
But they eagerly sinned  
in everything they did.<sup>10</sup>  
3:8 Therefore you must wait patiently<sup>11</sup> for  
me," says the LORD,  
"for the day when I attack and take plun-  
der.<sup>12</sup>  
I have decided<sup>13</sup> to gather nations together  
and assemble kingdoms,  
so I can pour out my fury on them –  
all my raging anger.  
For<sup>14</sup> the whole earth will be consumed  
by my fiery anger.

3:9 Know for sure that I will then enable  
the nations to give me acceptable praise.<sup>15</sup>  
All of them will invoke the LORD's name  
when they pray,<sup>16</sup>  
and will worship him in unison.<sup>17</sup>  
3:10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,<sup>18</sup>  
those who pray to me<sup>19</sup> will bring me  
tribute.  
3:11 In that day you<sup>20</sup> will not be ashamed  
of all your rebelliousness against me,<sup>21</sup>  
for then I will remove from your midst  
those who proudly boast,<sup>22</sup>  
and you will never again be arrogant on  
my holy hill.  
3:12 I will leave in your midst a humble  
and meek group of people,<sup>23</sup>  
and they will find safety in the LORD's  
presence.<sup>24</sup>  
3:13 The Israelites who remain<sup>25</sup> will not  
act deceitfully.  
They will not lie,  
and a deceitful tongue will not be found  
in their mouth.  
Indeed, they will graze peacefully like  
sheep<sup>26</sup> and lie down;  
no one will terrify them."

<sup>1</sup> *tn* Heb "cut off."

<sup>2</sup> *tn* Heb "corner towers"; NEB, NRSV "battlements."

<sup>3</sup> *tn* This Hebrew verb (יָדָה, *tsadah*) occurs only here in the OT, but its meaning is established from the context and from an Aramaic cognate.

<sup>4</sup> *tn* Heb "so that there is no man, without inhabitant."

<sup>5</sup> *tn* Heb "said."

<sup>6</sup> *tn* Or "fear." The second person verb form ("you will respect") is feminine singular, indicating that personified Jerusalem is addressed.

*sn* God's judgment of the nations (v. 6) was an object lesson for Israel's benefit.

<sup>7</sup> *tn* Or "dwelling place."

<sup>8</sup> *tn* Heb "cut off."

<sup>9</sup> *tn* Heb "all which I have punished her." The precise meaning of this statement and its relationship to what precedes are unclear.

<sup>10</sup> *tn* Heb "But they got up early, they made corrupt all their actions." The phrase "they got up early" probably refers to their eagerness to engage in sinful activities.

<sup>11</sup> *tn* The second person verb form ("you must wait patiently") is masculine plural, indicating that a group is being addressed. Perhaps the humble individuals addressed earlier (see 2:3) are in view. Because of Jerusalem's sin, they must patiently wait for judgment to pass before their vindication arrives.

<sup>12</sup> *tn* Heb "when I arise for plunder." The present translation takes יָדָה ('*ad*) as "plunder." Some, following the LXX, reprint the term יָדָה ('*ed*) and translate, "as a witness" (cf. NASB, NIV, NRSV). In this case the Lord uses a legal metaphor to picture himself as testifying against his enemies. Adele Berlin takes יָדָה? ('*ad*) in a temporal sense ("forever") and translates "once and for all" (*Zephaniah* [AB 25A], 133).

<sup>13</sup> *tn* Heb "for my decision is."

<sup>14</sup> *tn* Or "certainly."

<sup>15</sup> *tn* Heb "Certainly [or perhaps, "For"] then I will restore to the nations a pure lip."

*sn* I will then enable the nations to give me acceptable praise. This apparently refers to a time when the nations will reject their false idol-gods and offer genuine praise to the one true God.

<sup>16</sup> *tn* Heb "so that all of them will call on the name of the LORD."

<sup>17</sup> *tn* Heb "so that [they] will serve him [with] one shoulder."

<sup>18</sup> *tn* Or "Nubia"; Heb "Cush." "Cush" is traditionally assumed to refer to the region south of Egypt, i.e. Nubia or northern Sudan, referred to as "Ethiopia" by classical authors (not the more recent Abyssinia).

<sup>19</sup> *tn* Heb "those who pray to me, the daughter of my dispersed ones." The meaning of the phrase is unclear. Perhaps the text is corrupt at this point or a proper name should be understood. For a discussion of various options see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A), 134-35.

*sn* It is not certain if those who pray to me refers to the converted nations or to God's exiled covenant people.

<sup>20</sup> *sn* The second person verbs and pronouns are feminine singular, indicating that personified Jerusalem is addressed here.

<sup>21</sup> *tn* Heb "In that day you not be ashamed because of all your actions, [in] which you rebelled against me."

<sup>22</sup> *tn* Heb "the arrogant ones of your pride."

<sup>23</sup> *tn* Heb "needy and poor people." The terms often refer to a socioeconomic group, but here they may refer to those who are humble in a spiritual sense.

<sup>24</sup> *tn* Heb "and they will take refuge in the name of the LORD."

*sn* Safety in the Lord's presence. From the time the Lord introduced his special covenant name (Yahweh) to Moses, it served as a reminder of his protective presence as Israel's faithful deliverer.

<sup>25</sup> *tn* Or "the remnant of Israel."

<sup>26</sup> *tn* The words "peacefully like sheep" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

**3:14** Shout for joy, Daughter Zion!<sup>1</sup>  
Shout out, Israel!

Be happy and boast with all your heart,  
Daughter Jerusalem!

**3:15** The LORD has removed the judgment  
against you;<sup>2</sup>

he has turned back your enemy.

Israel's king, the LORD, is in your midst!  
You no longer need to fear disaster.

**3:16** On that day they will say<sup>3</sup> to Jeru-  
salem,

“Don't be afraid, Zion!

Your hands must not be paralyzed from  
panic!<sup>4</sup>

**3:17** The LORD your God is in your midst;  
he is a warrior who can deliver.

He takes great delight in you;<sup>5</sup>

he renews you by his love;<sup>6</sup>  
he shouts for joy over you.”<sup>7</sup>

**3:18** “As for those who grieve because  
they cannot attend the festivals –

I took them away from you;  
they became tribute and were a source of  
shame to you.<sup>8</sup>

**3:19** Look, at that time I will deal with  
those who mistreated you.

I will rescue the lame sheep<sup>9</sup>  
and gather together the scattered sheep.

I will take away their humiliation  
and make the whole earth admire and  
respect them.<sup>10</sup>

**3:20** At that time I will lead you –  
at the time I gather you together.<sup>11</sup>

Be sure of this!<sup>12</sup> I will make all the na-  
tions of the earth respect and admire  
you<sup>13</sup>

when you see me restore you,”<sup>14</sup> says the  
LORD.

<sup>1</sup> **sn** This phrase is used as an epithet for the city and the nation. “Daughter” may seem extraneous in English but consciously joins the various epithets and metaphors of Israel and Jerusalem as a woman, a device used to evoke sympathy from the reader.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* “your judgments,” that is, “the judgments directed against you.” The translation reflects the implications of the parallelism.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** *Heb* “it will be said.” The passive construction has been translated as active for stylistic reasons.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* “your hands must not go limp.”

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* “he rejoices over you with joy.”

<sup>6</sup> **tc** The MT reads, “he is silent in his love,” but this makes no sense in light of the immediately preceding and following lines. Some take the Hiphil verb form as causative (see Job 11:3) rather than intransitive and translate, “he causes [you] to be silent by his love,” that is, “he soothes [you] by his love.” The present translation follows the LXX and assumes an original reading יִרְדֵּשׁ (y<sup>h</sup>*khaddesh*, “he renews”) with ellipsis of the object (“you”).

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* “he rejoices over you with a shout of joy.”

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* “The ones grieving from an assembly I gathered from you they were, tribute upon her, a reproach.” Any translation of this difficult verse must be provisional at best. The present translation assumes three things: (1) The preposition מִן (*min*) prefixed to “assembly” is causal (the individuals are sorrowing because of the assemblies or festivals they are no longer able to hold). (2) מַסֵּאֵת (*mas'et*) means “tribute” and refers to the exiled people being treated as the spoils of warfare (see R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* [WEC], 385-86). (3) The third feminine singular suffix refers to personified Jerusalem, which is addressed earlier in the verse (the pronominal suffix in “from you” is second feminine singular). For other interpretive options see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A), 146.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** The word “sheep” is supplied for clarification. As in Mic 4:6-7, the exiles are here pictured as injured and scattered sheep whom the divine shepherd rescues from danger.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* “I will make them into praise and a name, in all the earth, their shame.” The present translation assumes that “their shame” specifies “them” and that “name” stands here for a good reputation.

<sup>11</sup> **tn** In this line the second person pronoun is masculine plural, indicating that the exiles are addressed.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** Or “for.”

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* “I will make you into a name and praise among all the peoples of the earth.” Here the word “name” carries the nuance of “good reputation.”

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* “when I restore your fortunes to your eyes.” See the note on the phrase “restore them” in 2:7.