

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Commentary by **A. R. FAUSSETT**

INTRODUCTION

ZEPHANIAH, ninth in order of the minor prophets, prophesied “in the days of Josiah” (Zephaniah 1:1), that is, between 642 and 611 B.C. The name means “Jehovah hath guarded,” literally, “hidden” (^{<4276>}Psalm 27:5 ^{<4818>}Psalm 83:3). The specification in the introductory heading, of not only his father, but also his grandfather, and great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather, implies that the latter were persons of note, or else the design was to distinguish him from another Zephaniah of note at the time of the captivity. The Jews’ supposition, that persons recorded as a prophet’s ancestors were themselves endowed with the prophetic spirit, seems groundless. There is no impossibility of the Hezekiah, who was Zephaniah’s great-great-grandfather, being King Hezekiah as to the number of generations; for Hezekiah’s reign of twenty-nine years, and his successor’s reign of fifty-five years, admit of *four* generations interposing between. Yet the omission of the designation, “king of Judah,” is fatal to the theory (compare ^{<4181>}Proverbs 25:1 ^{<4389>}Isaiah 38:9).

He must have flourished in the earlier part of Josiah’s reign. In ^{<4123>}Zephaniah 2:13-15 he foretells the doom of Nineveh, which happened in 625 B.C.; and in Zephaniah 1:4 he denounces various forms of idolatry, and specially that of Baal. Now Josiah’s reformation began in the twelfth and was completed in the eighteenth year of his reign. Zephaniah, therefore, in denouncing Baal worship, co-operated with that good king in his efforts, and so must have prophesied somewhere between the twelfth and eighteenth years of his reign. The silence of the historical books is no argument against this, as it would equally apply against Jeremiah’s prophetic existence at the same time. Jewish tradition says that Zephaniah had for his colleagues Jeremiah, whose sphere of labor was the thoroughfares and market places, and Huldah the prophetess, who exercised her vocation in the college in Jerusalem.

The prophecy begins with the nation's sin and the fearful retribution coming at the hands of the Chaldeans. These are not mentioned by name, as in Jeremiah; for the prophecies of the latter, being nearer the fulfillment, become more explicit than those of an earlier date. The second chapter dooms the persecuting states in the neighborhood as well as Judea itself. The third chapter denounces Jerusalem, but concludes with the promise of her joyful re-establishment in the theocracy.

The style, though not generally sublime, is graphic and vivid in details (compare Zephaniah 1:4-12). The language is pure, and free from Aramaisms. There are occasional coincidences with former prophets (compare ^{<3124>}Zephaniah 2:14, with ^{<2341>}Isaiah 34:11; ^{<3125>}Zephaniah 2:15, with ^{<2408>}Isaiah 47:8; ^{<3130>}Zephaniah 3:10, with ^{<2380>}Isaiah 18:1; Zephaniah 2:8, with ^{<2406>}Isaiah 16:6; also Zephaniah 1:5, with ^{<2481>}Jeremiah 8:2; ^{<3112>}Zephaniah 1:12, with ^{<2481>}Jeremiah 48:11). Such coincidences in part arise from the phraseology of *Hebrew* prophetic poetry being the common language of the inspired brotherhood. The New Testament, at ^{<6156>}Romans 15:6, seems to refer to Zephaniah 3:9.

CHAPTER 1

ZEPHANIAH 1:1-18.

GOD'S SEVERE JUDGMENT ON JUDAH FOR ITS IDOLATRY AND NEGLECT OF HIM: THE RAPID APPROACH OF THE JUDGMENT, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ESCAPE.

1. *days of Josiah* — Had their idolatries been under former kings, they might have said, Our kings have forced us to this and that. But under Josiah, who did all in his power to reform them, they have no such excuse.

son of Amon — the idolater, whose bad practices the Jews clung to, rather than the good example of Josiah, his son; so incorrigible were they in sin.

Judah — Isra_el's ten tribes had gone into captivity before this.

2. *utterly consume* — from a root to “sweep away,” or “scrape off utterly.” See ^{<2483>}Jeremiah 8:13, *Margin*, and here.

from off the land — of Judah.

3. Enumeration in detail of the “all things” (Zephaniah 1:2; compare ^{<2490>}Jeremiah 9:10 ^{<2403>}Hosea 4:3).

the stumbling-blocks — idols which cause Judah to offend or stumble (^{<2348>}Ezekiel 14:3,4,7).

with the wicked — The idols and their worshippers shall be involved in a common destruction.

4. *stretch out mine hand* — indicating some remarkable and unusual work of vengeance (^{<2155>}Isaiah 5:25 9:12,17,21).

Judah — including Benjamin. These two tribes are to suffer, which thought themselves perpetually secure, because they escaped the captivity in which the ten tribes were involved.

Jerusalem — the fountainhead of the evil. God begins with His sanctuary (^{<2398>}Ezekiel 9:6), and those who are nigh Him (^{<4803>}Leviticus 10:3).

the remnant of Baal — the remains of Baal worship, which as yet Josiah was unable utterly to eradicate in remote places. Baal was the Phoenician

tutelary god. From the time of the Judges (^{<4023>}Judges 2:13), Isra_el had fallen into this idolatry; and Manasseh lately had set up this idol within Jehovah's temple itself (^{<4221>}2 Kings 21:3,5,7). Josiah began his reformation in the twelfth year of his reign (^{<4304>}2 Chronicles 34:4,8), and in the eighteenth had as far as possible completed it.

Chemarims — idol priests, who had not reached the age of puberty; meaning “ministers of the gods” [SERVIUS on *aeneid*, 11], the same name as the Tyrian *Camilli*, *r* and *l* being interchangeable (compare ^{<3805>}Hosea 10:5, *Margin*). Josiah is expressly said (^{<4218>}2 Kings 23:5, *Margin*) to have “put down the Chemarim.” The *Hebrew* root means “black” (from the *black garments* which they wore or the *marks* which they branded on their foreheads); or “zealous,” from their idolatrous fanaticism. The very “name,” as well as themselves, shall be forgotten.

the priests — of Jehovah, of Aaronic descent, who ought to have used all their power to eradicate, but who secretly abetted, idolatry (compare Zephaniah 3:4 Ezekiel 8 22:26 44:10). From the *priests* Zephaniah passes to the *people*.

5. worship the host of heaven — *Saba*: whence, in contrast to Sabeanism, Jehovah is called *Lord of Sabaoth*.

upon the housetops — which were flat (^{<4221>}2 Kings 23:5,6,12 ^{<4493>}Jeremiah 19:13 32:29).

swear by the Lord — rather, “swear to JEHOVAH” (^{<4454>}2 Chronicles 15:14); solemnly dedicating themselves to Him (compare ^{<3801>}Isaiah 48:1 ^{<3045>}Hosea 4:15).

and — “and yet (with strange inconsistency, ^{<4182>}1 Kings 18:21 ^{<4319>}Ezekiel 20:39 ^{<4023>}Matthew 6:24) swear by Malcham,” that is, “*their king*” [MAURER]: the same as Molech (see on ^{<3165>}Amos 5:25), and “Milcom the god of ... Ammon” (^{<4113>}1 Kings 11:33). If Satan have half the heart, he will have all; if the Lord have but half offered to Him, He will have none.

6. This verse describes more comprehensively those guilty of defection from Jehovah in any way (^{<3023>}Jeremiah 2:13,17).

7. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord — (^{<3821>}Habakkuk 2:20). Let the *earth* be silent at His approach [MAURER]. Or, “Thou whosoever hast been wont to speak against God, as if He had no care about earthly affairs, cease thy murmurs and self-justifications; submit thyself to God, and repent in time” [CALVIN].

Lord ... prepared a sacrifice — namely, a slaughter of the guilty Jews, the victims due to His justice (^{<2316>}Isaiah 34:6 ^{<2460>}Jeremiah 46:10 ^{<2597>}Ezekiel 39:17).

bid his guests — literally, “sanctified His called ones” (compare ^{<2338>}Isaiah 13:3). It enhances the bitterness of the judgment that the heathen Chaldeans should be *sanctified*, or consecrated as it were, by God as His priests, and be *called* to eat the flesh of the elect people; as on feast days the priests used to feast among themselves on the remains of the sacrifices [CALVIN]. *English Version* takes it not of the *priests*, but the *guests bidden*, who also had to “sanctify” or purify themselves before coming to the sacrificial feast (^{<0933>}1 Samuel 9:13,22 16:5). Nebuchadnezzar was *bidden* to come to take vengeance on guilty Jerusalem (^{<2439>}Jeremiah 25:9).

8. the princes — who ought to have been an example of good to others, but were ringleaders in all evil.

the king’s children — fulfilled on Zedekiah’s children (^{<2496>}Jeremiah 39:6); and previously, on Jehoahaz and Eliakim, the sons of Josiah (^{<1236>}2 Kings 23:31,36 ^{<4306>}2 Chronicles 36:6; compare also ^{<1218>}2 Kings 20:18 21:13). Huldah the prophetess (^{<1229>}2 Kings 22:20) intimated that which Zephaniah now more expressly foretells.

all such as are clothed with strange apparel — the *princes* or *courtiers* who attired themselves in costly garments, imported from abroad; partly for the sake of luxury, and partly to ingratiate themselves with foreign great nations whose costume as well as their idolatries they imitated, [CALVIN]; whereas in costume, as in other respects, God would have them to be separate from the nations. GROTIUS refers the “strange apparel” to garments forbidden by the law, for example, men’s garments worn by women, and vice versa, a heathen usage in the worship of Mars and Venus (^{<4628>}Deuteronomy 22:5).

9. those that leap on the threshold — the servants of the princes, who, after having gotten prey (like hounds) for their masters, leap exultingly on their masters’ thresholds; or, on the thresholds of the houses which they break into [CALVIN]. JEROME explains it of those *who walk up the steps into the sanctuary with haughtiness*. ROSENMULLER translates, “Leap over the threshold”; namely, in imitation of the Philistine custom of not treading on the threshold, which arose from the head and hands of Dragon being broken off on the threshold before the ark (^{<0955>}1 Samuel 5:5). Compare ^{<2106>}Isaiah 2:6, “thy people ... are soothsayers *like the Philistines*.” CALVIN’S view agrees best with the latter clause of the verse.

fill ... masters' houses with violence, etc. — that is, with goods obtained *with violence*, etc.

10. fish gate — (⁴⁶³⁴2 Chronicles 33:14 ^{408B}Nehemiah 3:3 12:39). Situated on the east of the lower city, north of the sheep gate [MAURER]: near the stronghold of David in Milo, between Zion and the lower city, towards the west [JEROME]. This verse describes the state of the city when it was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar. It was through the fish gate that he entered the city. It received its name from the fish market which was near it. Through it passed those who used to bring fish from the lake of Tiberias and Jordan. It answers to what is now called the Damascus gate [HENDERSON].

the second — namely, the gate which was *second* in dignity [CALVIN]. Or, the *second* or lower part of the city. Appropriately, the fish gate, or extreme end of the lower part of the city, first resounds with the cries of the citizens as the foe approaches; then, as he advances further, that part of the city itself, namely, its inner part; lastly, when the foe is actually come and has burst in, the hills, the higher ones, especially Zion and Moriah, on which the upper city and temple were founded [MAURER]. The *second*, or lower city, answers to Akra, north of Zion, and separated from it by the valley of Tyropoeon running down to the pool of Siloam [HENDERSON]. The *Hebrew* is translated “college,” ⁴²²⁴2 Kings 22:14; so VATABLUS would translate here.

hills — not here those outside, but those within the walls: Zion, Moriah, and Ophel.

11. Maktesh — rather, “the mortar,” a name applied to the valley of Siloam from its hollow shape [JEROME]. The valley between Zion and Mount Olivet, at the eastern extremity of Mount Moriah, where the merchants dwelt. ³⁴⁴¹Zechariah 14:21, “The Canaanite,” namely, merchant [*Chaldee Version*]. The Tyropoeon (that is, *cheese-makers*) valley below Mount Akra [ROSENMULLER]. Better *Jerusalem itself*, so called as lying in the midst of hills (²²¹¹Isaiah 22:1 ⁴²¹³Jeremiah 21:13) and as doomed to be the scene of its people being destroyed as corn or drugs are pounded in a mortar (⁴¹⁷²Proverbs 27:22) [MAURER]. Compare the similar image of a “pot” (⁴²⁴⁸Ezekiel 24:3,6). The reason for the destruction is subjoined, namely, its *merchant people's* greediness of gain.

all the merchant people — literally, the “Canaanite people”: irony: all the merchant people of Jerusalem are very *Canaanites* in greed for gain and in idolatries (see on ⁴⁸¹⁷Hosea 12:7).

all ... that bear silver — loading themselves with that which will prove but a *burden* (Habakkuk 2:6).

12. search ... with candles — or lamps; so as to leave no dark corner in it wherein sin can escape the punishment, of which the Chaldeans are My instruments (compare ^{<30137>}Zephaniah 1:13 ^{<2158>}Luke 15:8).

settled on their lees — “hardened” or crusted; image from the crust formed at the bottom of wines long left undisturbed (^{<3481>}Jeremiah 48:11). The effect of *wealthy undisturbed ease* (“lees”) on the ungodly is *hardening*: they become stupidly secure (compare ^{<3559>}Psalm 55:19 ^{<3161>}Amos 6:1).

Lord will not do good ... evil — They deny that God regards human affairs, or renders good to the good; or evil to the evil, but that all things go haphazard (^{<5008>}Psalm 10:4 ^{<3127>}Malachi 2:17).

13. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, etc. — Fulfilling the prophecy in (^{<6330>}Deuteronomy 28:30,39 (compare ^{<3161>}Amos 5:11).

14. voice of ... day of ... Lord — that is, Jehovah ushering in that day with a roar of vengeance against the guilty (^{<2530>}Jeremiah 25:30 ^{<3102>}Amos 1:2). They who will not now heed (^{<3012>}Zephaniah 1:12) His voice by His prophets, must heed it when uttered by the avenging foe.

mighty ... shall cry ... bitterly — in hopeless despair; the might on which Jerusalem now prides itself, shall then fail utterly.

15. wasteness ... desolation — The *Hebrew* terms by their similarity of sounds, *Shoah*, *Umeshoah*, express the dreary monotony of desolation (see on Na 2:10).

16. the trumpet — namely, of the besieging enemy (^{<3162>}Amos 2:2).

alarm — the war shout [MAURER].

towers — literally “angles”; for city walls used not to be built in a direct line, but with sinuous curves and angles, so that besiegers advancing might be assailed not only in front, but on both sides, caught as it were in a cul-de-sac; towers were built especially at the angles. So TACITUS describes the walls of Jerusalem [*Histories*, 5.11.7].

17. like blind men — unable to see whither to turn themselves so as to find an escape from existing evils.

flesh — *Hebrew*, “bread”; so the *Arabic* term for “bread” is used for “flesh” (^{<4025>}Matthew 26:26).

18. *Neither ... silver nor ... gold shall ... deliver them*, etc. — (²¹¹⁰Proverbs 11:4).

fire of his jealousy — (²³⁸⁹Ezekiel 38:19); His wrath jealous for His honor consuming the guilty like fire.

make even a speedy riddance of all — rather, a “consummation” (complete destruction: “full end,” ²⁴⁶⁸Jeremiah 46:28 ²⁸¹¹Ezekiel 11:13) “altogether sudden” [MAURER]. “A consumption, *and that* a sudden one” [CALVIN].

CHAPTER 2

ZEPHANIAH 2:1-15.

EXHORTATION TO REPENT BEFORE THE CHALDEAN INVADERS COME. DOOM OF JUDAH'S FOES, THE PHILISTINES, MOAB, AMMON, WITH THEIR IDOLS, AND ETHIOPIA AND ASSYRIA.

1. ***Gather yourselves*** — *to a religious assembly*, to avert the judgment by prayers (^{<216>}Joel 2:16) [GROTIUS]. Or, so as not to be dissipated “as chaff” (Zephaniah 2:2). The *Hebrew* is akin to a root meaning “chaff.” Self-confidence and corrupt desires are the dissipation from which they are exhorted to *gather themselves* [CALVIN]. The foe otherwise, like the wind, will scatter you “as the chaff.” Repentance is the *gathering of themselves* meant.

nation not desired — (Compare ^{<421>}2 Chronicles 21:20), that is, not desirable; unworthy of the grace or favor of God; and yet God so magnifies that grace as to be still solicitous for their safety, though they had destroyed themselves and forfeited all claims on His grace [CALVIN]. The *Margin* from *Chaldee Version* has, “not desirous,” namely of returning to God. MAURER and GESENIUS translate, “Not waxing pale,” that is, dead to shame. *English Version* is best.

2. ***Before the decree bring forth*** — that is, Before God’s decree against you announced by me (Zephaniah 1:1-18) *have its fulfillment*. As the embryo lies hid in the womb, and then emerges to light in its own due time, so though God for a time hides His vengeance, yet He *brings it forth* at the proper season.

before the day pass as the chaff — that is, before *the day* for repentance pass, and with it you, the ungodly, pass away *as the chaff* (^{<1818>}Job 21:18 ^{<1006>}Psalms 1:4). MAURER puts it parenthetically, “the day (that is, time) passes as the chaff (that is, most quickly).” CALVIN, “before the decree bring forth” (the predicted vengeance), (then) the chaff (the Jews) shall pass in a day, that is, in a moment, though they thought that it would be long before they could be overthrown. *English Version* is best; the latter clause being explanatory of the former, and so the *before* being understood, not expressed.

3. As in Zephaniah 2:1 (compare *Note*, see on ³¹¹²Zephaniah 1:12) he had warned the hardened among the people to humble themselves, so now he admonishes “the meek” to proceed in their right course, that so they may escape the general calamity (³⁷⁴⁹Psalms 76:9). The *meek* bow themselves under God’s chastisements to God’s will, whereas the ungodly become only the more hardened by them.

Seek ye the Lord — in contrast to those that “sought not the Lord” (Zephaniah 1:6). The *meek* are not to regard what the multitudes do, but seek God at once.

his judgment — that is, law. The true way of “seeking the Lord” is to “work judgment,” not merely to be zealous about outward ordinances.

seek meekness — not perversely murmuring against God’s dealings, but patiently submitting to them, and composedly waiting for deliverance.

it may be ye shall be hid — (²³³³Isaiah 26:20 ³¹⁸⁶Amos 5:6). This phrase does not imply doubt of the deliverance of the godly, but expresses the difficulty of it, as well that the ungodly may see the certainty of their doom, as also that the faithful may value the more the grace of God in their case (⁴⁰⁴⁷1 Peter 4:17-19) [CALVIN]. Compare ⁴²⁵²2 Kings 25:12.

4. ***For*** — He makes the punishment awaiting the neighboring states an argument why the ungodly should repent (Zephaniah 2:1) and the godly persevere, namely, that so they may escape from the general calamity.

Gaza shall be forsaken — In the *Hebrew* there is a play of similar sounds, *Gaza Gazubah*; Gaza shall be forsaken, as its name implies. So the *Hebrew* of the next clause, *Ekron teekeer*.

at the noonday — when on account of the heat Orientals usually sleep, and military operations are suspended (³¹⁰⁵2 Samuel 4:5). Hence an attack *at noon* implies one sudden and unexpected (³¹⁰⁴Jeremiah 6:4,5 15:8).

Ekron — *Four* cities of the Philistines are mentioned, whereas *five* was the normal number of their leading cities. Gath is omitted, being at this time under the Jews’ dominion. David had subjugated it (⁴³⁸⁰1 Chronicles 18:1). Under Joram the Philistines almost regained it (⁴²¹⁶2 Chronicles 21:16), but Uzziah (⁴²⁰⁶2 Chronicles 26:6) and Hezekiah (⁴²⁸⁸2 Kings 18:8) having conquered them, it remained under the Jews. Amos 1:6 Zechariah 9:5,6 ⁴²³³Jeremiah 25:20, similarly mention only *four* cities of the Philistines.

5. ***inhabitants of the seacoast*** — the Philistines dwelling on the strip of seacoast southwest of Canaan. Literally, the “cord” or “line” of sea (compare ³⁴⁰³Jeremiah 47:7 ⁴²⁵⁶Ezekiel 25:16).

the Cherethites — the Cretans, a name applied to the Philistines as sprung from Crete (^{<4123>}Deuteronomy 2:23 ^{<2474>}Jeremiah 47:4 ^{<107>}Amos 9:7). *Philistine* means “an emigrant.”

Canaan ... land of the Philistines — They occupied the southwest of *Canaan* (^{<413>}Joshua 13:2,3); a name which hints that they are doomed to the same destruction as the early occupants of the land.

6. dwellings and cottages for shepherds — rather, “dwellings with cisterns” (that is, water-tanks *dug* in the earth) *for shepherds*. Instead of a thick population and tillage, the region shall become a pasturage for nomad shepherds’ flocks. The *Hebrew* for “dug cisterns,” *Ceroth*, seems a play on sounds, alluding to their name Cherethites (Zephaniah 2:5): Their land shall become what their national name implies, a land of *cisterns*. MAURER translates, “*Feasts* for shepherds’ (flocks),” that is, one wide pasturage.

7. remnant of ... Judah — those of the Jews who shall be left after the coming calamity, and who shall return from exile.

feed thereupon — namely, in the pastures of that seacoast region (Zephaniah 2:6).

visit — in mercy (^{<1061>}Exodus 4:31).

8. I have heard — A seasonable consolation to Judah when wantonly assailed by Moab and Ammon with impunity: God saith, “I have heard it all, though I might seem to men not to have observed it because I did not immediately inflict punishment.”

magnified themselves — acted haughtily, invading the territory of Judah (^{<2489>}Jeremiah 48:29 49:1; compare ^{<3120>}Zephaniah 2:10 ^{<4923>}Psalms 35:26 ^{<3012>}Obadiah 1:12).

9. the breeding of nettles — or, *the overspreading* of nettles, that is, a place overrun with them.

salt pits — found at the south of the Dead Sea. The water overflows in the spring, and salt is left by the evaporation. Salt land is barren (^{<1095>}Judges 9:45 ^{<44734>}Psalms 107:34, *Margin*).

possess them — that is, their land; in retribution for their having occupied Judah’s land.

10. (Compare Zephaniah 2:8).

their pride — in antithesis to the *meek* (Zephaniah 2:3).

11. *famish* — bring low by taking from the idols their former fame; as beasts are famished by their food being withheld. Also by destroying the kingdoms under the tutelage of idols (^{<1906>}Psalm 96:4 ^{<2341>}Isaiah 46:1).

gods of the earth — who have their existence only *on earth*, not in heaven as the true God.

every one from his place — each *in his own* Gentile *home*, taught by the Jews in the true religion: not in Jerusalem alone shall men worship God, but everywhere (^{<4683>}Psalm 68:29,30 Malachi 1:1 ^{<6021>}John 4:21 ^{<4001>}Corinthians 1:2 ^{<10081>}Timothy 2:8). It does not mean, as in ^{<2302>}Isaiah 2:2 ^{<3001>}Micah 4:1,2 ^{<3022>}Zechariah 8:22 14:16 that they shall come *from* their several *places* to Jerusalem to worship [MAURER].

all ... isles of ... heathen — that is, all the maritime regions, especially the west, now being fulfilled in the gathering in of the Gentiles to Messiah.

12. Fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar (God's *sword*, ^{<2305>}Isaiah 10:5) conquered Egypt, with which Ethiopia was closely connected as its ally (^{<2442>}Jeremiah 46:2-9 ^{<2405>}Ezekiel 30:5-9).

Ye — literally, "They." The third person expresses estrangement; while doomed before God's tribunal in the second person, they are spoken of in the third as aliens from God.

13. Here he passes suddenly to the north. Nineveh was destroyed by Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, 625 B.C. The Scythian hordes, by an inroad into Media and thence in the southwest of Asia (thought by many to be the forces described by Zephaniah, as the invaders of Judea, rather than the Chaldeans), for a while interrupted Cyaxares' operations; but he finally succeeded. Arbaces and Belesis previously subverted the Assyrian empire under Sardanapalus (that is, Pul?), 877 B.C.

14. *flocks* — of sheep; answering to "beasts" in the parallel clause. Wide pastures for sheep and haunts for wild beasts shall be where once there was a teeming population (compare Zephaniah 2:6). MAURER, needlessly for the parallelism, makes it "*flocks of savage animals*."

beasts of the nations — that is, beasts of the earth (^{<0024>}Genesis 1:24). Not as ROSENMULLER, "all kinds of beasts that form a nation," that is, gregarious beasts (^{<2405>}Proverbs 30:25,26).

cormorant — rather, the "pelican" (so ^{<9406>}Psalm 102:6 ^{<2341>}Isaiah 34:11, *Margin*).

bittern — (^{<23423}Isaiah 14:23). MAURER translates, “the hedgehog”; HENDERSON, “the porcupine.”

upper lintels — rather, “*the capitals* of her columns,” namely, in her temples and palaces [MAURER]. Or, “on the pomegranate-like knobs at the tops of the houses” [GROTIUS].

their voice shall sing in the windows — The desert-frequenting birds’ “voice in the windows” implies desolation reigning in the upper parts of the palaces, answering to “desolation ... in the thresholds,” that is, in the lower.

he shall uncover the cedar work — laying the cedar wainscoting on the walls, and beams of the ceiling, bare to wind and rain, the roof being torn off, and the windows and doors broken through. All this is designed as a consolation to the Jews that they may bear their calamities patiently, knowing that God will avenge them.

15. Nothing then seemed more improbable than that the capital of so vast an empire, a city sixty miles in compass, with walls one hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots could go abreast on them, and with fifteen hundred towers, should be so totally destroyed that its site is with difficulty discovered. Yet so it is, as the prophet foretold.

there is none beside me — This peculiar phrase, expressing self-gratulation as if peerless, is plainly adopted from ^{<23408}Isaiah 47:8. The later prophets, when the spirit of prophecy was on the verge of departing, leaned more on the predictions of their predecessors.

hiss — in astonishment at a desolation so great and sudden (^{<1008}1 Kings 9:8); also in derision (^{<38723}Job 27:23 ^{<21215}Lamentations 2:15 ^{<32730}Ezekiel 27:36).

CHAPTER 3

ZEPHANIAH 3:1-20.

RESUMPTION OF THE DENUNCIATION OF JERUSALEM, AS BEING UNREFORMED BY THE PUNISHMENT OF OTHER NATIONS: AFTER HER CHASTISEMENT JEHOVAH WILL INTERPOSE FOR HER AGAINST HER FOES; HIS WORSHIP SHALL FLOURISH IN ALL LANDS, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM, WHERE HE SHALL BE IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE, AND SHALL MAKE THEM A PRAISE IN ALL THE EARTH.

1. *filthy* — MAURER translates from a different root, “rebellious,” “contumacious.” But the following term, “polluted,” refers rather to her inward moral *filth*, in spite of her outward ceremonial purity [CALVIN]. GROTIUS says, the *Hebrew* is used of women who have prostituted their virtue. There is in the *Hebrew Moreah*; a play on the name *Moriah*, the hill on which the temple was built; implying the glaring contrast between their *filthiness* and the holiness of the worship on *Moriah* in which they professed to have a share.

oppressing — namely, the poor, weak, widows, orphans and strangers (^{<2121>}Jeremiah 22:3).

2. *received not correction* — Jerusalem is incurable, obstinately rejecting salutary admonition, and refusing to be reformed by “correction” (^{<2118>}Jeremiah 5:3).

trusted not in ... Lord — Distrust in the Lord as if He were insufficient, is the parent of all superstitions and wickednesses [CALVIN].

drew not near to her God — Though God was specially near to her (^{<1840>}Deuteronomy 4:7) as “her God,” yet she drew not near to Him, but gratuitously estranged herself from Him.

3. *roaring* — for prey (^{<1085>}Proverbs 28:15 ^{<3227>}Ezekiel 22:27 ^{<1084>}Amos 3:4 ^{<3112>}Micah 2:2).

evening wolves — which are most ravenous at evening after being foodless all day (^{<2116>}Jeremiah 5:6 Habakkuk 1:8).

they gnaw not the bones till the morrow — rather, “they put not off till to-morrow to gnaw the bones”; but devour all at once, bones and flesh, so ragingly ravenous are they [CALVIN].

4. light — in whose life and teaching there is no truth, gravity, or steadiness.

treacherous — false to Jehovah, whose prophets they profess to be (^{23:32}Jeremiah 23:32 ^{22:28}Ezekiel 22:28).

polluted ... sanctuary — by their profane deeds.

5-7. The Jews regard not God’s justice manifested in the midst of them, nor His judgments on the guilty nations around.

The just Lord — Why then are ye so unjust?

is in the midst thereof — He retorts on them their own boast, “Is not the Lord among us” (^{3:11}Micah 3:11)? True He is, but it is for another end from what ye think [CALVIN]; namely, to lead you *by the example of His righteousness* to be righteous. ^{19:2}Leviticus 19:2, “Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy” [MAURER]. But CALVIN, “That ye may feel His hand to be the nearer *for taking vengeance for your crimes*: ‘He will not do iniquity’ by suffering your sins to go unpunished” (^{32:4}Deuteronomy 32:4).

every morning — literally, “morning by morning.” The time in the sultry East for dispensing justice.

bring ... to light — publicly and manifestly by the teaching of His prophets, which aggravates their guilt; also by samples of His judgments on the guilty.

he faileth not — He is continually setting before you samples of His justice, sparing no pains. Compare ^{5:4}Isaiah 5:4 ^{50:4}Isaiah 50:4, “he wakeneth morning by morning.”

knoweth no shame — The unjust Jews are not shamed by His justice into repentance.

6. I had hoped that My people by My judgments on other nations would be led to amendment; but they are not, so blinded by sin are they.

towers — literally, “angles” or “corners”; hence the *towers* built at the angles of their city walls. Under Josiah’s long and peaceful reign the Jews were undisturbed, while the great incursion of Scythians into Western Asia took place. The judgment on the ten tribes in a former reign also is here alluded to.

7. *I said, Surely*, etc. — God speaks after the manner of men in condescension to man's infirmity; not as though God was ignorant of the future contingency, but in their sense, *Surely one might have expected* ye would under such circumstances repent: but no!

thou — at least, O Jerusalem! Compare “*thou, even thou*, at least in this thy day” (^{<099>}Luke 19:42).

their dwelling — the *sanctuary* [BUXTORF]. Or, the *city*. Compare Jesus' words (^{<035>}Luke 13:35), “Behold, *your house* is left unto you desolate” (^{<035>}Leviticus 26:31,32 ^{<092>}Psalms 69:25); and used as to *the temple* (^{<312>}Micah 3:12). “Their” is used instead of “thy”; this change of person implies that God puts them to a greater distance.

howsoever I punished them — Howsoever I might have punished them, I would not have *cut off their dwelling*. CALVIN, “Howsoever I had marked them out for punishment” because of their provocations, still, if even then they had repented, taught by My corrections, I was ready to have pardoned them. MAURER, “Altogether in accordance with what I had long ago decreed (ordained) concerning you” (^{<031>}Deuteronomy 28:1-14, and, on the other hand, ^{<035>}Deuteronomy 28:15-68 27:15-26). *English Version*, or CALVIN'S view, is better.

rose early, and corrupted, etc. — Early morning is in the East the best time for transacting serious business, before the relaxing heat of midday comes on. Thus it means, With the greatest earnestness they set themselves to “corrupt all their doings” (^{<002>}Genesis 6:12 ^{<211>}Isaiah 5:11 ^{<310>}Jeremiah 11:7 25:3).

8. *wait ye upon me* — Here Jehovah turns to the pious Jews. Amidst all these judgments on the Jewish nation, look forward to the glorious time of restoration to be ushered in by God's precious outpouring of wrath on all nations, ^{<210>}Isaiah 30:18-33; where the same phrase, “blessed are all they that *wait for Him*,” is used as to the same great event. CALVIN erroneously makes this verse an address to the ungodly; and so MAURER, “Ye shall not have to wait for Me in vain”; I will presently come armed with indignation: I will no longer contend with you by My prophets.

until the day — that is, waiting for the day (Habakkuk 2:3).

rise up to the prey — like a savage beast rising from his lair, greedy for the prey (compare ^{<035>}Matthew 24:28). Or rather, as a warrior leading Isra_el to *certain victory*, which is expressed by “the prey,” or *booty*, which is the reward of victory. The *Septuagint* and *Syriac* versions read the *Hebrew*, “I rise up as a *witness*” (compare ^{<310>}Job 16:8 Malachi 3:5). Jehovah being in

this view *witness*, accuser, and judge. *English Version* is better (compare ^{<3833>}Isaiah 33:23).

gather the nations — against Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:2), to pour out His indignation upon them there (^{<2902>}Joel 3:2 Zechariah 12:2,3).

9. For — The blessed things promised in this and ^{<3805>}Zephaniah 3:10 are the immediate results of the punishment inflicted on the nations, mentioned in Zephaniah 3:8 (compare ^{<3887>}Zephaniah 3:19).

turn to the people a pure language — that is, *changing* their impure language I will *give* to them again *a pure language* (literally, “lip”). Compare for this *Hebrew* idiom, ^{<0910>}1 Samuel 10:9, *Margin*. The confusion of languages was of the penalty sin, probably idolatry at Babel (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:1-6, *Margin*, where also “lip” expresses *language*, and perhaps also *religion*; Zephaniah 3:4, “a tower whose top *may reach* unto heaven,” or rather, *points to heaven*, namely, dedicated to *the heavens* idolized, or Bel); certainly, of rebellion against God’s will. An earnest of the removal of this penalty was the gift of tongues on pentecost (^{<4016>}Acts 2:6-13). The full restoration of the earth’s unity of language and of worship is yet future, and is connected with the restoration of the Jews, to be followed by the conversion of the world. Compare ^{<2908>}Isaiah 19:18 Zechariah 14:9 ^{<6106>}Romans 15:6, “with one mind and *one mouth* glorify God.” The Gentiles’ *lips* have been rendered impure through being the instruments of calling on idols and dishonoring God (compare ^{<6904>}Psalms 16:4 ^{<3017>}Hosea 2:17). Whether *Hebrew* shall be the one universal language or not, the God of the Hebrews shall be the one only object of worship. Until the Holy Ghost purify the *lips*, we cannot rightly call upon God (^{<2068>}Isaiah 6:5-7).

serve him with one consent — literally, “shoulder” or “back”; metaphor from a yoke, or burden, borne between two (^{<0423>}Numbers 13:23); helping one another with conjoint effort. If one of the two bearers of a burden, laid on both conjointly, give way, the burden must fall to the earth [CALVIN]. Christ’s rule is called a *burden* (^{<4013>}Matthew 11:30 ^{<4153>}Acts 15:28 ^{<6123>}Revelation 2:24; compare ^{<4044>}2 Corinthians 6:14 for the same image).

10. From beyond ... Ethiopia my suppliants — literally, “burners of incense” (compare ^{<3802>}Psalms 141:2 ^{<6108>}Revelation 5:8 8:3,4). The Isra_elites are meant, called “the daughter of My dispersed,” a *Hebrew* idiom for *My dispersed people*. “The rivers of Ethiopia” are those which enclose it on the north. In the west of Abyssinia there has long existed a people called *Falashas*, or “emigrants” (akin to the synonym “Philistine”). These trace their origin to Palestine and profess the Jewish religion. In physical traits they resemble the Arabs. When Bruce was there, they had a Jewish king, Gideon, and his queen, Judith. Probably the Abyssinian Christians were

originally in part converted Jews. They are here made the representatives of all Isra_el which is to be restored.

shall bring mine offering — that is, the *offering* that is *My right*. I prefer, with DE WETTE and *Chaldee Version*, making “suppliants” the objective case, not the nominative. The *peoples*: (Zephaniah 3:8,9), brought to fear Me by My judgments, “shall bring as Mine offering My suppliants (an appropriate term for the Jews, on whom then there shall have been poured the spirit of *supplications*, ^{<3820>}Zechariah 12:10), the daughter of My dispersed.” So ^{<2660>}Isaiah 66:20, “they shall bring all your brethren for an *offering* unto the Lord.” Compare HORSLEY’S view of ^{<2800>}Isaiah 18:1,2,7. England in this view may be the naval power to restore Isra_el to Palestine (^{<2800>}Isaiah 60:9). The *Hebrew* for “Ethiopia” is *Cush*, which may include not only Ethiopia, but also the region of the Tigris and Babylon, where Nimrod, Cush’s son (^{<0100>}Genesis 10:8-12), founded Nineveh and acquired Babylon, and where the ten tribes are mentioned as being scattered (^{<6000>}1 Peter 1:1 5:13; compare ^{<2810>}Isaiah 11:11). The restoration under Cyrus of the Jews transported under Pharaoh-necho to Egypt and Ethiopia, was an earnest of the future restoration under Christ.

11. shalt thou not be ashamed — Thou shalt then have no cause to be ashamed; for I will then *take away out of the midst of thee* those who by their sins gave thee cause for shame (Zephaniah 3:7).

them that rejoice in thy pride — those priding themselves *on that which thou boastest of*, thy temple (“My holy mountain”), thy election as God’s people, etc., in the Pharisaic spirit (^{<2400>}Jeremiah 7:4 ^{<2810>}Micah 3:11 ^{<4000>}Matthew 3:9). Compare ^{<2810>}Jeremiah 13:17, “mine eyes shall weep for *your pride*.” The converted remnant shall be of a humble spirit (^{<3820>}Zephaniah 3:12 ^{<2660>}Isaiah 66:2,10).

12. afflicted ... they shall trust in ... Lord — the blessed effect of sanctified affliction on the Jewish remnant. Entire trust in the Lord cannot be, except where all cause for boasting is taken away (^{<2400>}Isaiah 14:32 ^{<2810>}Zechariah 11:11).

13. nor speak lies — worshipping God in truth, and towards man having love without dissimulation. The characteristic of the 144,000 *sealed of Isra_el*.

none shall make them afraid — either foreign foe, or unjust prince (Zephaniah 3:3), prophet, or priest (Zephaniah 3:4).

14. The prophet in mental vision sees the joyful day of Zion present, and bids her rejoice at it.

15. The cause for joy: “The Lord hath taken away thy judgments,” namely, those sent by Him upon thee. After the taking away of sin (^{<31813>}Zephaniah 3:13) follows the taking away of trouble. When the cause is removed, the effect will cease. Happiness follows in the wake of holiness.

the Lord is in the midst of thee — Though He seemed to desert thee for a time, He is now present as thy safeguard (^{<31817>}Zephaniah 3:17).

not see evil any more — Thou shalt not *experience* it (^{<24523>}Jeremiah 5:12 44:17).

16. *Let not thine hands be slack* — (^{<38122>}Hebrews 12:12). Do not faint in the work of the Lord.

17. *he will rest in his love* — content with it as His supreme delight (compare ^{<2157>}Luke 15:7,10) [CALVIN], (^{<2316>}Isaiah 62:5 65:19). Or, *He shall be silent*, namely as to thy faults, not imputing them to thee [MAURER] (^{<3812>}Psalms 32:2 ^{<3516>}Ezekiel 33:16). I prefer explaining it of that calm *silent* joy in the possession of the object of one’s love, too great for words to express: just as God after the six days of creation *rested* with silent satisfaction in His work, for “behold it was very good” (^{<10031>}Genesis 1:31 2:2). So the parallel clause by contrast expresses the joy, not kept silent as this, but uttered in “singing.”

18. *sorrowful for the solemn assembly* — pining after the solemn assembly which they cannot celebrate in exile (^{<21004>}Lamentations 1:4 2:6).

who are of thee — that is, of thy true citizens; and whom therefore I will restore.

to whom the reproach of it was a burden — that is, to whom *thy* reproach (“the reproach of My people,” ^{<3316>}Micah 6:16; their ignominious captivity) was a burden. “Of it” is put *of thee*, as the person is often changed. Those who shared in the burden of reproach which fell on My people. Compare ^{<2318>}Isaiah 25:8, “the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth.”

19. *undo* — MAURER translates, “I will deal with,” that is, as they deserve. Compare ^{<3223>}Ezekiel 23:25, where the *Hebrew* is similarly translated. The destruction of Isra_el’s foes precedes Israel’s restoration (^{<2315>}Isaiah 66:15,16).

her that halteth — all that are helpless. Their weakness will be no barrier in the way of My restoring them. So in ^{<19515>}Psalms 35:15, *Margin*, “halting” is used for *adversity*. Also ^{<3516>}Ezekiel 34:16 ^{<31016>}Micah 4:6,7.

I will get them praise, etc. — literally, “I will make them (to become) a praise and a name,” etc.

shame — (^{<3803>}Ezekiel 34:29).

20. *make you a name ... praise* — make you to become celebrated and praised.

turn back your captivity — bring back your captives [MAURER]. The *Hebrew* is *plural*, “captivities”; to express the captivities of different ages of their history, as well as the diversity of places in which they were and are dispersed.

before your eyes — Incredible as the event may seem, *your own eyes* with delight shall see it. You will scarcely believe it for joy, but the testimony of your own eyes shall convince you of the delightful reality (compare ^{<12411>}Luke 24:41).