

ZEPHANIAH

1¹THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the time of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah.

Doom on Judah and her neighbours

²I will sweep the earth clean of all that is on it,
says the LORD.

³I will sweep away both man and beast,
I will sweep the birds from the air and the fish from the sea,
and I will bring the wicked to their knees [I will bring ... knees: *prob. rdg, Heb* the ruins with the wicked]
and wipe out mankind from the earth.
This is the very word of the LORD.

⁴I will stretch my hand over Judah
and all who live in Jerusalem;
I will wipe out from this place the last remnant of Baal
and the very name of the heathen priests,
⁵those who bow down upon the house-tops
to worship the host of heaven
and who swear by Milcom,
⁶those who have turned their backs on the LORD,
who have not sought the LORD or consulted him.

⁷Silence before the Lord GOD!
for the day of the LORD is near.
The LORD has prepared a sacrifice
and has hallowed his guests.

⁸On the day of the LORD's sacrifice.
I will punish the royal house and its chief officers
and all who ape outlandish fashions.

⁹On that day
I will punish all who dance on the temple terrace,
who fill their master's [*Or their Lord's*] house with crimes of violence and fraud.

¹⁰On that day, says the LORD,
an outcry shall be heard from the Fish Gate,
wailing from the second quarter of the city,
a loud crash from the hills;

¹¹and [*and: prob. rdg, Heb omitted*] those who live in the Lower Town shall wail.
For it is all over with the merchants,
and all the dealers in silver are wiped out.

¹²At that time

I will search Jerusalem with a lantern
and punish all who sit in stupor over the dregs of their wine,
who say to themselves,
'The LORD will do nothing, good or bad.'

¹³Their wealth shall be plundered,
their houses laid waste;
they shall build houses but not live in them,
they shall plant vineyards but not drink the wine from them.

¹⁴The great day of the LORD is near,
it comes with speed;
no runner so fast as that day,
no raiding band so swift [*no runner ... swift: prob. rdg, Heb hark, the day of the LORD is bitter, there the warrior cries aloud*].

¹⁵That day is a day of wrath,
a day of anguish and affliction,
a day of destruction and devastation,
a day of murk and gloom,
a day of cloud and dense fog,

¹⁶a day of trumpet and battle-cry
over fortified cities and lofty battlements.

¹⁷I will bring dire distress upon men;
they shall walk like blind men for their sin against the LORD.
Their blood shall be spilt like dust
and their bowels like dung;

¹⁸neither their silver nor their gold
shall avail to save them.

On the day of the LORD's wrath, by the fire of his jealousy
the whole land shall be consumed;
for he will make an end, a swift end,
of all who live in the land.

2¹Gather together, you unruly nation, gather together,

²before you are sent far away and vanish [*you are ... vanish: prob. rdg, Heb obscure*] like chaff,
before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you,
before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you.

³Seek the LORD,
all in the land who live humbly by his laws;
seek righteousness, seek a humble heart;
it may be that you will find shelter
in the day of the LORD's anger.

⁴For Gaza shall be deserted,
Ashkelon left desolate,
the people of Ashdod shall be driven out [*the people ... out: or Ashdod shall be made an example*] at noonday
and Ekron uprooted.

⁵Listen, you who live by the coast, you Kerethite settlers.
The word of the LORD is spoken against you;
I will subdue you [I ... you: *prob. rdg, Heb Canaan*], land of the Philistines,
I will lay you waste and leave you without inhabitants;
⁶and you, Kereth, shall be all shepherds' huts [you ... huts: *Heb has these words in a different order*] and sheepfolds;
⁷and the coastland shall belong to the survivors of Judah.
They shall pasture their flocks by the sea [*by the sea: prob. rdg, Heb upon them*]
and lie down at evening in the houses of Ashkelon,
for the LORD their God will turn to them
and restore their fortunes.

⁸I have heard the insults of Moab, the taunts of Ammon,
how they have insulted my people
and encroached on their frontiers.

⁹Therefore, by my life,
says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel,
Moab shall be like Sodom,
Ammon like Gomorrah,
a pile of weeds, a rotting heap of saltwort,
waste land for evermore.
The survivors of my people shall plunder them,
the remnant of my nation shall possess their land.

¹⁰This will be retribution for their pride, because they have insulted the people of the LORD of Hosts and encroached upon their rights. ¹¹The LORD will appear against them with all his terrors; for he will reduce to beggary all the gods of the earth, and all the coasts and islands of the nations will worship him, every man in his own home.

¹²You Cushites also shall be killed
by the sword of the LORD [*the sword of the LORD: prob. rdg, Heb my sword*].

¹³So let him stretch out his hand over the north
and destroy Assyria,
make Nineveh desolate,
arid as the wilderness.

¹⁴Flocks shall couch there,
and all the beasts of the wild.
Horned owl and ruffed bustard shall roost on her capitals;
the tawny owl shall hoot in the window,
and the bustard stand in the porch [*prob. rdg, Heb adds an unintelligible phrase*].

¹⁵This is the city that exulted in fancied security,
saying to herself, 'I am, and I alone.'
And what is she now? A waste, a haunt for wild beasts,
at which every passer-by shall hiss and shake his fist.

3¹Shame on the tyrant city, filthy and foul!

²No warning voice did she heed, she took no rebuke to heart,

she did not trust in the LORD or come near to her God.

³Her officers were lions roaring in her midst,
her rulers wolves of the plain [*Or evening*]
that did not wait [*Or carry off*] till morning,
⁴her prophets were reckless, no true prophets.

Her priests profaned the sanctuary
and did violence to the law.

⁵But the LORD in her midst is just;
he does no wrong;
morning by morning he gives judgement,
without fail at daybreak [*prob. rdg, Heb adds but the wrongdoer knows no shame*].

⁶I have wiped out the proud;
their battlements are laid in ruin.
I have made their streets a desert where no one passes.
Their cities are laid waste, deserted, unpeopled.

⁷In the hope that she would remember all my instructions,
I said, 'Do but fear me
and take my rebuke to heart';
but they were up betimes and went about their evil deeds.

⁸Wait for me, therefore, says the LORD,
wait for the day when I stand up to accuse you;
for mine it is to gather nations
and assemble kingdoms,
to pour out on them my indignation,
all the heat of my anger;
the whole earth shall be consumed by the fire of my jealousy.

⁹I will give all peoples once again pure lips,
that they may invoke the LORD by name
and serve him with one consent.

¹⁰From beyond the rivers of Cush
my suppliants of the Dispersion shall bring me tribute.

A remnant preserved

¹¹On that day, Jerusalem,
you shall not be put to shame for all your deeds
by which you have rebelled against me;
for then I will rid you
of your proud and arrogant citizens,
and never again shall you flaunt your pride
on my holy hill.

¹²But I will leave in you a people
afflicted and poor.

¹³The survivors in Israel shall find refuge in the name of the LORD;
they shall no longer do wrong or speak lies,

no words of deceit shall pass their lips;
for they shall feed and lie down
with no one to terrify them.

¹⁴Zion, cry out for joy;
raise the shout of triumph, Israel;
be glad, rejoice with all your heart,
daughter of Jerusalem.

¹⁵The LORD has rid you of your adversaries,
he has swept away your foes;
the LORD is among you as king, O Israel;
never again shall you fear disaster.

¹⁶On that day this shall be the message to Jerusalem:
Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands fall slack.

¹⁷The LORD your God is in your midst,
like a warrior, to keep you safe;
he will rejoice over you and be glad;
he will show you his love once more;
he will exult over you with a shout of joy

¹⁸as in days long ago [*as ... ago: prob. rdg, Heb obscure*].

I will take your cries of woe [*cries of woe: prob. rdg, Heb obscure*] away
from you;

and you shall no longer endure reproach for her.

¹⁹When that time comes, see,
I will deal with all your oppressors.
I will rescue the lost and gather the dispersed;
I will win my people praise and renown
in all the world where once they were despised.

²⁰When the time comes for me to gather you [*When ... you: prob. rdg, Heb
and in the time, my gathering you*],
I will bring you home.
I will win you renown and praise
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I bring back your prosperity; and you shall see it.
It is the LORD who speaks.