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Tsefanyah

(Zephaniah)

Introduction

Tsefanyah (commonly known as Zephaniah) was a prophet at the time that Yoshiyah (Josiah) was king of Yehudah (Judah). The people served the true God, but before long, they abandoned Yahweh and started worshipping false gods. So then Yahweh threatened to punish the people of Yerushalem (Jerusalem) city and the people across all of Yehudah because of their evil activities. However, even then, they refused to ask him for forgiveness. So in 586 before Yeshua/Jesus (B.C.), Yerushalem was destroyed by the Babylonians (sometimes also called Chaldeans). But even then, he'd planned to punish those other nations in the future for enslaving his people, then he'd allow his people to return there to Yerushalem and receive his blessing.

Main components of this document

The day of Yahweh's judgement *1:1–2:3*
The destruction of nations near Yisrael *2:4-15*
The destruction and future redemption of Yerushalem *3:1-20*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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Readers' Version

1:1 The message from Yahweh which came to Tsefanyah (Zephaniah) (son of Kush (Ethiopia), son of Gedalyah, son of Amaryah, son of Hizkiyah (Hezekiah)) in the time of Amon's son, King Yoshiyah (Josiah) of Yehudah (Judah)[1]

Coming judgement against Yehudah · Southern kingdom

2 Yahweh declares:
I will exterminate everything that lives on the ground.
3 Yahweh declares:
I'll bring humans and animals to an end, along with the birds and fish. Wicked people will be destroyed along with their idols and humankind will be cut-off from the earth. **4** I will punish the people of Yehudah (Judah),
and those living in Yerushalem (Jerusalem).
I will wipe all remnants of Ba'al out from this place.
No one will even remember the names of those priests who served idols.
5 I'll punish those who bowed down to the stars and planets from their rooftops,
and those making promises to Yahweh but then promising to the false god Malkam.[2]
6 I'll punish those who turn back after following me, Yahweh,
as well as those who haven't searched for Yahweh or prayed to me.
7 Be silent in the presence of the master Yahweh,
because his day is near.
Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice,
and he's consecrated his guests.
8 On the day of Yahweh's sacrifice, I will visit their officials and the king's sons, and all those wearing foreign clothing. **9** At that time I will punish all the officials who force their way into people's homes—the ones filling their masters' houses using fraud and violence.
10 Yahweh declares:
On that day a cry of distress will come from the Fish Gate,
and wailing from the second district
and a loud crash from the hills.
11 Wail, you inhabitants of the Maktesh,
because all of the people of Kena'an (Canaan) will be destroyed.
All the money-counters will be eliminated.
12 I will search Yerushalem (Jerusalem) with lamps at that time,
and I will punish those who've sunk to the bottom—
the ones who tell themselves,
'Yahweh will never take action—either good or bad.'
13 Their wealth will be taken as plunder
and their houses will be ruined.
They'll build houses, but they won't get to live in them.
They'll plant vineyards, but won't get to drink their wine.
14 Yahweh's big day of judgement is near—
close and coming quickly.
The sound of Yahweh's day is bitter—
even warriors will cry out.
15 That day will be a day of anger,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of destruction and desolation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of cloud and thick darkness,
16 a day of trumpet blasts and with the battle cry
against the fortified cities and against the high towers on their corners.
17 I'll bring distress to the people,
and they'll walk slowly as if they were blind,
because they've sinned against Yahweh.
Their blood will be poured out like dust,
and their innards like dung.
18 Their silver, and even their gold, won't be able to save them
on the day of Yahweh's anger.
The whole earth will be consumed in the fire of his jealousy
because he'll soon destroy people from all over the world.

1 RV 1:1 · Cross-ref. 2Ki 22:1–23:30; 2Ch 34:1–35:27.

2 RV 1:5 · Note A variant of the name of the pagan god 'Molek' (or 'Molech', but also close to the Hebrew word for 'king' as found in some other translations).

Readers' Version

Do what is right · Southern kingdom

2:1 Gather yourselves together,
yes, assemble now you shameless nation
2 before the decree is made,
before the day passes like chaff,
before Yahweh's anger reaches you all,
yes, before that day of Yahweh's anger hits you.
3 Search for Yahweh, all you humble people who do his justice.
Aim to do what is right and to stay humble.
Perhaps you'll be hidden away on the day Yahweh's anger.

The demolition of places near Yisrael

4 Because Azah (Gaza) will become abandoned,
and Ashkelon will become a ruin.
The people of Ashdod will be driven out by noon,
and Ekron will be overthrown.[3]
5 The inhabitants of the coastal region are to be pitied,
the nation of the Kereti.
Yahweh's decision is against you all,
Kena'an (Canaan), land of the Pelishtim.
I'll destroy you until no one remains.
6 The coastal region will become pastures of meadows for shepherds
and pens for flocks.
7 The remaining survivors from Yehudah (Judah) will inhabit that region.
They will shepherd their flocks on that land.
They'll lie down in their houses in Ashkelon in the evening,
because their god Yahweh will visit them, and he'll restore their fortune.
8 I've heard Moav's (Moab's) mocking[4]
and the Amonim' insults.[5]
They've insulted my people
and built up their forces against their border.
9 Commander-in-chief Yahweh, Yisrael's (Israel's) god, declares:
As certain as I'm alive,
Moav will become like Sedom,
and the Amonim like Amorah (Gomorrah),
overrun by nettles and salt-pits—in ruins forever.[6]
The remnant of my people will plunder them,
and the remainder of my nation will take possession of them.
10 That will be the fruit of their pride,
because they mocked and talked themselves up
against the people of Commander-in-chief Yahweh.
11 The people of Moav (Moab) and Amon will be very scared when Yahweh punishes them.
He'll do that so powerfully that people will stop worshipping all other gods.
People in every nation will worship Yahweh instead—each person in their own country.
12 Also you, Kushim (Ethiopians) (Kushim), will be killed by my sword.[7]
13 Yahweh will punish those in the north.
Yes, he'll destroy Ashur (Assyria).
He'll turn Nineveh into ruins—
it'll become a dry place like the desert.[8]
14 Herds of every kind of wild animals will lie down in the middle of it,
Various kinds of owls will sit on the pillars still standing.
A call will hoot in the window.
Rubble will blocking any doorways still upright,
because the cedar planks will be exposed.
15 This is the proud city where people lived in security.
The one with a reputation: "No other city compares with me."
How it's become a ruin—a home for the wild animals.

3 **RV 2:4-7 · Cross-ref.** Isa 14:29-31; Jer 47:1-7; Eze 25:15-17; Yoel 3:4-8; Amos 1:6-8; Zech 9:5-7.

4 **RV 2:8-11 · Cross-ref.** Isa 15:1–16:14; 25:10-12; Jer 48:1-47; Eze 25:8-11; Amos 1:13-15.

5 **RV 2:8-11 · Cross-ref.** Jer 49:1-6; Eze 21:28-32; 25:1-7; Amos 1:13-15.

6 **RV 2:9 · Cross-ref.** Gen 19:24.

7 **RV 2:12 · Cross-ref.** Isa 18:1-7.

8 **RV 2:13-15 · Cross-ref.** Isa 10:5-34; 14:24-27; Nah 1:1–3:19.

Readers' Version

Every one passing by will hiss at it in derision,
and shake their fist remembering their hate for it.

Yerushalem's sin · Southern kingdom

3:1 The one rebelling
and being defiled is to be pitied—
the city of oppressors.
2 She doesn't listen to what she's told.
She doesn't take correction.
She refuses to trust in Yahweh.
She won't approach her god.
3 Her leaders are roaring lions among the flock.
Her judges are wolves that approach in the evening.
There's nothing left to eat by the morning.
4 Her prophets are insolent, treacherous men.
Her priests profane the sanctuary—they violate God's law.
5 Yahweh behaves fairly in her midst.
He doesn't do anything that's wrong.
He makes fair and just judgements every morning.
At every dawn, he's present there,
and yet those who are disobedient have no shame.
6 I've destroyed nations—broken down their walls.
I've destroyed their streets and now they're deserted.
Their cities are ruined, lifeless,
without anyone living in them.
7 I said, 'Surely you will respect me and accept correction.
Then she won't die as a city because of my punishing her.'
Nevertheless, they got up early to do all their corrupt activities.
8 Yahweh declares:
Wait for me, for when I pounce on the prey,
because my decision is to gather nations and assemble kingdoms,
to pour my indignation and all my anger out on them,
because the whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealousy.
9 Then I'll be sure to give pure speech to the peoples,
so all of them can pray to Yahweh,
and serve him side-by-side.
10 From across the rivers of Kush (Ethiopia) (Kush), my worshippers,
my scattered children will return and bring my offering.
11 On that day you won't feel ashamed about all the times you disobeyed me,
because at that time, I'll remove those proud people from among you,
and you won't continue to be arrogant on my sacred mountain.
12 And I'll leave the poorer and humble people among you,
and they'll trust in Yahweh's authority.
13 The surviving Israelis won't do what is wrong.
They won't tell lies or deceive others.[9]
Instead they'll eat and sleep in peace,
No one will be there to terrify them.

The song of happiness · Both kingdoms

14 Tsiyon's (Zion's) daughter, sing happily.
All Yisrael (Israel), shout aloud.
Daughters of Yerushalem (Jerusalem), be happy and triumphant will all your being.
15 Yahweh will stop punishing you.
He's forced your enemy to retreat.
Yisrael's king, Yahweh, is among you.
Don't worry any more about being harmed.
16 In that day Yerushalem will be told,
"Don't be afraid, Tsiyon (Zion).
Don't let your hands grow weak.
17 Your god Yahweh is right there.
A powerful warrior, he'll save you.
He'll be so happy about you.
He'll be silent in his love.
He'll talk happily about your rescue."
18 I will gather those among you who grieve so they can attend the celebrations.
They were taken as tribute and it was a reproach.

9 **RV 3:13 · Cross-ref.** Rev 14:5.

Readers' Version

19 Look, I'll be dealing with all of your oppressors at that time.
I'll save your people who are disabled or who've been shamed.
Then I'll get them praising,
and change their shame into a good reputation around the world.

20 At that time I will bring you all in—
yes, I'll gather you all together at that time.
You'll have a good reputation and people all over the world will praise you,
as I restore your good fortune right in front of your eyes.
Yahweh has spoken.

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