
a ***Grace Notes*** course

Zephaniah

From Commentary on the Old Testament

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch

adapted for Grace Notes training by Warren Doud

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Zephaniah

Introduction

Person of the Prophet.—*Zephaniah's* family is traced back in the heading to his book through four members, namely, to his great-great-grandfather *Hezekiah*; from which it has been justly inferred, that inasmuch as the father only is mentioned as a general rule, Hezekiah must have been a celebrated man, and that in all probability the king of that name is intended. For the only other person of such a name mentioned in the earlier history is an Ephraimite called *Yhizkiyâh* in 2 Chron. 28:12, and he can hardly be the person intended. The circumstance that Hezekiah is not described as the king of that name by the predicate *hammelekh* or *melekh Yhūdâh*, furnishes no decided argument against this assumption, but may probably be explained on the ground that the predicate "king of Judah" follows immediately afterwards in connection with Josiah's name. There is still less force in the objection, that in the genealogy of the kings only two generations occur between Hezekiah and Josiah, inasmuch as Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years, that is to say, for nearly two generations. The name Zephaniah (*Tsphanyâh*), i.e., he whom Jehovah hides or shelters, not "*speculator et arcanorum Dei cognitor*," as Jerome explains it according to an erroneous derivation from *tsâphâh* instead of *tsâphan*, occurs again as the name of a priest (Jer. 21:1; 29:25, etc.), as well as of other persons (cf. Zech. 6:10, 14, 1 Chron. 6:21). The LXX write it Σοφονίας, *Sophonias*, according to their usual custom of expressing *ḡ* by *ç*, and the Sheva by a short vowel which is regulated by the full vowel that follows; they have also changed the *a* into *o*, as in the case of Γοδολίου for *Gdalyâh* in Zeph. 1:1. Nothing further is known concerning the prophet's life. The statement in Ps. Dorothei and Ps. Epiph., that he sprang "from the tribe of Simeon, from the mountain of Sarabathâ" (*al. Baratha* or *Sabartharam*), is quite worthless. The date at which he lived is determined by the statement in the heading to his book, to the

effect that he prophesied under king Josiah the son of Amos, who reigned from 641 to 610 B.C. This agrees both with the place assigned to his book in the series of the minor prophets, namely, between Habakkuk and Haggai, and also by the contents of his prophecies. According to Zeph. 2:13ff., where he predicts the destruction of the kingdom of Asshur and the city of Nineveh, the Assyrian empire was still in existence in his time, and Nineveh was not yet conquered, which took place, according to our discussions on Nahum (pp. 380ff.), at the earliest, in the closing years of Josiah's reign, and possibly not till after his death. Moreover, his description of the moral depravity which prevailed in Jerusalem coincided in many respects with that of Jeremiah, whose labours as a prophet commenced in the thirteenth year of Josiah. Along with the worship of Jehovah (Zeph. 1:5; cf. Jer. 6:20), he speaks of idolatry (Zeph. 1:4, 5; cf. Jer. 7:17, 18), of false swearing by Jehovah, and swearing by the idols (Zeph. 1:5b; Jer. 5:2; 7:9, and 5:7; 12:16), of the wicked treatment of the *thorâh* (Zeph. 3:4; Jer. 8:8, 9), of the fruitlessness of all the admonitions that have hitherto been addressed to Judah (Zeph. 3:2; Jer. 2:30; 7:28), and of the deep moral corruption that has pervaded all ranks—the royal family, the princes, the prophets, and the priests (Zeph. 1:4, 8, 9; 3:3, 4; cf. Jer. 2:8, 26). He describes the nation as a shameless one (Zeph. 2:1; 3:5; cf. Jer. 3:3; 6:15; 8:12), and Jerusalem as a rebellious city (מִוְרָאָה, Zeph. 3:1; cf. Jer. 6:17; 5:23), as stained with blood and the abominations of idolatry (Zeph. 3:1; cf. Jer. 2:22, 23, 34), and as oppressive towards widows and orphans, and with its houses full of unrighteous possessions (Zeph. 3:1 and 1:9; cf. Jer. 5:27, 28; 6:6).

The only point open to dispute is whether Zephaniah's prophecy belonged to the first or the second half of the thirty-first year of Josiah's reign. Whilst Ewald supposes that Zephaniah wrote at a time when "not even any preparation had yet been made in Jerusalem for that important and thorough reformation of religion which king Josiah attempted with such

energetic decision and such good results in the second half of his reign" (2 Kings 22, 23), most of the other commentators infer from Zeph. 1:4, where the extermination of the remnant of Baal is predicted, and with greater propriety, that Josiah's reformation of religion had already commenced, and that the outward predominance of idolatry was already broken down when Zephaniah uttered his prophecies. For the prophet could not well speak of a remnant of Baal before the abolition of the idolatry introduced into the kingdom by Manasseh and Amon had really commenced. But Ewald and Hävernich reply to this, that the prophet announces that even the remnant and the name of idolatry are to disappear, so that nothing at all will remain, and that this presupposes that in the time of the prophet not only the remnant of the worship of Baal was in existence, but the Baal-worship itself. But however correct the former remark may be, there is no ground for the conclusion drawn from it. The destruction of Baal, even to the very remnant and name, does not warrant the assumption that the worship of Baal still existed in undiminished power and extent at the time when the threat was uttered, but could be fully explained if there were only remnants of it left to which the expression "remnant of Baal" primarily refers. If nothing had been hitherto done for the abolition of idolatry, Zephaniah would certainly have spoken differently and more strongly than he does in Zeph. 1:4, 5, concerning the abomination of it. If, for example, according to Zeph. 1:5, sacrifices were still offered upon the roofs to the army of heaven, the existence of the Jehovah-worship is also presupposed in the reproof in Zeph. 3, 4, "the priests pollute the sanctuary;" and in the words "them that swear by Jehovah, and swear by their king" (Zeph. 1:5), Jehovah-worship and idolatry are mentioned as existing side by side. We cannot therefore regard the opinion, that "throughout the whole of the prophecy there is no trace of any allusion to Josiah's reformation," as a well-founded one. According to the more precise account given in the Chronicles, Josiah commenced the reformation of worship in the

twelfth year of his reign (2 Chron. 34:3-7), and in the eighteenth year he had the temple repaired. It was then that the book of the law was discovered, the reading of which affected the king so much, that he not only appointed a solemn passover, but after the feast was over had all the remaining traces of idolatry in Jerusalem and Judah completely obliterated (2 Kings 23:24). Now, as Zephaniah's prophecy presupposes the maintenance of the temple-worship, it can only have been uttered after the purification of the temple from the abominations of idolatry that were practised in its courts, and in all probability was not uttered till after the completion of the repairs of the temple, and the celebration of the solemn passover in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. The time cannot be determined more exactly.

The threat in Zeph. 1:8, that the judgment shall fall upon the princes, and even upon the king's sons, does not warrant us in concluding that the sons of Josiah had reached a sufficient age to have occasioned the announcement of punishment, by sinful acts for which they themselves were accountable, which would not apply to the twelfth year of the king's reign, when Jehoiakim was six years old, Jehoahaz four years, and when Zedekiah was not yet born, but only to the eighteenth year, when Jehoiakim had reached his twelfth year and Jehoahaz his tenth. For "the king's sons" are not necessarily the sons of the reigning sovereign only, but may also include the sons of the deceased kings, Manasseh and Amon; and this general threat of judgment announced against all ranks may be understood without hesitation as relating to all princes or persons of royal blood. The character of the prophecy as a whole also furnishes no decisive points bearing upon the question, whether it was uttered or composed before or after the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. For the tendency to promote the work of religious reformation which had already commenced, by means of strong prophetic encouragements, in order that it might lead to a division, and therefore to decision for the Lord (Zeph. 2:1-3, which

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Hävernicks and several other commentators claim for our prophecy, can no more be proved to exist in the writing before us, than the conjecture expressed by Delitzsch in Herzog's *Cyclopaedia*, that the prophet did not come forward with his threat till the efforts of the pious king to exterminate utterly the worship of Baal had reached their highest point, without securing their end; inasmuch as it is in accordance with the position of things and the character of prophecy, that when human efforts have done their utmost without securing the desired result, Jehovah interposes and threatens what still remains of Baal with His outstretched arm of punishment. For however correct the remark (of Delitzsch) may be, that in the form in which the prophecy lies before us it contains no trace of any intention to promote the work taken in hand by the king, and that the state of the nation as reflected therein is not a progressive one in process of reformation, but appears rather to be a finished one and ripe for judgment; the latter only applies to the mass of the nation, who were incorrigible, and therefore ripe for judgment, and does not preclude the existence of a better kernel, to which the prophet could still preach repentance, and cry, "Seek ye the Lord, seek humility; perhaps ye may be hidden in the day of Jehovah" (Zeph. 2:3). But the nation was in this state not only after the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, but also before it; and the efforts of the pious king to exterminate idolatry, and to raise and revive the worship of Jehovah, could effect no further alteration in this, than that individuals out of the corrupt mass were converted, and were saved from destruction. The measure of the sin, which was inevitable followed by the destruction of the kingdom of Judah, had been already filled by Manasseh, and Josiah's reformation could only effect a postponement, and not avert the threatened judgment (compare 2 Kings 12:10-16 with 23:26, 27).

The Book of Zephaniah does not contain two or three prophetic addresses, but the quintessence of the oral proclamations of the prophet condensed into one lengthened

prophecy, commencing with the threat of judgment (Zeph. 1), proceeding to an exhortation to repentance (Zeph. 2-3:8), and concluding with a promise of the salvation which would flourish for the remnant of Israel after the termination of the judgment (Zeph. 3:9-20). This is arranged in three sections. The first section consists of the first chapter; the second reaches from Zeph. 2:1 to Zeph. 3:8; and the third comprises Zeph. 3:9-20. This division is indicated by both the contents and the form of the announcement: by the contents, since the first two parts threaten the judgment and assign the reason, whilst the third follows with the promise; by the form, inasmuch as the thought in Zeph. 1:18, "All the earth shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy," is repeated as a *refrain* in Zeph. 3:8, and the *hōi* in Zeph. 2:5 answers to the *hōi* in Zeph. 3:1, the former announcing the judgment upon the nations, the latter the judgment upon Jerusalem, which assigns the motive for the summons to repentance in Zeph. 2:1-4. Zephaniah proclaims the judgment upon the whole earth, upon all the heathen nations, and upon Judah and Jerusalem, in the following order: In the first part of his prophecy he threatens the near approach of the judgment upon the whole earth (Zeph. 1:2-7) and upon Judah (Zeph. 1:8-13), and depicts its terrible character (Zeph. 1:14-18); and in the second part (Zeph. 2-3:8) he exhorts the people to repent, and the righteous to persevere (Zeph. 2:1-3), and assigns a reason for this exhortation, by announcing that the Lord will judge the heathen nations both near and at hand and far off for the reproach which they have cast upon His people, and by destroying their power lead them to reverence His name (Zeph. 2:4-15), and will also bring His righteousness to light in Jerusalem and Judah by the destruction of the ungodly (Zeph. 3:1-8). Then (the announcement of salvation commences thus in Zeph. 3:9, 10) will the nations serve Jehovah with one accord, and lead His scattered people to Him. The remnant of Israel will be made into a humble nation of God by the destruction of the wicked one out of

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the midst of it; and being sheltered by its God, it will rejoice in undisturbed happiness, and be exalted to "a name and praise" among all the nations of the earth (Zeph. 3:11–20).

Zephaniah's prophecy has a more general character, embracing both judgment and salvation in their totality, so as to form one complete picture. It not only commences with the announcement of a universal judgment upon the whole world, out of which the judgment rises that will fall upon Judah on account of its sins, and upon the world of nations on account of its hostility to the people of Jehovah; but it treats throughout of the great and terrible day of Jehovah, on which the fire of the wrath of God consumes the whole earth (Zeph. 1:14–18; 2:2; 3:8). But the judgment, as a revelation of the wrath of God on account of the general corruption of the world, does not form the centre of gravity or the sole object of the whole of the predictions of our prophet. The end and goal at which they aim are rather the establishment of divine righteousness in the earth, and the judgment is simply the means and the way by which this the aim of all the development of the world's history is to be realized. This comes clearly out in the second and third sections. Jehovah will manifest Himself terribly to the nations, to destroy all the gods of the earth, that all the islands of the nations may worship Him (Zeph. 2:11). By pouring out His wrath upon nations and kingdoms, He will turn to the peoples a pure lip, so that they will call upon His name and serve Him with one shoulder (Zeph. 3:8, 9). The idolaters, the wicked, and the despisers of God will be destroyed out of Judah and Jerusalem, that the righteousness of Jehovah may come to the day (Zeph. 3:1–7). The humble, who do God's righteousness, are to seek Jehovah, to strive after righteousness and humility, and to wait for the Lord, for the day when He will arise, to procure for Himself worshippers of His name among the nations through the medium of the judgment, and to gather together His dispersed people, and make the remnant of Israel into a sanctified and blessed people of God (Zeph. 3:11–20).

It is in this comprehensive character of his prophecy that we find the reason why Zephaniah neither names, nor minutely describes, the executors of the judgment upon Judah, and even in the description of the judgment to be inflicted upon the heathen nations (Zeph. 2:4–15) simply individualizes the idea of "all the nations of the earth," by naming the nearer and more remote nations to the west and east, the south and north of Judah. He does not predict either this or that particular judgment, but extends and completes in comprehensive generality the judgment, by which God maintains His kingdom on the earth. This peculiarity in Zephaniah's prophecy has been correctly pointed out by Bucer (in his commentary, 1528), when he says of the book before us: "If any one wishes all the secret oracles of the prophets to be given in a brief compendium, let him read through this brief Zephaniah." There are many respects in which Zephaniah links his prophecy to those of the earlier prophets, both in subject-matter and expression; not, however, by resuming those prophecies of theirs which had not been fulfilled, or were not exhausted, during the period of the Assyrian judgment upon the nations, and announcing a fresh and more perfect fulfilment of them by the Chaldaeans, but by reproducing in a compendious form the fundamental thoughts of judgment and salvation which are common to all the prophets, that his contemporaries may lay them to heart; in doing which he frequently appropriates striking words and pregnant expression taken from his predecessors, and applies them to his own purpose. Thus, for example, the expression in Zeph. 1:7 is compiled from earlier prophetic words: "Be silent before the Lord Jehovah (from Hab. 2:20), for the day of Jehovah is at hand (Joel 1:15 and others); for Jehovah has prepared a sacrificial slaughter (Isa. 34:6), has consecrated His invited ones (Isa. 13:3)." (For further remarks on this point, see my *Lehrbuch der Einleitung*, p. 307). In this respect Zephaniah opens the series of the less original prophets of the Chaldaean age of judgment, who rest more upon the

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earlier types; whilst in more material respects his predecessor Habakkuk acted as pioneer to the prophets of this period.

Ewald's view bears evidence of a strong misapprehension of the nature of the prophecy generally, and of the special peculiarities of the prophecy before us. "The book of Zephaniah," he says, "must have originated in a great commotion among the nations, which threw all the kingdoms round about Judah far and wide into a state of alarm, and also threatened to be very dangerous to Jerusalem,"—namely, on account of the invasion of Upper and Hither Asia by the Scythians, which is mentioned by Herodotus in i. 15, 103–6, iv. 10ff. For there is not a trace discoverable in the whole book of any great commotion among the nations. The few allusions to the fact that a hostile army will execute the judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah (in Zeph. 1:12, 13, 16, and 3:15) do not presuppose anything of the kind; and in the threatening of the judgment upon Philistia, Moab and Ammon, Cush, and Asshur with Nineveh, Jehovah only is named as executing it (Zeph. 2:4–15). Moreover, neither Herodotus nor the historical books of the Old Testament mention any conquest of Jerusalem by the Scythians; whilst, even according to the account given by Herodotus, the Scythian hordes neither destroyed Nineveh nor made war upon the Cushites (Aethiopians), as would be predicted by Zephaniah (Zeph. 2:12–15), if he had the Scythians in his eye; and lastly, Jeremiah, upon whose prophecies Ewald, Hitzig, and Bertheau have principally based their Scythian hypothesis, knows nothing of the Scythians, but simply expects and announces that the judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem will come from the Chaldaeans. Zephaniah found the historical occasion for his prophecy in the moral depravity of Judah and Jerusalem, in the depth to which his people had fallen in idolatry, and in their obstinate resistance to all the efforts made by the prophets and the pious king Josiah to stem the corruption, and thus avert from Judah the judgment threatened even by Moses and the earlier prophets, of the dispersion of the whole nation among the

heathen. On the ground of the condition of his people, and the prophetic testimonies of his predecessors, Zephaniah, under the impulse of the Spirit of God, predicted the near approach of the great and terrible day of Jehovah, which came upon Judah and the heathen nations far and wide through the instrumentality of the Chaldaeans. For Nebuchadnezzar laid the foundation of the empire which devastated Judah, destroyed Jerusalem with its temple, and led the degenerate covenant nation into exile. This empire was perpetuated in the empires of the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans, which arose after it and took its place, and in whose power Judah continued, even after the return of one portion of the exiles to the land of their fathers, and after the restoration of the temple and the city of Jerusalem during the Persian rule; so that the city of God was trodden down by the heathen even to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, whereby the desolation of the holy land, which continues to the present day, was produced, and the dispersion of the Jews to all quarters of the globe accomplished, and both land and people were laid under the ban, from which Israel can only be liberated by its conversion to Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all nations, and from which it will assuredly be redeemed by virtue of the promise of the faithful covenant God. For the exegetical literature, see my *Lehrbuch der Einleitung*, pp. 305–6.

Zephaniah 1

The Judgment Upon All the World, and Upon Judah in Particular

Zephaniah 1. The judgment will come upon all the world (vv. 2, 3), and will destroy all the idolaters and despisers of God in Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 4–7), and fall heavily upon sinners of every rank (vv. 8–13). The terrible day of the Lord will burst irresistibly upon all the inhabitants of the earth (vv. 14–18).

Zephaniah 1:1–3. V. 1 contains the heading, which has been explained in the introduction. Vv. 2 and 3 form the preface.—V. 2. "I will sweep, sweep away everything from the face of

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the earth, is the saying of Jehovah. V. 3. I will sweep away man and cattle, sweep away the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the offences with the sinners, and I cut off men from the face of the earth, is the saying of Jehovah." The announcement of the judgment upon the whole earth not only serves to sharpen the following threat of judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem in this sense, "Because Jehovah judges the whole world, He will punish the apostasy of Judah all the more;" but the judgment upon the whole world forms an integral part of his prophecy, which treats more fully of the execution of the judgment in and upon Judah, simply because Judah forms the kingdom of God, which is to be purified from its dross by judgment, and led on towards the end of its divine calling. As Zephaniah here opens the judgment awaiting Judah with an announcement of a judgment upon the whole world, so does he assign the reason for his exhortation to repentance in Zeph. 2, by showing that all nations will succumb to the judgment; and then announces in Zeph. 3:9ff., as the fruit of the judgment, the conversion of the nations to Jehovah, and the glorification of the kingdom of God. The way to salvation leads through judgment, not only for the world with its enmity against God, but for the degenerate theocracy also. It is only through judgment that the sinful world can be renewed and glorified. The verb **חָסַף**, the *hiphil* of *sūph*, is strengthened by the inf. abs. **חֹסֵף**, which is formed from the verb **חָסַף**, a verb of kindred meaning. *Sūph* and *'āsaph* signify to take away, to sweep away, *hiph.* to put an end, to destroy. *Kōl*, everything, is specified in v. 3: men and cattle, the birds of heaven, and the fishes of the sea; the verb *'āsēph* being repeated before the two principal members. This specification stands in unmistakable relation to the threatening of God: to destroy all creatures for the wickedness of men, from man to cattle, and to creeping things, and even to the fowls of the heaven (Gen. 6:7). By playing upon this threat, Zephaniah intimates that the approaching judgment will be as general over the earth, and

as terrible, as the judgment of the flood. Through this judgment God will remove or destroy the offences (stumbling-blocks) together with the sinners. **אֶת** before **הַרְשָׁעִים** cannot be the sign of the accusative, but can only be a preposition, with, together with, since the objects to **חָסַף** are all introduced without the sign of the accusative; and, moreover, if **אֶת-הַרְשָׁעִים** were intended for an accusative, the copula *Vāv* would not be omitted. *Hammakhshēlōth* does not mean houses about to fall (Hitzig), which neither suits the context nor can be grammatically sustained, since even in Isa. 3:6 *hammakshēlāh* is not the fallen house, but the state brought to ruin by the sin of the people; and *makhshēlāh* is that against which or through which a person meets with a fall. *Makhshēlōth* are all the objects of coarser and more refined idolatry, not merely the idolatrous images, but all the works of wickedness, like τὰ σκάνδαλα in Matt. 13:41. The judgment, however, applies chiefly to men, i.e., to sinners, and hence in the last clause the destruction of men from off the earth is especially mentioned. The irrational creation is only subject to φθορά, on account of and through the sin of men (Rom. 8:20ff.).

Zephaniah 1:4-7. The judgment coming upon the whole earth with all its inhabitants will fall especially upon Judah and Jerusalem. V. 4. "And I stretch my hand over Judah, and over all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and cut off from this place the remnant of Baal, the name of the consecrated servants, together with the priests. V. 5. And those who worship the army of heaven upon the roofs, and the worshippers who swear to Jehovah, and who swear by their king. V. 6. And those who draw back from Jehovah, and who did not seek Jehovah, and did not inquire for Him." God stretches out His hand (**יָד**) or His arm (**זְרוֹעַ**) to smite the ungodly with judgments (compare Zeph. 6:6, Deut. 4:34; 5:15, with Isa. 5:25; 9:11, 16, 20; 10:4; 14:26ff.). Through the judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem He will cut off **שְׂאֵר הַבַּעַל**, the remnant of Baal, i.e., all that remains of Baal and of idolatry; for Baal or the

Baal-worship stands *per synecdochen* for idolatry of every kind (see at Hos. 2:10). The emphasis lies upon “the remnant,” all that still exists of the Baal-worship or idolatry, even to the very last remnant; so that the emphasis presupposes that the extermination has already begun, that the worship of Baal no longer exists in undiminished force and extent. It must not be limited, however, to the complete abolition of the outward or grosser idolatry, but includes the utter extermination of the grosser as well as the more refined Baal-worship. That the words should be so understood is required by the parallel clause: the name of the consecrated servants together with the priests. *Kmârîm* are not prophets of Baal, but, as in 2 Kings 23:5 and Hos. 10:5, the priests appointed by the kings of Judah for the worship of the high places and the idolatrous worship of Jehovah (for the etymology of the word, see at 2 Kings 23:5). The *kôhănîm*, as distinguished from these, are idolatrous priests in the stricter sense of the word (i.e., those who conducted the literal idolatry). The names of both the idolatrous priests of Jehovah and the literal priests of the idols are to be cut off, so that not only the persons referred to will disappear, but even their names will be heard no more. Along with the idols and their priests, the worshippers of idols are also to be destroyed. Just as in v. 4 two classes of priests are distinguished, so in v. 5 are two classes of worshippers, viz., (1) the star-worshippers, and (2) those who tried to combine the worship of Jehovah and the worship of idols; and to these a third class is added in v. 6. The worship of the stars was partly Baal-worship, the sun, moon, and stars being worshipped as the bearers of the powers of nature worshipped in Baal and Asherah (see at 2 Kings 23:5); and partly Sabaeism or pure star-worship, the stars being worshipped as the originators of all growth and decay in nature, and the leaders and regulators of all sublunary things (see at 2 Kings 21:3). The worship took place upon the roofs, i.e., on altars erected upon the flat roofs of the houses, chiefly by the burning of incense (Jer. 19:13), but also by the offering of sacrifices (2 Kings 23:12; see the

comm. *in loc.*). “They offered the sacrifices upon the roofs, that they might be the better able to see the stars in the heavens” (Theodoret). Along with the star-worshippers as the representatives of literal idolatry, Zephaniah mentions as a second class the worshippers who swear partly to Jehovah, and partly by their king, i.e., who go limping on two sides (1 Kings 18:21), or try to combine the worship of Jehovah with that of Baal. *Malkâm*, their king, is Baal, who is distinctly called king in the inscriptions (see Movers, *Phönizier*, i. pp. 171–2), and not the “earthly king of the nation,” as Hitzig has erroneously interpreted the Masoretic text, in consequence of which he proposes to read *milkôm*, i.e., Moloch. נִשְׁבַּע with לֵי signifies to take an oath to Jehovah, i.e., to bind one’s self on oath to His service; whereas נִשְׁבַּע with בְּ (to swear by a person) means to call upon Him as God when taking an oath. The difference between the two expressions answers exactly to the religious attitude of the men in question, who pretended to be worshippers of Jehovah, and yet with every asseveration took the name of Baal into their mouth. In v. 6 we have not two further classes mentioned, viz., “the vicious and the irreligious,” as Hitzig supposes; but the persons here described form only one single class. Retiring behind Jehovah, drawing back from Him, turning the back upon God, is just the same as not seeking Jehovah, or not inquiring after Him. The persons referred to are the religiously indifferent, those who do not trouble themselves about God, the despisers of God.

Zephaniah 1:7. This judgment will speedily come. V. 7. “Be silent before the Lord Jehovah! For the day of Jehovah is near, for Jehovah has prepared a slaying of sacrifice, He has consecrated His called.” The command, “Be silent before the Lord,” which is formed after Hab. 2:20, and with which the prophet summons to humble, silent submission to the judgment of God, serves to confirm the divine threat in vv. 2–6. The reason for the commanding Hush! (keep silence) is given in the statement that the day of Jehovah is close at

hand (compare Joel 1:15), and that God has already appointed the executors of the judgment. The last two clauses of the verse are formed from reminiscences taken from Isaiah. The description of the judgment as *zebhash*, a sacrifice, is taken from Isa. 34:6 (cf. Jer. 46:10 and Ezek. 39:17). The sacrifice which God has prepared is the Jewish nation; those who are invited to this sacrificial meal ("called," 1 Sam. 9:13) are not beasts and birds of prey, as in Ezek. 39:17, but the nations which He has consecrated to war that they may consume Jacob (Jer. 10:25). The extraordinary use of the verb *hiqdīsh* (consecrated) in this connection may be explained from Isa. 13:3, where the nations appointed to make war against Babel are called *mquddāshīm*, the sanctified of Jehovah (cf. Jer. 22:7).

Zephaniah 1:8–13. The judgment will fall with equal severity upon the idolatrous and sinners of every rank (vv. 8–11), and no one in Jerusalem will be able to save himself from it (vv. 12, 13). In three double verses Zephaniah brings out three classes of men who differ in their civil position, and also in their attitude towards God, as those who will be smitten by the judgment: viz., (1) the princes, i.e., the royal family and superior servants of the king, who imitate the customs of foreigners, and oppress the people (vv. 8, 9); (2) the merchants, who have grown rich through trade and usury (vv. 10, 11); (3) the irreligious debauchees (vv. 12, 13). The first of these he threatens with visitation. V. 8. *"And it will come to pass in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I visit the princes and the king's sons, and all who clothe themselves in foreign dress.* V. 9. *And I visit every one who leaps over the threshold on that day, those who fill the Lord's house with violence and deceit."* The enumeration of those who are exposed to the judgment commences with the *princes*, i.e., the heads of the tribes and families, who naturally filled the higher offices of state; and the *king's sons*, not only the sons of Josiah, who were still very young (see the Introduction, p. 435), but also the sons of the deceased kings, the royal princes generally. The king himself is not named, because Josiah

walked in the ways of the Lord, and on account of his piety and fear of God was not to lie to see the outburst of the judgment (2 Kings 22:19, 20; 2 Chron. 34:27, 28). The princes and king's sons are threatened with punishment, not on account of the high position which they occupied in the state, but on account of the ungodly disposition which they manifested. For since the clauses which follow not only mention different classes of men, but also point out the sins of the different classes, we must also expect this in the case of the princes and the king's sons, and consequently must refer the dressing in foreign clothes, which is condemned in the second half of the verse, to the princes and king's sons also, and understand the word "all" as relating to those who imitated their manners without being actually princes or king's sons. *Malbūsh nokhrī* (foreign dress) does not refer to the clothes worn by the idolaters in their idolatrous worship (Chald., Rashi, Jer.), nor to the dress prohibited in the law, viz., "women dressing in men's clothes, or men dressing in women's clothes" (Deut. 22:5, 11), as Grotius maintains, nor to clothes stolen from the poor, or taken from them as pledges; but, as *nokhrī* signifies a foreigner, to foreign dress. Drusius has already pointed this out, and explains the passage as follows: "I think that the reference is to all those who betrayed the levity of their minds by wearing foreign dress. For I have no doubt that in that age some copied the Egyptians in their style of dress, and others the Babylonians, according as they favoured the one nation or the other. The prophet therefore says, that even those who adopted foreign habits, and conformed themselves to the customs of the victorious nation, would not be exempt." The last allusion is certainly untenable, and it would be more correct to say with Strauss: "The prophets did not care for externals of this kind, but it was evident to them that 'as the dress, so the heart;' that is to say, the clothes were witnesses in their esteem of the foreign inclinations of the heart." In v. 9a many commentators find a condemnation of an idolatrous use of foreign customs; regarding the leaping over the threshold as an imitation of

the priests of Dagon, who adopted the custom, according to 1 Sam. 5:5, of leaping over the threshold when they entered the temple of that idol. But an imitation of that custom could only take place in temples of Dagon, and it appears perfectly inconceivable that it should have been transferred to the threshold of the king's palace, unless the king was regarded as an incarnation of Dagon,—a thought which could never enter the minds of Israelitish idolaters, since even the Philistian kings did not hold themselves to be incarnations of their idols. If we turn to the second hemistich, the thing condemned is the filling of their masters' houses with violence; and this certainly does not stand in any conceivable relation to that custom of the priests of Dagon; and yet the words "who fill," etc., are proved to be explanatory of the first half of the verse, by the fact that the second clause is appended without the copula *Vav*, and without the repetition of the preposition על. Now, if a fresh sin were referred to there, the copula *Vav*, at all events, could not have been omitted. We must therefore understand by the leaping over the threshold a violent and sudden rushing into houses to steal the property of strangers (Calvin, Ros., Ewald, Strauss, and others), so that the allusion is to "dishonourable servants of the king, who thought that they could best serve their master by extorting treasures from their dependants by violence and fraud" (Ewald). אֲדֹנֵיהֶם, of their lord, i.e., of the king, not "of their lords:" the plural is in the *pluralis majestatis*, as in 1 Sam. 26:16, 2 Sam. 2:5, etc.

Zephaniah 1:10–11. Even the usurers will not escape the judgment. V. 10. "And it will come to pass in that day, is the saying of Jehovah, voice of the cry from the fish-gate, and howling from the lower city, and great destruction from the hills. V. 11. Howl, inhabitants of the mortar, for all the people of Canaan are destroyed; cut off are all that are laden with silver." In order to express the thought that the judgment will not spare any one class of the population, Zephaniah depicts the lamentation which will arise from all parts of the city. קוֹל צִעָקָה, voice of the cry,

i.e., a loud cry of anguish will arise or resound. The fish-gate (according to Neh. 3:3; 12:39; cf. 2 Chron. 33:14) was in the eastern portion of the wall which bounded the lower city on the north side (for further details on this point, see at Neh. 3:3). הַמְּשָׁנָה (= הָעִיר מְשָׁנָה, Neh. 11:9), the second part or district of the city, is the lower city upon the hill Acra (see at 2 Kings 22:14). *Shebher, fragor*, does not mean a cry of murder, but the breaking to pieces of what now exists, not merely the crashing fall of the buildings, like *za'āqath shebher* in Isa. 15:5, the cry uttered at the threatening danger of utter destruction. In order to heighten the terrors of the judgment, there is added to the crying and howling of the men the tumult caused by the conquest of the city. "From the hills," i.e., "not from Zion and Moriah," but from the hills surrounding the lower city, viz., Bezetha, Gareb (Jer. 31:39), and others. For Zion, the citadel of Jerusalem, is evidently thought of as the place where the howling of the men and the noise of the devastation, caused by the enemy pressing in from the north and north-west, are heard. *Hammakhtēsh*, the mortar (Prov. 27:22), which is the name given in Judg. 15:19 to a hollow place in a rock, is used here to denote a locality in Jerusalem, most probably the depression which ran down between Acra on the west and Bezetha and Moriah on the east, as far as the fountain of Siloah, and is called by Josephus "the cheese-maker's valley," and by the present inhabitants *el-Wād*, i.e., the valley, and also the mill-valley. The name "mortar" was probably coined by Zephaniah, to point to the fate of the merchants and men of money who lived there. They who dwell there shall howl, because "all the people of Canaan" are destroyed. These are not Canaanitish or Phoenician merchants, but Judaeen merchants, who resembled the Canaanites or Phoenicians in their general business (see at Hos. 12:8), and had grown rich through trade and usury. *Ntīl keseph*, laden with silver.

Zephaniah 1:12–13. The debauchees and rioters generally will also not remain free from punishment. V. 12. "And at that time it will come

to pass, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and visit the men who lie upon their lees, who say in their heart, Jehovah does no good, and no evil. V. 13. Their goods will become plunder, and their houses desolation: they will build houses, and not dwell (therein), and plant vineyards, and not drink their wine." God will search Jerusalem with candles, to bring out the irreligious debauchees out of their hiding-places in their houses, and punish them. The visitation is effected by the enemies who conquer Jerusalem. Jerome observes on this passage: "Nothing will be allowed to escape unpunished. If we read the history of *Josephus*, we shall find it written there, that princes and priests, and mighty men, were dragged even out of the sewers, and caves, and pits, and tombs, in which they had hidden themselves from fear of death." Now, although what is stated here refers to the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus, there can be no doubt that similar things occurred at the Chaldaean conquest. The expression to search with candles (cf. Luke 15:8) is a figure denoting the most minute search of the dwellings and hiding-places of the despisers of God. These are described as men who sit drawn together upon their lees (אָפֵק, lit., to draw one's self together, to coagulate). The figure is borrowed from old wine, which has been left upon its lees and not drawn off, and which, when poured into other vessels, retains its flavour, and does not alter its odour (Jer. 48:11), and denotes perseverance or confirmation in moral and religious indifference, "both external quiet, and carelessness, idleness, and spiritual insensibility in the enjoyment not only of the power and possessions bestowed upon them, but also of the pleasures of sin and the worst kinds of lust" (Marck). Good wine, when it remains for a long time upon its lees, becomes stronger; but bad wine becomes harsher and thicker. *Shmârim*, lees, do not denote "sins in which the ungodly are almost stupefied" (Jerome), or "splendour which so deprives a man of his senses that there is nothing left either pure or sincere" (Calvin), but "the impurity of sins, which were associated in the

case of these men with external good" (Marck). In the carnal repose of their earthly prosperity, they said in their heart, i.e., they thought within themselves, there is no God who rules and judges the world; everything takes place by chance, or according to dead natural laws. They did not deny the existence of God, but in their character and conduct they denied the working of the living God in the world, placing Jehovah on the level of the dead idols, who did neither good nor harm (Isa. 41:23; Jer. 10:5), whereby they really denied the being of God. To these God will show Himself as the ruler and judge of the world, by giving up their goods (*chêlâm, opes eorum*) to plunder, so that they will experience the truth of the punishments denounced in His word against the despisers of His name (compare Lev. 26:32, 33, Deut. 28:30, 39, and the similar threats in Amos 5:11, Mic. 6:15).

Zephaniah 1:14–18. This judgment will not be delayed. To terrify the self-secure sinners out of their careless rest, Zephaniah now carries out still further the thought only hinted at in v. 7 of the near approach and terrible character of the judgment. V. 14. "The great day of Jehovah is near, near and hasting greatly. Hark! the day of Jehovah, bitterly crieth the hero there. V. 15. A day of fury is this day, a day of anguish and pressure, a day of devastation and desert, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and cloudy night. V. 16. A day of the trumpet and battering, over the fortified cities and high battlements." The day of Jehovah is called "the great day" with reference to its effects, as in Joel 2:11. The emphasis lies primarily, however, upon the *qârôbh* (is near), which is therefore repeated and strengthened by מִהֵרָ מֵהֵרָ. מִהֵרָ is not a *piel* participle with the *Mem* dropped, but an adjective form, which has sprung out of the adverbial use of the inf. abs. (cf. Ewald, § 240, e). In the second hemistich the terrible character of this day is described. קוֹל before *yôm Yhōvâh* (the day of Jehovah), at the head of an interjectional clause, has almost grown into an interjection (see at Isa. 13:4). The hero cries bitterly, because he cannot save himself, and

must succumb to the power of the foe. *Shâm*, *adv. loci*, has not a temporal signification even here, but may be explained from the fact that in connection with the day the prophet is thinking of the field of battle, on which the hero perishes while fighting. In order to depict more fully the terrible character of this day, Zephaniah crowds together in vv. 15 and 16 all the words supplied by the language to describe the terrors of the judgment. He first of all designates it as *yôm 'ebhrâh*, the day of the overflowing wrath of God (cf. v. 18); then, according to the effect which the pouring out of the wrath of God produces upon men, as a day of distress and pressure (cf. Job 15:24), of devastation (הַשְׁמָד and מְשׁוּאָה combined, as in Job 38:27; 30:3), and of the darkest cloudy night, after Joel 2:2; and lastly, in v. 16, indicating still more closely the nature of the judgment, as a day of the trumpet and the trumpet-blast, i.e., on which the clangour of the war-trumpets will be heard over all the fortifications and castles, and the enemy will attack, take, and destroy the fortified places amidst the blast of trumpets (cf. Amos 2:2). *Pinnôth* are the corners and battlements of the walls of the fortifications (2 Chron. 26:15).

Zephaniah 1:17–18. In the midst of this tribulation the sinners will perish without counsel or help. V. 17. “*And I make it strait for men, and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Jehovah; and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.*” V. 18. *Even their silver, even their gold, will not be able to save them on the day of Jehovah’s fury, and in the fire of His wrath will the whole earth be devoured; for He will make an end, yea a sudden one, to all the inhabitants of the earth.*” וְהִצַּרְתִּי reminds of the threat of Moses in Deut. 28:52, to which Zephaniah alluded in v. 16. And in הִלְכוּ בְּעֵרְוִים the allusion to Deut. 28:29 is also unmistakable. To walk like the blind, i.e., to seek a way out of the trouble without finding one. This distress God sends, because they have sinned against Him, by falling away from Him through idolatry and the

transgression of His commandments, as already shown in vv. 4–12. But the punishment will be terrible. Their blood will be poured out like dust. The point of comparison is not the quantity, as in Gen. 13:16 and others, but the worthlessness of dust, as in 2 Kings 13:7 and Isa. 49:23. The blood is thought as little of as the dust which is trodden under foot. *Lchûm*, which occurs again in Job 20:23, means flesh (as in the Arabic), not food. The verb *shâphakh*, to pour out, is also to be taken *per zeugma* in connection with this clause, though without there being any necessity to associate it with 2 Sam. 20:10, and regard *lchûm* as referring to the bowels. For the fact itself, compare 1 Kings 14:10 and Jer. 9:21. In order to cut off all hope of deliverance from the rich and distinguished sinners, the prophet adds in v. 18: Even with silver and gold will they not be able to save their lives. The enemy will give no heed to this (cf. Isa. 13:17; Jer. 4:30; Ezek. 7:19) in the day that the Lord will pour out His fury upon the ungodly, to destroy the whole earth with the fire of His wrathful jealousy (cf. Deut. 4:24). By *kol-hâ’ârets* we might understand the whole of the land of Judah, if we looked at what immediately precedes it. But if we bear in mind that the threat commenced with judgment upon the whole earth (vv. 2, 3), and that it here returns to its starting-point, to round off the picture, there can be no doubt that the whole earth is intended. The reason assigned for this threat in v. 18b is formed after Isa. 10:23; but the expression is strengthened by the use of אֶדְ-נִבְהֶלָה instead of וְנִחַרְצָה, the word round in Isaiah. *Kâlâh*: the finishing stroke, as in Isa. *l.c.* (see at Nah. 1:8). אֶדְ, only, equivalent to “not otherwise than,” i.e., assuredly. נִבְהֶלָה is used as a substantive, and is synonymous with *behâlâh*, sudden destruction, in Isa. 65:23. The construction with *'êth accus.* as in Nah. 1:8.

Zephaniah 2

Exhortation to Repentance in View of the Judgment—Ch. 2:1–3:8

Zephaniah 2:1–3:8. Zephaniah, having in the previous chapter predicted the judgment upon the whole world, and Judah especially, as being close at hand, now summons his people to repent, and more especially exhorts the righteous to seek the Lord and strive after righteousness and humility, that they may be hidden in the day of the Lord (vv. 1–3). The reason which he gives for this admonition to repentance is twofold: viz., (1) that the Philistians, Moabites, and Ammonites will be cut off, and Israel will take possession of their inheritances (vv. 4–10), that all the gods of the earth will be overthrown, and all the islands brought to worship the Lord, since He will smite the Cushites, and destroy proud Asshur and Nineveh (vv. 11–15); and (2) that even blood-stained Jerusalem, with its corrupt princes, judges, and prophets, will endure severe punishment. Accordingly, the call to repentance is not simply strengthened by the renewed threat of judgment upon the heathen and the ungodly in Judah, but is rather accounted for by the introduction of the thought, that by means of the judgment the heathen nations are to be brought to acknowledge the name of the Lord, and the rescued remnant of Israel to be prepared for the reception of the promised salvation.

Zephaniah 2:1–3. Call to conversion.—V. 1. *“Gather yourselves together, and gather together, O nation that dost not grow pale. V. 2. Before the decree bring forth (the day passes away like chaff), before the burning wrath of Jehovah come upon you, before the day of Jehovah’s wrath come upon you. V. 3. Seek Jehovah, all ye humble of the land, who have wrought His right; seek righteousness, seek humility, perhaps ye will be hidden in the day of Jehovah’s wrath.”* The summons in v. 1 is addressed to the whole of Judah or Israel. The verb *qōshēsh*, possibly a *denom.* from *qash*, signifies to gather stubble (Ex. 5:7, 12), then generally to gather together or collect, e.g.,

branches of wood (Num. 15:32, 33; 1 Kings 17:10); in the *hithpoel*, to gather one’s self together, applied to that spiritual gathering which leads to self-examination, and is the first condition of conversion. The attempts of Ewald and Hitzig to prove, by means of doubtful etymological combinations from the Arabic, that the word possesses the meanings, to grow pale, or to purify one’s self, cannot be sustained. The *kal* is combined with the *hiphil* for the purpose of strengthening it, as in Hab. 1:5 and Isa. 29:9. *Nikhsâph* is the perf. *niphahl* in pause, and not a participle, partly because of the $\text{נִלְ$ which stands before it (see however Ewald, § 286, *g*), and partly on account of the omission of the article; and *nikhsâph* is to be taken as a relative, “which does not turn pale.” *Kâsaph* has the meaning “to long,” both in the *niphâl* (vid., Gen. 31:30, Ps. 84:3) and *kal* (cf. Ps. 17:12, Job 14:15). This meaning is retained by many here. Thus Jerome renders it, “*gens non amabilis*, i.e., *non desiderata a Deo*,” but this is decidedly unsuitable. Others render it “not possessing strong desire,” and appeal to the paraphrase of the Chaldee, “a people not wishing to be converted to the law.” This is apparently the view upon which the Alex. version rests: $\epsilon\theta\nu\omicron\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\acute{\iota}\delta\epsilon\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu$. But although *nikhsâph* is used to denote the longing of the soul for fellowship with God in Ps. 84:3, this idea is not to be found in the word itself, but simply in the object connected with it. We therefore prefer to follow Grotius, Gesenius, Ewald, and others, and take the word in its primary sense of turning pale at anything, becoming white with shame (cf. Isa. 29:22), which is favoured by Zeph. 3:15. The reason for the appeal is given in v. 2, viz., the near approach of the judgment. The resolution brings forth, when that which is resolved upon is realized (for *yâlad* in this figurative sense, see Prov. 27:1). The figure is explained in the second hemistich. The next clause וְגַרְמֵי יוֹגֵר does not depend upon בְּטָרֶם , for in that case the verb would stand at the head with *Vav* cop., but it is a parenthesis inserted to strengthen the admonition: the day comes like chaff, i.e., approaches with the greatest rapidity, like chaff

driven by the wind: not “the time passes by like chaff” (Hitzig); for it cannot be shown that *yōm* was ever used for time in this sense. *Yōm* is the day of judgment mentioned in Zeph. 1:7, 14, 15; and עָבַר here is not to pass by, but to approach, to come near, as in Nah. 3:19. For the figure of the chaff, see Isa. 29:5. In the second hemistich בְּטָרָם is strengthened by לֹא; and הָרוּן אָרָה, the burning of wrath in the last clause, is explained by יוֹם אָרָה יִי, the day of the revelation of the wrath of God.

Zephaniah 2:3. But because the judgment will so speedily burst upon them, all the pious especially—*’anvê hâ’ârets*, the quiet in the land, οἱ πραεῖς (Amos 2:7; Isa. 11:4; Ps. 37:11)—are to seek the Lord. The humble (*’ănâvîm*) are described as those who do Jehovah’s right, i.e., who seek diligently to fulfil what Jehovah has prescribed in the law as right. Accordingly, seeking Jehovah is explained as seeking righteousness and humility. The thought is this: they are to strive still more zealously after Jehovah’s right, viz., righteousness and humility (cf. Deut. 16:20; Isa. 51:1, 7); then will they probably be hidden in the day of wrath, i.e., be pardoned and saved (cf. Amos 5:15). This admonition is now still further enforced from v. 4 onwards by the announcement of the coming of judgment upon all the heathen, that the kingdom of God may attain completion.

Zephaniah 2:4–7. Destruction of the Philistines.—V. 4. *“For Gaza will be forgotten, and Ashkelon become a desert; Ashdod, they drive it out in broad day, and Ekron will be ploughed out. V. 5. Woe upon the inhabitants of the tract by the sea, the nation of the Cretans! The word of Jehovah upon you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines! I destroy thee, so that not an inhabitant remains. V. 6. And the tract by the sea becomes pastures for shepherds’ caves, and for folds of sheep. V. 7. And a tract will be for the remnant of the house of Judah; upon them will they feed: in the houses of Ashkelon they encamp in the evening; for Jehovah their God will visit them, and turn their captivity.”* The fourth verse, which is closely connected by *kî* (for) with the

exhortation to repentance, serves as an introduction to the threat of judgment commencing with *hōi* in v. 5. As the mentioning of the names of the four Philistian capitals (see at Josh. 13:3) is simply an individualizing periphrasis for the Philistian territory and people, so the land and people of Philistia are mentioned primarily for the purpose of individualizing, as being the representatives of the heathen world by which Judah was surrounded; and it is not till afterwards, in the further development of the threat, that the enumeration of certain near and remote heathen nations is appended, to express more clearly the idea of the heathen world as a whole. Of the names of the Philistian cities Zephaniah makes use of two, *’Azzâh* and *’Eqrôn*, as a play upon words, to express by means of paronomasia the fate awaiting them. *’Azzâh*, Gaza, will be *’ăzûbhâh*, forsaken, desolate. *’Eqrôn*, Ekron, will be *tê’âqēr*, rooted up, torn out of its soil, destroyed. To the other two he announces their fate in literal terms, the *shmâmâh* threatened against Ashkelon corresponding to the *’ăzûbhâh*, and the *gârêsh* predicated of Ashdod preparing the way for Ekron’s *tê’âqēr*. בְּצַהֲרָיִם at noon, i.e., in broad day, might signify, when used as an antithesis to night, “with open violence” (Jerome, Kimchi); but inasmuch as the expulsion of inhabitants is not effected by thieves in the night, the time of noon is more probably to be understood, as v. Cölln and Rosenmüller suppose, as denoting the time of day at which men generally rest in hot countries (2 Sam. 4:5), in the sense of unexpected, unsuspected expulsion; and this is favoured by Jer. 15:8, where the devastation at noon is described as a sudden invasion. The omission of Gath may be explained in the same manner as in Amos 1:6–8, from the fact that the parallelism of the clauses only allowed the names of four cities to be given; and this number was amply sufficient to individualize the whole, just as Zephaniah, when enumerating the heathen nations, restricts the number to four, according to the four quarters of the globe: viz., the Philistines in the west (vv. 5–7); the Moabites and Ammonites comprised

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in one in the east (vv. 8–10); the Cushites in the south (vv. 11, 12); and Asshur, with Nineveh, in the north (north-east), (vv. 13–15). The woe with which the threat is commenced in v. 5 applies to the whole land and people of the Philistines. *Chebhel*, the measure, then the tract of land measured out or apportioned (see at Deut. 3:4; 32:9, etc.). The tract of the sea is the tract of land by the Mediterranean Sea which was occupied by the Philistines (*chebhel hayyâm* = *'erets Plishtîm*). Zephaniah calls the inhabitants *gōi Krēthîm*, nation of the Cretans, from the name of one branch of the Philistian people which was settled in the south-west of Philistia, for the purpose of representing them as a people devoted to *kârath*, or extermination. The origin of this name, which is selected both here and in Ezek. 25:16 with a play upon the appellative signification, is involved in obscurity; for, as we have already observed at 1 Sam. 30:14, there is no valid authority for the derivation which is now current, viz., from the island of *Crete* (see Stark, *Gaza*, pp. 66 and 99ff.). עֲלִיָּכֶם דְּבַר יְיָ forms an independent sentence: The word of the Lord cometh over you. The nature of that word is described in the next sentence: I will destroy thee. The name *Kna'an* is used in the more limited sense of Philistia, and is chosen to indicate that Philistia is to share the lot of Canaan, and lose its inhabitants by extermination.

Zephaniah 2:6. The tract of land thus depopulated is to be turned into “pastures (*nvōth*, the construct state plural of *nâveh*) of the excavation of shepherds,” i.e., where shepherds will make excavations or dig themselves huts under the ground as a protection from the sun. This is the simplest explanation of the variously interpreted *krōth* (as an inf. of *kârâh*, to dig), and can be grammatically sustained. The digging of the shepherds stands for the excavations which they make. Bochart (*Hieroz.* i. p. 519, ed. Ros.) has already given this explanation: “*Caulae s. caulae repletus erit effossionis pastorum*, i.e., *caulae a pastoribus effossae in cryptis subterraneis ad vitandum solis aestum*.” On the

other hand, the derivation from the noun *kērâh*, in the sense of cistern, cannot be sustained; and there is no proof of it in the fact that *kârâh* is applied to the digging of wells. Still less is it possible to maintain the derivation from כַּר (Arab. *wkr*), by which Ewald would support the meaning nests for *kērōth*, i.e., “the small houses or carts of the shepherds.” And Hitzig’s alteration of the text into כָּרִים = כָּרִית, pastures, so as to obtain the tautology “meadows of the pastures,” is perfectly unwarranted. The word *chebhel* is construed in v. 6 as a feminine *ad sensum*, with a retrospective allusion to *'erets Plishtîm*; whereas in v. 7 it is construed, as it is everywhere else, as a masculine. Moreover, the noun *chebhel*, which occurs in this verse without the article, is not the subject; for, if it were, it would at least have had the article. It is rather a predicate, and the subject must be supplied from v. 6: “The Philistian tract of land by the sea will become a tract of land or possession for the remnant of the house of Judah, the portion of the people of God rescued from the judgment. Upon them, viz., these pastures, will they feed.” The plural עֲלִיָּהֶם does not stand for the neuter, but is occasioned by a retrospective glance at רְעִים. The subject is, those that are left of the house of Judah. They will there feed their flocks, and lie down in the huts of Ashkelon. For the prophet adds by way of explanation, Jehovah their God will visit them. *Pâqqad*, to visit in a good sense, i.e., to take them under His care, as is almost always the meaning when it is construed with an accusative of the person. It is only in Ps. 59:6 that it is used with an *acc. pers.* instead of with עַל, in the sense of to chastise or punish. שׁוּב עֲשׂוּתָא as in Hos. 6:11 and Amos 9:14. The *keri* שְׁבִיתָא has arisen from a misinterpretation. On the fulfilment, see what follows.

Zephaniah 2:8–10. The judgment upon Joab and Ammon.—V. 8. “*I have heard the abuse of Moab, and the revilings of the sons of Ammon, who have abused my nation, and boasted against its boundary.* V. 9. *Therefore, as I live, is the*

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saying of Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Yea, Moab shall become like Sodom, and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrha, an inheritance of nettles and salt-pits, and desert for ever. The remnant of my nation will plunder them, the residue of my nation will inherit them. V. 10. Such to them for their pride, that they have despised and boasted against the nation of Jehovah of hosts." The threat now turns from the Philistines in the west to the two tribes to the east, viz., the Moabites and Ammonites, who were descended from Lot, and therefore blood-relations, and who manifested hostility to Israel on every possible occasion. Even in the time of Moses, the Moabitish king Balak sought to destroy Israel by means of Balaam's curses (Num. 22), for which the Moabites were threatened with extermination (Num. 24:17). In the time of the judges they both attempted to oppress Israel (Judg. 3:12ff. and 10:7ff.; cf. 1 Sam. 11:1-5 and 2 Sam. 10-12), for which they were severely punished by Saul and David (1 Sam. 14:47, and 2 Sam. 8:2; 12:30, 31). The reproach of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, which Jehovah had heard, cannot be taken, as Jerome, Rashi, and others suppose, as referring to the hostilities of those tribes towards the Judaeans during the Chaldaean catastrophe; nor restricted, as v. Cölln imagines, to the reproaches heaped upon the ten tribes when they were carried away by the Assyrians, since nothing is known of any such reproaches. The charge refers to the hostile attitude assumed by both tribes at all times towards the nation of God, which they manifested both in word and deed, as often as the latter was brought into trouble and distress. Compare Jer. 48:26, 27; and for *giddēph*, to revile or blaspheme by actions, Num. 15:30, Ezek. 20:27; also for the fact itself, the remarks on Amos 1:13-2:3. יַגְדִּילוּ עַל גְּבוּרַת גְּבוּרַת, they did great things against their (the Israelites') border (the suffix in *gbhūlām*, their border, refers to 'ammī, my people). This great doing consisted in their proudly violating the boundary of Israel, and endeavouring to seize upon Israelitish territory (cf. Amos 1:13). Pride and haughtiness, or high-minded self-exaltation

above Israel as the nation of God, is charged against the Moabites and Ammonites by Isaiah and Jeremiah also, as a leading feature in their character (cf. Isa. 16:6; 25:11; Jer. 48:29, 30). Moab and Ammon are to be utterly exterminated in consequence. The threat of punishment is announced in v. 8 as irrevocable by a solemn oath. It shall happen to them as to Sodom and Gomorrha. This simile was rendered a very natural one by the situation of the two lands in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea. It affirms the utter destruction of the two tribes, as the appositional description shows. Their land is to become the possession of nettles, i.e., a place where nettles grow. *Mimshâq*, ὄπ. λεγ., from the root *mâshaq*, which was not used, but from which *mesheq* in Gen. 15:2 is derived. *Chârûl*: the stinging nettle (see at Job 30:7), which only flourishes in waste places. *Mikhrêh melach*: a place of salt-pits, like the southern coast of the Dead Sea, which abounds in rock-salt, and to which there is an allusion in the threat of Moses in Deut. 29:22. "A desert for ever:" the emphasis lies upon 'ad 'ôlâm (for ever) here. The people, however, i.e., the Moabites and Ammonites themselves, will be taken by the people of Jehovah, and be made their possession. The suffixes attached to יְבָזוּם and יְנַחֲלוּם can only refer to the people of Moab and Ammon, because a land turned into an eternal desert and salt-steppe would not be adapted for a *nachălâh* (possession) for the people of God. The meaning is not, they will be their heirs through the medium of plunder, but they will make them into their own property, or slaves (cf. Isa. 14:2; 61:5). יְגִי is גִּי with the suffix of the first person, only one of the two ' being written. In v. 10 the threat concludes with a repetition of the statement of the guilt which is followed by such a judgment. The fulfilment or realization of the threat pronounced upon Philistia, Moab, and Ammon, we have not to look for in the particular historical occurrences through which these tribes were conquered and subjugated by the Chaldaeans, and to some extent by the Jews

after the captivity, until they eventually vanished from the stage of history, and their lands became desolate, as they still are. These events can only come into consideration as preliminary stages of the fulfilment, which Zephaniah completely passes by, since he only views the judgment in its ultimate fulfilment. We are precluded, moreover, from taking the words as relating to that event by the circumstance, that neither Philistia on the one hand, nor Moabites and Ammonites on the other, were ever taken permanent possession of by the Jews; and still less were they ever taken by Judah, as the nation of God, for His own property. Judah is not to enter into such possession as this till the Lord turns the captivity of Judah (v. 7); that is to say, not immediately after the return from the Babylonish captivity, but when the dispersion of Israel among the Gentiles, which lasts till this day, shall come to an end, and Israel, through its conversion to Christ, be reinstated in the privileges of the people of God. It follows from this, that the fulfilment is still in the future, and that it will be accomplished not literally, but spiritually, in the utter destruction of the nations referred to as heathen nations, and opponents of the kingdom of God, and in the incorporation of those who are converted to the living God at the time of the judgment, into the citizenship of the spiritual Israel. Until the eventual restoration of Israel, Philistia will remain an uninhabited shepherds' pasture, and the land of the Moabites and Ammonites the possession of nettles, a place of salt-pits and a desert; just as the land of Israel will for the very same time be trodden down by the Gentiles. The curse resting upon these lands will not be entirely removed till the completion of the kingdom of God on earth. This view is proved to be correct by the contents of v. 11, with which the prophet passes to the announcement of the judgment upon the nations of the south and north.

Zephaniah 2:11. *"Fearful is Jehovah over them, for He destroyeth all the gods of the earth; that all the islands of the nations, every one from its*

place, may worship Him." Whilst עֲלֵיהֶם refers to what precedes, the next clause in the reason assigned points to the announcement of judgment upon the remaining nations of the earth in vv. 12ff.; so that v. 11 cannot be taken either as the conclusion of the previous threat, or as the commencement of the following one, but leads from the one to the other. Jehovah is terrible when He reveals Himself in the majesty of Judge of the world. The suffix appended to עֲלֵיהֶם does not refer to עַם יְהוָה, but to לְהֶם in v. 10, answering to the Moabites and Ammonites. Jehovah proves Himself terrible to these, because He has resolved to destroy all the gods of the earth. *Râzâh*, to make lean; hence to cause to vanish, to destroy. He causes the gods to vanish, by destroying the nations and kingdoms who relied upon these gods. He thereby reveals the nothingness of the gods, and brings the nations to acknowledge His sole deity (Mic. 5:12). The fall of the false gods impels to the worship of the one true God. וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לוֹ is the consequence, the fruit, and the effect of Jehovah's proving Himself terrible to the nations and their gods. אֲזֵי הַגּוֹיִם, islands of the Gentiles, is an epithet taken from the islands and coastlands of Europe, to denote the whole of the heathen world (see at Isa. 41:1). The distributive מִמְּקוֹמוֹ refers to *haggōyīm* as the principal idea, though not in the sense of "every nation," but in that of every individual belonging to the nations. *Mimmaqōmō*, coming from his place: the meaning is not that the nations will worship Jehovah at their own place, in their own lands, in contradistinction to Mic. 4:1, Zech. 14:16, and other passages, where the nations go on pilgrimage to Mount Zion (Hitzig); but their going to Jerusalem is implied in the *min* (from), though it is not brought prominently out, as being unessential to the thought. With regard to the fulfilment, Bucer has correctly observed, that "the worship of Jehovah on the part of the heathen is not secured without sanguinary wars, that the type may not be taken for the fact itself, and the shadow for the body ... But the true completion

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of the whole in the kingdom of Christ takes place here in spirit and in faith, whilst in the future age it will be consummated in all its reality and in full fruition." Theodoret, on the other hand, is too one-sided in his view, and thinks only of the conversion of the heathen through the preaching of the gospel. "This prophecy," he says, "has received its true fulfilment through the holy apostles, and the saints who have followed them; ... and this takes place, not by the law, but by the teaching of the gospel."

Zephaniah 2:12–15. After this statement of the aim of the judgments of God, Zephaniah mentions two other powerful heathen nations as examples, to prove that the whole of the heathen world will succumb to the judgment. V. 12. *"Ye Cushites also, slain of my sword are they.* V. 13. *And let him stretch out his hand toward the south, and destroy Asshur; and make Nineveh a barren waste, a dry place, like the desert.* V. 14. *And herds lie down in the midst of it, all kinds of beasts in crowds: pelicans also and hedgehogs will lodge on their knobs; the voice of the singer in the window; heaps upon the threshold: for their cedar-work hath He made bare.* V. 15. *This the city, the exulting one, the safely dwelling one, which said in her heart, I, and no more: how has she become a desolation, a lair of beasts! Every one that passeth by it will hiss, swing his hand."* As a representative of the heathen dwelling in the south, Zephaniah does not mention Edom, which bordered upon Judah, or the neighbouring land of Egypt, but the remote Ethiopia, the furthest kingdom or people in the south that was known to the Hebrews. The Ethiopians will be slain of the sword of Jehovah. הַקְּמָה does not take the place of the copula between the subject and predicate, any more than הוּא in Isa. 37:16 and Ezra 5:11 (to which Hitzig appeals in support of this usage: see Delitzsch, on the other hand, in his *Comm. on Isaiah, l.c.*), but is a predicate. The prophecy passes suddenly from the form of address (in the second person) adopted in the opening clause, to a statement concerning the Cushites (in the third person). For similar instances of

sudden transition, see Zeph. 3:18, Zech. 3:8, Ezek. 28:22. הַלְלִי תְּרַבִּי is a reminiscence from Isa. 66:16: slain by Jehovah with the sword. Zephaniah says nothing further concerning this distant nation, which had not come into any hostile collision with Judah in his day; and only mentions it to exemplify the thought that all the heathen will come under the judgment. The fulfilment commenced with the judgment upon Egypt through the Chaldaeans, as is evident from Ezek. 30:4, 9, as compared with Josephus, Ant. x. 11, and continues till the conversion of that people to the Lord, the commencement of which is recorded in Acts 8:27–38. The prophet dwells longer upon the heathen power of the north, the Assyrian kingdom with its capital Nineveh, because Assyria was then the imperial power, which was seeking to destroy the kingdom of God in Judah. This explains the fact that the prophet expresses the announcement of the destruction of this power in the form of a wish, as the use of the contracted forms *yēt* and *yāsēm* clearly shows. For it is evident that Ewald is wrong in supposing that טַיִם stands for טַיִם, or should be so pointed, inasmuch as the historical tense, "there He stretched out His hand," would be perfectly out of place. נָטָה יָד (to stretch out a hand), as in Zeph. 1:4. *'Al tsâphôn*, over (or against) the north. The reference is to Assyria with the capital Nineveh. It is true that this kingdom was not to the north, but to the north-east, of Judah; but inasmuch as the Assyrian armies invaded Palestine from the north, it is regarded by the prophets as situated in the north. On Nineveh itself, see at Jonah 1:2 (p. 263); and on the destruction of this city and the fall of the Assyrian empire, at Nah. 3:19 (p. 379). *Lishmâmâh* is strengthened by the apposition *tsiyyâh kammidbâr*.

Nineveh is not only to become a steppe, in which herds feed (Isa. 27:10), but a dry, desolate waste, where only desert animals will make their home. *Tsiyyâh*, the dry, arid land—the barren, sandy desert (cf. Isa. 35:1). בְּתוֹכָהּ, in the midst of the city which has become a desert, there lie flocks, not of sheep and goats (צֹאן, v. 6;

cf. Isa. 13:20), but כָּל־חַיְתוֹ-גֹי, literally of all the animals of the (or a) nation. The meaning can only be, "all kinds of animals in crowds or in a mass." גֹי is used here for the mass of animals, just as it is in Joel 1:6 for the multitude of locusts, and as עַם is in Prov. 30:35, 36 for the ant-people; and the genitive is to be taken as in apposition. Every other explanation is exposed to much greater objections and difficulties. For the form חַיְתוֹ, see at Gen. 1:24. Pelicans and hedgehogs will make their homes in the remains of the ruined buildings (see at Isa. 34:11, on which passage Zephaniah rests his description). בְּכַפְתְּרֵיהֶּ, upon the knobs of the pillars left standing when the palaces were destroyed (*kaphtōr*; see at Amos 9:1). The reference to the pelican, a marsh bird, is not opposed to the *tsiyyâh* of v. 13, since Nineveh stood by the side of streams, the waters of which formed marshes after the destruction of the city. קוֹל יְשׁוּרָר cannot be rendered "a voice sings," for *shōrēr*, to sing, is not used for tuning or resounding; but *yshōrēr* is to be taken relatively, and as subordinate to קוֹל, the voice of him that sings will be heard in the window. Jerome gives it correctly: *vox canentis in fenestra*. There is no necessity to think of the cry of the owl or hawk in particular, but simply of birds generally, which make their singing heard in the windows of the ruins. The sketching of the picture of the destruction passes from the general appearance of the city to the separate ruins, coming down from the lofty knobs of the pillars to the windows, and from these to the thresholds of the ruins of the houses. Upon the thresholds there is *chōrebh*, devastation (= rubbish), and no longer a living being. This is perfectly appropriate, so that there is no necessity to give the word an arbitrary interpretation, or to alter the text, so as to get the meaning a raven or a crow. The description closes with the explanatory sentence: "for He has laid bare the cedar-work," i.e., has so destroyed the palaces and state buildings, that the costly panelling of the walls is exposed. *ʿArzâh* is a collective, from *ʿerez*, the

cedar-work, and there is no ground for any such alteration of the text as Ewald and Hitzig suggest, in order to obtain the trivial meaning "hews or hacks in pieces," or the cold expression, "He destroys, lays bare." In v. 15 the picture is rounded off. "This is the city," i.e., this is what happens to the exulting city. עֲלִיָּה, exulting, applied to the joyful tumult caused by the men—a favourite word with Isaiah (cf. Isa. 22:2; 23:7; 24:8; 32:13). The following predicates from הַיְשׁוּבָת to עוֹד are borrowed from the description of Babel in Isa. 47:8, and express the security and self-deification of the mighty imperial city. The *Yod* in *'aphsî* is not paragogical, but a pronoun in the first person; at the same time, *'ephes* is not a preposition, "beside me," since in that case the negation "not one" could not be omitted, but "the non-existence," so that אֲנִי־אֶפְסִי = אֲנִי, I am absolutely no further (see at Isa. 47:8). But how has this self-deifying pride been put to shame! אֲיִךְ, an expression of amazement at the tragical turn in her fate. The city filled with the joyful exulting of human beings has become the lair of wild beasts, and every one that passes by expresses his malicious delight in its ruin. *Shâraq*, to hiss, a common manifestation of scorn (cf. Mic. 6:16; Jer. 19:8). הִינֵנִי יָד, to swing the hand, embodying the thought, "Away with her, she has richly deserved her fate."

Zephaniah 3

Zephaniah 3:1–8. To give still greater emphasis to his exhortation to repentance, the prophet turns to Jerusalem again, that he may once more hold up before the hardened sinners the abominations of this city, in which Jehovah daily proclaims His right, and shows the necessity for the judgment, as the only way that is left by which to secure salvation for Israel and for the whole world. V. 1. "Woe to the refractory and polluted one, the oppressive city! V. 2. She has not hearkened to the voice; not accepted discipline; not trusted in Jehovah; not drawn near to her God. V. 3. Her princes are roaring lions in the midst of her; her judges

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evening wolves, who spare not for the morning. V. 4. Her prophets boasters, men of treacheries: her priests desecrate that which is holy, to violence to the law." The woe applies to the city of Jerusalem. That this is intended in v. 1 is indisputably evident from the explanation which follows in vv. 2–4 of the predicates applied to the city addressed in v. 1. By the position of the indeterminate predicates מִוֹרְאָה and נִגְאָלָה before the subject to which the *hōi* refers, the threat acquires greater emphasis. מִוֹרְאָה is not formed from the *hophal* of רָאָה (*ἐπιφανής*, LXX, Cyr., Cocc.), but is the participle *kal* of מָרָא = מָרָה or מָרַר, to straighten one's self, and hold one's self against a person, hence to be rebellious (see Delitzsch on *Job*, on Job 33:2, note). נִגְאָלָה, stained with sins and abominations (cf. Isa. 59:3). *Yōnâh* does not mean *columba*, but oppressive (as in Jer. 46:16; 50:16, and 25:38)), as a participle of *yānâh* to oppress (cf. Jer. 22:3). These predicates are explained and vindicated in vv. 2–4, viz., first of all מִוֹרְאָה in v. 2. She gives no heed to the voice, sc. of God in the law and in the words of the prophets (compare Jer. 7:28, where קוֹל יְהוָה occurs in the repetition of the first hemistich). The same thing is affirmed in the second clause, "she accepts no chastisement." These two clauses describe the attitude assumed towards the legal contents of the word of God, the next two the attitude assumed towards its evangelical contents, i.e., the divine promises. Jerusalem has no faith in these, and does not allow them to draw her to her God. The whole city is the same, i.e., the whole of the population of the city. Her civil and spiritual rulers are no better. Their conduct shows that the city is oppressive and polluted (vv. 3 and 4). Compare with this the description of the leaders in Mic. 3. The princes are lions, which rush with roaring upon the poor and lowly, to tear them in pieces and destroy them (Prov. 28:15; Ezek. 19:2; Nah. 2:12). The judges resemble evening wolves (see at Hab. 1:8), as insatiable as wolves, which leave not a single bone till the following morning, of the prey they have caught in the

evening. The verb *gâram* is a denom. from *gerem*, to gnaw a bone, *piel* to crush them (Num. 24:8); to gnaw a bone for the morning, is the same as to leave it to be gnawed in the morning. *Gâram* has not in itself the meaning to reserve or lay up (Ges. *Lex.*). The prophets, i.e., those who carry on their prophesying without a call from God (see Mic. 2:11; 3:5, 11), are *pōchăzîm*, vainglorious, boasting, from *pâchaz*, to boil up or boil over, and when applied to speaking, to overflow with frivolous words. Men of treacheries, *bōgdōth*, a subst. verb, from *bâgad*, the classical word for faithless adultery or apostasy from God. The prophets proved themselves to be so by speaking the thoughts of their own hearts to the people as revelations from God, and thereby strengthening it in its apostasy from the Lord. The priests profane that which is holy (*qōdesh*, every holy thing or act), and do violence to the law, namely, by treating what is holy as profane, and perverting the precepts of the law concerning holy and unholy (cf. Ezek. 22:26).

Zephaniah 3:5, 6. Jerusalem sins in this manner, without observing that Jehovah is constantly making known to it His own righteousness. V. 5. "Jehovah is just in the midst of her; does no wrong: morning by morning He sets His justice in the light, not failing; but the unjust knoweth no shame. V. 6. I have cut off nations: their battlements are laid waste; I have devastated their streets, so that no one else passeth over: their cities are laid waste, that there is no man there, not an inhabitant more." V. 5 is attached adversatively to what precedes without a particle, in this sense: And yet Jehovah is just *bqirbâh*, i.e., in the midst of the city filled with sinners. The words recal to mind the description of the divine administration in Deut. 32:4, where Jehovah is described as אֵין עוֹל and יִשָּׁר. It follows from this that *tsaddîq* is not to be referred to the fact that God does not leave the sins of the nation unpunished (Ros.), but to the fact that He commits no wrong: so that לא יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹלָה is only a negative paraphrase of *tsaddîq*. His justice, i.e., the righteousness of His conduct, He puts in the light every morning

(*babbōqer babbōqer*, used distributively, as in Ex. 16:21, Lev. 6:5, etc.), not by rewarding virtue and punishing wickedness (Hitziq, Strauss, after the Chaldee, Jerome, Theodoret, and Cyril), according to which *mishpāt* would signify judgment; but by causing His law and justice to be proclaimed to the nation daily “by prophets, whose labour He employs to teach the nation His laws, and who exert themselves diligently by exhorting and admonishing every day, to call it to bring forth better fruit, but all in vain (Ros., Ewald, etc.; cf. Hos. 6:5). It is at variance with the context to take these words as referring to the judgments of God. These are first spoken of in v. 6, and the correspondence between these two verses and vv. 7 and 8 shows that we must not mix up together v. 5b and v. 6, or interpret v. 5b from v. 6. Just as the judgment is threatened there (v. 8) because the people have accepted no correction, and have not allowed themselves to be moved to the fear of Jehovah, so also in vv. 5 and 6 the prophet demonstrates the righteousness of God from His double administration: viz., first, from the fact that He causes His justice to be proclaimed to the people, that they may accept correction; and secondly, by pointing to the judgments upon the nations. *לֹא יִנְדָּר* paraphrases the idea of “infallibly;” the literal meaning is, that there is no morning in which the justice is wanting. Hitziq, Strauss, and others have rendered it quite unsuitably, “God does not suffer Himself to be wanting,” i.e., does not remain absent. But the perverse one, viz., the nation sunk in unrighteousness, knows no disgrace, to make it ashamed of its misdeeds. In v. 6 Jehovah is introduced as speaking, to set before the nations in the most impressive manner the judgments in which He has manifested His righteousness. The two hemistichs are formed uniformly, each consisting of two clauses, in which the direct address alternates with an indefinite, passive construction: I have cut off nations, their battlements have been laid waste, etc. *Gōyīm* are neither those nations who are threatened with ruin in Zeph. 2:4–15, nor the Canaanites, who have been exterminated by Israel, but nations generally, which have

succumbed to the judgments of God, without any more precise definition. *Pinnōth*, the battlements of the fortress-walls and towers (Zeph. 1:16), stand *per synecdochen* for castles or fortifications. *Chūtsōth* are not streets of the city, but roads, and stand synecdochically for the flat country. This is required by the correspondence of the clauses. For just as the cities answer to the castles, so do *chūtsōth* to the nations. *Nitsdū*, from *tsādāh*, not in the sense of waylaying (Ex. 21:13; 1 Sam. 24:12), but in accordance with Aramaean usage, to lay waste, answering to *nāshammū*, for which Jeremiah uses *nitttsū* in Jer. 4:26.

Zephaniah 3:7, 8. In vv. 7 and 8 the prophet sums up all that he has said in vv. 1–6, to close his admonition to repentance with the announcement of judgment. V. 7. *“I said, Only do thou fear me, do thou accept correction, so will their dwelling not be cut off, according to all that I have appointed concerning them: but they most zealously destroyed all their doings. V. 8. Therefore wait for me, is the saying of Jehovah, for the day when I rise up to the prey; for it is my right to gather nations together, to bring kingdoms in crowds, to heap upon them my fury, all the burning of my wrath: for in the fire of my zeal will the whole earth be devoured.”* God has not allowed instruction and warning to be wanting, to avert the judgment of destruction from Judah; but the people have been getting worse and worse, so that now He is obliged to make His justice acknowledged on earth by means of judgments. *אָמַרְתִּי*, not I thought, but I said. This refers to the strenuous exertions of God to bring His justice to the light day by day (v. 5), and to admonitions of the prophets in order to bring the people to repentance. *תִּירָאִי* and *תִּקְחִי* are cohortatives, chosen instead of imperatives, to set forth the demand of God by clothing it in the form of entreating admonition as an emanation of His love. *Lâqach mūsâr* as in v. 2. The words are addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem personified as the daughter of Zion (v. 11); and *מְעוֹנָהּ*, her dwelling, is the city of Jerusalem, not the

temple, which is called the dwelling-place of Jehovah indeed, but never the dwelling-place of the nation, or of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The clause which follows, and which has been very differently interpreted, בל אֲשֶׁר פָּקַדְתִּי עָלֶיָּהּ, can hardly be taken in any other way than that in which Ewald has taken it, viz., by rendering *kōl* as the accusative of manner: according to all that I have appointed, or as I have appointed everything concerning them. For it is evidently impracticable to connect it with what precedes as *asyndeton*, because the idea of יָבוֹא cannot be taken *per zeugma* from יָבִיֵּא, and we should necessarily have to supply that idea. For *hikkârêth* does not in any way fit in with אֲשֶׁר פָּקַדְתִּי, whether we take עַל פָּקַד in the sense of charge, command, appoint (after Job 34:13; 36:23), or in that of correct, punish. For the thought that God will cut off all that He has appointed concerning Jerusalem, would be just as untenable as the thought that He will exterminate the sins that have been punished in Jerusalem. But instead of repenting, the people have only shown themselves still more zealous in evil deeds. *Hishkîm*, to rise early, then in connection with another verb, adverbially: early and zealously. *Hishchîth*, to act corruptly; and with *'âlîlôth*, to complete corrupt and evil deeds (cf. Ps. 14:1). Jehovah must therefore interpose with punishment.

Zephaniah 3:8. With the summons *chakkū lî*, wait for me, the prophecy returns to its starting-point in vv. 2 and 3, to bring it to a close. The persons addressed are *kol 'anvê hâ'ârets*, whom the prophet has summoned in the introduction to his exhortation to repentance (Zeph. 2:3), to seek the Lord and His righteousness. The Lord calls upon them, to wait for Him. For the nation as such, or those who act corruptly, cannot be addressed, since in that case we should necessarily have to take *chakkū lî* as ironical (Hitzig, Maurer); and this would be at variance with the usage of the language, inasmuch as *chikkâh layhōvâh* is only used for waiting in a believing attitude of the Lord and His help (Ps. 33:20; Isa. 8:17; 30:18;

64:3). The *lî* is still more precisely defined by לְיוֹם וְגו', for the day of my rising up for prey. לְעַד does not mean εἰς μαρτύριον = לְעַד (LXX, Syr.), or for a witness (Hitzig), which does not even yield a suitable thought apart from the alteration in the pointing, unless we “combine with the witness the accuser and judge” (Hitzig), or, to speak more correctly, make the witness into a judge; nor does לְעַד stand for לְעַד, *in perpetuum*, as Jerome has interpreted it after Jewish commentators, who referred the words to the coming of the Messiah, “who as they hope will come, and, as they say, will devour the earth with the fire of His zeal when the nations are gathered together, and the fury of the Lord is poured out upon them.” For “the rising up of Jehovah for ever” cannot possibly denote the coming of the Messiah, or be understood as referring to the resurrection of Christ, as Cocceius supposes, even if the judgment upon the nations is to be inflicted through the Messiah. לְעַד means “for prey,” that is to say, it is a concise expression for taking prey, though not in the sense suggested by Calvin: “Just as lions seize, tear in pieces, and devour; so will I do with you, because hitherto I have spared you with too much humanity and paternal care.” This neither suits the expression *chakkū lî*, according to the only meaning of *chikkâh* that is grammatically established, nor the verses which follow (vv. 9, 10), according to which the judgment to be inflicted upon the nations by the Lord is not an exterminating but a refining judgment, through which He will turn to the nations pure lips, to call upon His name. The prey for which Jehovah will rise up, can only consist, therefore, in the fact, that through the judgment He obtains from among the nations those who will confess His name, so that the souls from among the nations which desire salvation fall to Him as prey (compare Isa. 53:12 with 52:15 and 49:7). It is true that, in order to gain this victory, it is necessary to exterminate by means of the judgment the obstinate and hardened sinners. “For my justice (right) is to gather this.” *Mishpât* does not mean *judicium*, judgment, here; still less does it

signify *decretum*, a meaning which it never has; but justice or right, as in v. 5. My justice, i.e., the justice which I shall bring to the light, consists in the fact that I pour my fury upon all nations, to exterminate the wicked by judgments, and to convert the penitent to myself, and prepare for myself worshippers out of all nations. $\text{קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְיָ}$ is governed by $\text{וְגַם יִקְרָא יְיָ}$. God will gather together the nations, to sift and convert them by severe judgments. To give the reason for the terrible character and universality of the judgment, the thought is repeated from Zeph. 1:18 that “all the earth shall be devoured in the fire of His zeal.” In what follows, the aim and fruit of the judgment are given; and this forms an introduction to the announcement of salvation.

Promise of the Conversion of the Nations and Glorification of Israel—Ch. 3:9–20

Zephaniah 3:9–20. The confessors of His name, whom the Lord will procure for Himself among the nations through the medium of the judgment, will offer to Him His dispersed nation as a sacrifice (vv. 9, 10). And the rescued remnant of Israel, in their humility, will trust in the Lord, and under the pastoral fidelity of their God have no more foe to fear, but rejoicing in the blessed fellowship of the Lord, be highly favoured and glorified (vv. 11–20).

Zephaniah 3:9. “For then will I turn to the nations a pure lip, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve Him with one shoulder. V. 10. From beyond the rivers of Cush will they bring my worshippers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, as a meat-offering to me.” By the explanatory *kī* the promise is connected with the threat of judgment. The train of thought is this: the believers are to wait for the judgment, for it will bring them redemption. The first clause in v. 9 is explained in different ways. Many commentators understand by *sâphâh bhrûrâh* the lip of God, which He will turn to the nations through His holy servants. According to this view, Luther has adopted the rendering: “Then will I cause the nations to be preached to otherwise, with friendly lips, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord.” But this view,

which has been defended by Cocceius, Mark, and Hofmann (*Schriftbeweis*, ii. 2, pp. 573–4), would only be admissible if *bârûr* signified clear, evident,—a meaning which Hofmann assumes as the ground of his explanation: “A clear, easily intelligible, un mistakeable language does God turn to the nations, to call them all in the name of Jehovah, that they may serve Him as one man.” But, apart from the inadmissible rendering of $\text{קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְיָ}$, this explanation is proved to be erroneous by the fact that *bârûr* does not mean clear, intelligible; that even in Job 33:3 it has not this meaning; but that it simply means pure, purified, sinless; and that *sâphâh bhrûrâh*, the opposite of טָמֵא שְׂפָתַי in Isa. 6:5, cannot be used at all of the lip or language of God, but simply of the lip of a man who is defiled by sin. Consequently אֶל הַפֶּה הַזֶּה must be explained according to 1 Sam. 10:9, since the circumstance that we have לְ הַפֶּה הַזֶּה in this passage does not make any material difference in the meaning. The construction in both passages is a pregnant one. God turns to the nations a pure lip, by purifying their sinful lips, i.e., He converts them, that they may be able to call upon Him with pure lips. Lip does not stand for language, but is mentioned as the organ of speech, by which a man expresses the thoughts of his heart, so that purity of the lips involves or presupposes the purification of the heart. The lips are defiled by the names of the idols whom they have invoked (cf. Hos. 2:19, Ps. 16:4). The fruit of the purification is this, that henceforth they call upon the name of Jehovah, and serve Him. $\text{יְיָ קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְיָ}$, when used of men, always signifies to call solemnly or heartily upon the name of Jehovah. To serve *shkhem 'echâd*, with one shoulder, is to serve together or with unanimity. The metaphor is taken from bearers who carry a burden with even shoulders; cf. Jer. 32:39.

As an example of the way in which they will serve the Lord, it is stated in v. 10 that they will offer the widely scattered members of the Israelitish church as a sacrifice to the Lord. Compare Isa. 66:20, where this thought is

applied to the heathen of all quarters of the globe; whereas Zephaniah, while fixing his eye upon that passage, has given it more briefly, and taken the expression “from beyond the rivers of Cush” from Isa. 18:1, for the purpose of naming the remotest heathen nations *instar omnium*. The rivers of Cush are the Nile and the Astaboras, with their different tributaries. עֲתָרַי בְּת פּוּצֵי is the accusative of the nearest object, and מְנַחְתֵּי that of the more remote. *Athâr* does not mean fragrance (Ges., Ewald, Maurer), but worshipper, from *’âthar*, to pray, to entreat. The worshippers are more precisely defined by *bath pûtsai*, the daughter of my dispersed ones (*pûts*, part. pass.), i.e., the crowd or congregation consisting of the dispersed of the Lord, the members of the Israelitish congregation of God scattered about in all the world. They are presented to the Lord by the converted Gentiles as *minchâh*, a meat-offering, i.e., according to Isa. 66:20, just as the children of Israel offered a meat-offering. In the symbolism of religious worship, the presentation of the meat-offering shadowed forth diligence in good works as the fruit of justification. The meaning is therefore the following: The most remote of the heathen nations will prove that they are worshippers of Jehovah, by bringing to Him the scattered members of His nation, or by converting them to the living God. We have here in Old Testament form the thought expressed by the Apostle Paul in Rom. 11, namely, that the Gentiles have been made partakers of salvation, that they may incite to emulation the Israelites who have fallen away from the call of divine grace. The words of the prophet treat of the blessing which will accrue, from the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, to the Israelites who have been rejected on account of their guilt, and refer not only to the missionary work of Christians among the Jews in the stricter sense of the term, but to everything that is done, both directly and indirectly, through the rise and spread of Christianity among the nations, for the conversion of the Jews to the Saviour whom they once despised. Their

complete fulfilment, however, will only take place after the *pleroma* of the Gentiles has come in, when the πῶρωσις, which in part has happened to Israel, shall be removed, and “all Israel” shall be saved (Rom. 11:25, 26). On the other hand, Mark, Hitzig, and others, have taken *’athârai bath pûtsai* as the subject, and understand it as referring to the heathen who have escaped the judgment by flying in all directions to their own homes, for example even to Cush, and who having become converted, offer to the Lord the gift that is His due. But, apart from the parallel passage in Isa. 66:20, which alone is quite decisive, this view is proved to be untenable by *bath pûtsai*, daughter of *my* dispersed ones. The thought that Jehovah disperses the heathen, either at the judgment or through the judgment, is foreign to the whole of the Old Testament, as Hitzig himself appears to have felt, when he changed *pûts*, to disperse, into its very opposite—namely, to come home. The thought, on the other hand, that God will disperse His people Israel among all nations on account of their sins, and will hereafter gather them together again, is a truth expressed even in the song of Moses, and one which recurs in all the prophets, so that every hearer or reader of our prophet must think at once of the Israel scattered abroad in connection with the expression “my (i.e., Jehovah’s) dispersed ones.” The objection, that Judah is first spoken of in v. 11 (Hitzig), is thereby deprived of all its significance, even if this really were the case. But the objection is also incorrect, since the Judaeans have been already addressed in v. 8 in the expression תְּבוּ לִי.

Zephaniah 3:11. “In that day wilt thou not be ashamed of all thy doings, wherewith thou hast transgressed against me; for then will I remove from the midst of thee those that rejoice in thy pride, and thou wilt no more pride thyself upon my holy mountain. V. 12. And I leave in the midst of thee a people bowed down and poor, and they trust in the name of Jehovah. V. 13. The remnant of Israel will not do wrong, and not speak lies, and there will not be found in their mouth a tongue of deceit; for they will feed and rest, and

no one will terrify them." The congregation, being restored to favour, will be cleansed and sanctified by the Lord from every sinful thing. The words of v. 11 are addressed to the Israel gathered together from the dispersion, as the daughter of Zion (cf. v. 14). "In that day" refers to the time of judgment mentioned before, viz., to the day when Jehovah rises up for prey (v. 8). לֹא תִבוּשׁי, thou wilt not need to be ashamed of all thine iniquities; because, as the explanatory clauses which follow clearly show, they occur no more. This is the meaning of the words, and not, as Ewald imagines, that Jerusalem will no more be bowed down by the recollection of them. The perfect אָשַׁר פְּשַׁעֲתָּ does indeed point to the sins of former times; not to the recollection of them, however, but to the commission of them. For the proud and sinners will then be exterminated from the congregation. עָלִיזֵי גִבּוֹרָה is taken from Isa. 13:3, where it denotes the heroes called by Jehovah, who exult with pride caused by the intoxication of victory; whereas here the reference is to the haughty judges, priests, and prophets (vv. 3 and 4), who exult in their sinful ways. גִּבּוֹרָה a feminine form of the infinitive, like *moshchâh* in Ex. 29:29, etc. (cf. Ges. § 45, 1, *b*, and Ewald, § 236, *a*). גִּבּוֹרָה, to be haughty, as in Isa. 3:16. The prophet mentions pride as the root of all sins. The holy mountain is not Canaan as a mountainous country, but the temple mountain, as in the parallel passage, Isa. 11:9. The people left by the Lord, i.e., spared in the judgment, and gathered together again out of the dispersion, will be *'ânî* and *dal*. The two words are often connected together as synonyms, e.g., Isa. 26:6 and Job 34:28. עָנִי is not to be confounded with עָנָו, gentle or meek, but signifies bowed down, oppressed with the feeling of impotence for what is good, and the knowledge that deliverance is due to the compassionate grace of God alone; it is therefore the opposite of proud, which trusts in its own strength, and boasts of its own virtue. The leading characteristic of those who are bowed down will be trust in the Lord, the

spiritual stamp of genuine piety. This remnant of Israel, the ἐκλογὴ of the people of God, will neither commit injustice, nor practise wickedness and deceit with word and tongue, will therefore be a holy nation, answering to its divine calling (Ex. 19:6), just as God does not wrong (v. 5), and the servant of Jehovah has no deceit in his mouth (Isa. 53:9). What is stated here can, of course, not refer to those who were brought back from Babylon, as Calvin supposes, taking the words comparatively, because there were many hypocrites among the exiles, and adding, "because the Lord will thus wipe away all stains from His people, that the holiness may then appear all the purer." The prophetic announcement refers to the time of perfection, which commenced with the coming of Christ, and will be completely realized at His return to judgment. Strauss very appropriately compares the words of John, "Whatsoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (1 John 3:9). Zephaniah explains what he says, by adding the assurance of the blessing which is promised in the law as the reward of faithful walk in the commandments of the Lord. This reason rests upon the assumption that they only rejoice in the promised blessing who walk in the commandments of God. In this respect the enjoyment of the blessing yields a practical proof that wrong and wickedness occur no more. The words יִרְעוּ וְרָבְצוּ may be explained from the comparison of the remnant of Israel to a flock both in Mic. 7:14 and Luke 12:32 ("little flock;" for the fact itself, compare Mic. 4:4). This blessing is still further developed in what follows, first of all by a reference to the removal of the judgments of God (vv. 14–17), and secondly by the promise of God that all the obstacles which prevent the enjoyment of the blessing are to be cleared away (vv. 18–20).

Zephaniah 3:14. "Exult, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! rejoice and exult with all the heart, O daughter Jerusalem. V. 15. Jehovah has removed thy judgments, cleared away thine enemy; the King of Israel, Jehovah, is in the midst of thee: thou wilt see evil no more. V. 16. In that day will men say to Jerusalem, Fear not, O Zion; let not

thy hands drop. V. 17. *Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, a hero who helps: He rejoices over thee in delight, He is silent in His love, exults over thee with rejoicing.* The daughter Zion, i.e., the reassembled remnant of Israel, is to exult and shout at the fulness of the salvation prepared for it. The fulness is indicated in the heaping up of words for exulting and rejoicing. The greater the exultation, the greater must the object be over which men exult. הִרְיֵעוּ, to break out into a cry of joy, is a plural, because the Israel addressed is a plurality. The re-establishment of the covenant of grace assigns the reason for the exultation. God has removed the judgments, and cleared away the enemies, who served as the executors of His judgments. *Pinnâh, piel*, to put in order (sc., a house), by clearing away what is lying about in disorder (Gen. 24:31; Lev. 14:36), hence to sweep away or remove. *Oyēbh*: with indefinite generality, every enemy. Now is Jehovah once more in the midst of the daughter Zion as King of Israel, whereas, so long as Israel was given up to the power of the enemy, He had ceased to be its King. *Yhōvâh* is in apposition to *melekh Yisrâ'el*, which is placed first for the sake of emphasis, and not a predicate. The predicate is merely בְּקִרְבֶּךָ (in the midst of thee). The accent lies upon the fact that Jehovah is in the midst of His congregation as King of Israel (cf. v. 17). Because this is the case, she will no more see, i.e., experience, evil (רָאָה) as in Jer. 5:12, Isa. 44:16, etc.), and need not therefore any longer fear and despair. This is stated in v. 16: They will say to Jerusalem, Fear not. She will have so little fear, that men will be able to call her the fearless one. צִיּוֹן is a vocative of address. It is simpler to assume this than to supply לְ from the previous clause. The falling of the hands is a sign of despair through alarm and anxiety (cf. Isa. 13:7). This thought is still further explained in v. 17. Jehovah, the God of Zion, is within her, and is a hero who helps or saves; He has inward joy in His rescued and blessed people (cf. Isa. 62:5; 65:19). יְהִרְיֵעוּ appears unsuitable, since we cannot think of it as indicating silence as to sins that

may occur (cf. Ps. 50:21, Isa. 22:14), inasmuch as, according to v. 13, the remnant of Israel commits no sin. Ewald and Hitzig would therefore read *yachādîsh*; and Ewald renders it "he will grow young again," which Hitzig rejects as at variance with the language, because we should then have יִתְהַדַּשׁ. He therefore takes *yachādîsh* as synonymous with יַעֲשֶׂה הַדְּשׁוֹת, he will do a new thing (Isa. 43:19). But this rendering cannot be justified by the usage of the language, and does not even yield a thought in harmony with the context. Silence in His love is an expression used to denote love deeply felt, which is absorbed in its object with thoughtfulness and admiration, and forms the correlate to rejoicing with exultation, i.e., to the loud demonstration of one's love. The two clauses contain simply a description, drawn from man's mode of showing love, and transferred to God, to set forth the great satisfaction which the Lord has in His redeemed people, and are merely a poetical filling up of the expression, "He will rejoice over thee with joy." This joy of His love will the Lord extend to all who are troubled and pine in misery.

Zephaniah 3:18. *"I gather together those that mourn for the festive meeting; they are of thee; reproach presses upon them. V. 19. Behold, at that time I will treat with all thine oppressors, and will save the limping, and gather together that which is dispersed, and make them a praise and a name in every land of their shame. V. 20. At that time will I bring you and gather you in time; for I will make you a name and a praise among all the nations of the earth, when I turn your captivity before your eyes, saith Jehovah."* The salvation held up in prospect before the remnant of Israel, which has been refined by the judgments and delivered, was at a very remote distance in Zephaniah's time. The first thing that awaited the nation was the judgment, through which it was to be dispersed among the heathen, according to the testimony of Moses and all the prophets, and to be refined in the furnace of affliction. The ten tribes were already carried away into exile, and Judah was

to share the same fate immediately afterwards. In order, therefore, to offer to the pious a firm consolation of hope in the period of suffering that awaited them, and one on which their faith could rest in the midst of tribulation, Zephaniah mentions in conclusion the gathering together of all who pine in misery at a distance from Zion, and who are scattered far and wide, to assure even these of their future participation in the promised salvation. Every clause of v. 18 is difficult. נִגְיִי is a *niphal* participle of נִגַּה, with ו instead of י; as in Lam. 1:4, in the sense of to mourn, or be troubled. *Mō'ēd*, the time of the feast, when all Israel gathered together to rejoice before Jehovah, as in Hos. 12:10, except that the word is not to be restricted to the feast of tabernacles, but may be understood as relating to all the feasts to which pilgrimages were made. The preposition *min* is taken by many in the sense of far from; in support of which Hitzig appeals to Lam. 1:4. But that passage is rather opposed to the application of the meaning referred to, inasmuch as we have מִבְּלִי there, in which *min* denotes the cause. And this causal signification is to be retained here also, if only because of the close connection between נִגְיִי and מְמוֹעֵד, according to which the dependent word can only denote the object or occasion of the *nōgāh*. Those who are troubled for the festal meeting are they who mourn because they cannot participate in the joy of assembling before the face of the Lord, namely, on account of their banishment into foreign lands. *Mimmēkh hāyū*, from thee were they, i.e., they have been thine (*min* expressing descent or origin, as in Isa. 58:12, Ezra 2:59, Ps. 68:27; and the whole clause containing the reason for their meeting). The explanation given by Anton and Strauss is unsuitable and forced: "They will be away from thee, namely, separated from thee as mourners." In the last clause it is a matter of dispute to what the suffix in עֲלִיָּהּ refers. The explanation of Strauss, that it refers to Zion, is precluded by the fact that Zion is itself addressed, both in what precedes and what follows, and the thought does not require

so rapid a change of persons. It is more natural to refer it to נִגְיִי, in which case the singular suffix is used collectively as a neuter, like the feminines הַצֵּלְעָה and הַנִּדְחָה; and the meaning takes this form: a burden upon them, viz., those who mourned for the feasts, was the reproach, sc. of slavery among the heathen (compare v. 19, at the close). Consequently the clause assigns a still further reason for the promise, that they are to be gathered together.

In v. 19, עֲשֶׂה with אֵת signifies neither to handle in an evil sense, nor *comprimere, conculcare*, but to treat or negotiate with a person, as in Ezek. 23:25 and 17:17, where אֵת, according to a later usage of the language, is a preposition, and not a sign of the accusative. The more precise definition of the procedure, or of the kind of negotiation, is evident from the context. The reference is to a punitive procedure, or treating in wrath. מְעַנֶּיךָ as in Ps. 60:14, the heathen nations who had subjugated Israel. What follows is taken almost *verbatim* from Mic. 4:6; and the last clause points back to Deut. 26:19, to tell the people that the Lord will assuredly realize the glorification promised to the people of His possession, and make Israel an object of praise to the whole earth. בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ, in all lands, where they have suffered shame. *Boshtām* is expegetical of *hā'ârets*, which governs it; this explains the use of the article with the *nomen regens* (cf. Ewald, § 290, d). In order to paint the glory of the future salvation in still more vivid colours before the eyes of the people, the Lord ends by repeating this promise once more, with a slight change in the words. At that time will I lead you. The indefinite אֲבִיָּא might be expounded from the context, by supplying the place to which God will lead them, after such passages as Isa. 14:2; 43:5. But it is more natural to think of the phrase, to lead out and in, according to Num. 27:17, and to take אֲבִיָּא as an abbreviation of הוֹצִיא וְהָבִיא, picturing the pastoral fidelity with which the Lord will guide the redeemed. The

following words אֶתְהַבֵּי אֶתְהַבֵּי point to this: compare Isa. 40:11, where the gathering of the lambs is added to the feeding of the flock, to give prominence to the faithful care of the shepherds for the weak and helpless. אֶתְהַבֵּי is the infinitive: my gathering you, sc. will take place. The choice of this form is to be traced, as Hitzig supposes, to the endeavour to secure uniformity in the clauses. A fresh reason is then assigned for the promise, by a further allusion to the glorification appointed for the people of God above all the nations of the earth, coupled with the statement that this will take place at the turning of their captivity, i.e., when God shall abolish the misery of His people, and turn it into salvation (“turn the captivity,” as in Zeph. 2:7), and that “before your eyes;” i.e., not that “ye yourselves shall see the salvation, and not merely your children, when they have closed your eyes” (Hitzig)—for such an antithesis would be foreign to the context—but as equivalent to “quite obviously, so that the turn in events stands out before the eye,” analogous to “ye will see eye to eye” (Isa. 52:8; cf. Luke 2:30). This will assuredly take place, for Jehovah has spoken it.

On the fulfilment of this promise, Theodoret observes that “these things were bestowed upon those who came from Babylon, and have been offered to all men since then.” This no doubt indicates certain points of the fulfilment, but the principal fulfilment is generalized too much. For although the promise retains its perfect validity in the case of the Christian church, which is gathered out of both Jews and Gentiles, and will receive its final accomplishment in the completion of the kingdom of heaven founded by Christ on the earth, the allusion to the Gentile Christians falls quite into the background in the picture of salvation in vv. 11–20, and the prophet’s eye is

simply directed towards Israel, and the salvation reserved for the rescued ἐκλογὴ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ. But inasmuch as Zephaniah not only announces the judgment upon the whole earth, but also predicts the conversion of the heathen nations to Jehovah the living God (Zeph. 3:9, 10), we must not restrict the description of salvation in Zeph. 3:11–20 to the people of Israel who were lineally descended from Abraham, and to the remnant of them; but must also regard the Gentiles converted to the living God through Christ as included among them, and must consequently say that the salvation which the Lord will procure through the judgment for the daughter Zion or the remnant of Israel, commenced with the founding of the Christian church by the apostles for Judah and the whole world, and has been gradually unfolded more and more through the spread of the name of the Lord and His worship among all nations, and will be eventually and fully realized at the second coming of Christ, to the last judgment, and to perfect His kingdom in the establishment of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21 and 22). It is true that both the judgment and the salvation of the remnant of Israel seeking Jehovah and His righteousness commenced even before Christ, with the giving up of Judah, together with all the tribes and kingdoms falling within the horizon of Old Testament prophecy, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar and the imperial rulers who followed him; but so far as the question of the fulfilment of our prophecy is concerned, these events come into consideration merely as preliminary stages of and preparations for the times of decision, which commenced with Christ not only for the Jews, but for all nations.