

## ZEPHANIAH

—prophet to Judah, second half of 7th century

### 1. Date and historical background

1:1, reign of Josiah (640-609 BC)

2:13, before Nineveh destroyed (612 BC)

1:4-5, 8-9, apparently before Josiah's reformation in 621

numerous references to syncretism; probably before reformation in 621 BC (2 Kings 23:4-25), yet too late to avoid judgment altogether (2 Kings 23:26-27)

Conclusion: written during period 640-621 BC; nearly 100 years after Micah and Isaiah. Just had passed through a "dark period" of Kings Manasseh and Amon

Zephaniah was a contemporary of Nahum, who wrote against Assyria; he saw the beginning of Jeremiah's long ministry, as well as Huldah's.

Zephaniah ministered in a time of national idolatry, while Judah was encircled by declining Assyrian rule.

### 2. The prophet Zephaniah

1:1, great-great grandson of Hezekiah (probably King Hezekiah)

1:4, etc., "from this place..." = lived in Judah—Jerusalem

Preaching of Zephaniah may have led Josiah to seek the Lord, as the prophetess Huldah had (cf. 2 Kings 22:14 - 23:3).

### 3. Literary form

Almost all of Zephaniah is in poetic form (except 2:8-11; 3:16-20). Each line has 3 + 2 beats; this funeral dirge tempo is known as elegiac meter, which flourished in Greek poetry in the 7th century BC.

—>This shows Greek-Palestinian intercourse of the period which was cultural as well as commercial

#### 4. Outline of Zephaniah

Theme: “the day of Yahweh,” (= a day both of judgment and of blessing)

1:7, 14-16, 18;      2:2-3;      3:8, 11, 16

ch. 1, God’s coming great judgment (=Babylonian invasion of Judea in 20 years)

vv. 2,3 sounds like Gen. 6 in preparation for “the day of the LORD”

v. 4 excommunication of idolatry

v. 12, God is not apathetic about apathy

v. 18, encouragement to the pious in an age of materialism

ch. 2, The remnant and its enemies

vv. 2,3, anger and mercy meet in the “Day of the Lord”

v. 3, Zephaniah (זְפַנְיָהּ) means “Yah hides”

v. 12, typical of the Divine Warrior found in the prophets, e.g., Is. 63:2,3

Zeph. 3:17 The LORD your God in your midst, *a delivering Warrior*, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

### ch. 3, Yahweh's righteousness and kingdom

vv. 1-5 = a Lament over Jerusalem

v. 8, day of wrath; Armageddon? cf. "decision" of Joel 3:14

8 "Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All my fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy.

vv. 9-20, kingdom promises (millennium)

v. 9 "pure lips" cf. Isaiah's (chpt. 6) unclean lips

3:9 "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord."

Dumbrell (*Faith of Israel*) believes the judgment on Babel is reversed when the scattered remnant returns to speak with "pure lips." Babel had tried to make a name for itself (Gen. 11:4); now the exalted remnant is given a great name (Zeph. 3:19,20) in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covt (Gen. 12:2, a promise given on the heels of Babel in Gen. 11).

3:19 Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, And gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and a *name*. In every land where they were put to shame. 20 At that time I will bring you back, Even at the time I gather you; For I will give you a *name* and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I return your captives before your eyes," Says the LORD.

Gen. 12:2 "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing."

v. 15, theocratic ideal of Shekinah