

## Zephaniah



**Z**ephaniah announced “the day of the Lord,” a time when God would bring judgment on Judah and the other nations surrounding it. This coming day would be one of doom for many, but those from Israel and Judah who remain humble and faithful would survive to bless the whole world.

**1** I am Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the grandson of Gedaliah, the great-grandson of Amariah, and the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah. When Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah, the LORD gave me this message.

### Judgment on Judah

- 2** I, the LORD, now promise to destroy everything on this earth—  
**3** people and animals, birds and fish.  
“Everyone who is evil will crash to the ground,” and I will wipe out the entire human race.  
**4** I will reach out to punish Judah and Jerusalem—nothing will remain of the god Baal; nothing will be remembered of his pagan priests.  
**5** Not a trace will be found of those who worship stars from their rooftops, or bow down to the god Milcom, while claiming loyalty to me, the LORD.  
**6** Nothing will remain of anyone

who has turned away and rejected me.

- 7** Be silent! I am the LORD God, and the time is near. I am preparing to sacrifice my people and to invite my guests.  
**8** On that day I will punish national leaders and sons of the king, along with all who follow foreign customs. ▷  
**9** I will punish worshipers of pagan gods ▷ and cruel palace officials who abuse their power.  
**10** I, the LORD, promise that on that day noisy crying will be heard from Fish Gate, New Town, and Upper Hills.  
**11** Everyone in Lower Hollow will mourn loudly, because merchants and money changers will be wiped out.  
**12** I’ll search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those people

who sit there unworried  
while thinking,

"The LORD won't do anything,  
good or bad."

<sup>13</sup> Their possessions will be taken,  
their homes left in ruins.

They won't get to live  
in the houses they build,  
or drink wine from the grapes  
in their own vineyards.

### A Terrible Day

<sup>14</sup> The great day of the LORD  
is coming soon, very soon.

On that terrible day,  
fearsome shouts of warriors  
will be heard everywhere.

<sup>15</sup> It will be a time of anger—  
of trouble and torment,  
of disaster and destruction,  
of darkness and despair,  
of storm clouds and shadows,

<sup>16</sup> of trumpet calls  
and battle cries  
against fortified cities  
and mighty fortresses.

<sup>17</sup> The LORD warns everyone  
who has sinned against him,  
"I'll strike you blind!  
Then your blood and your insides  
will gush out like vomit.

<sup>18</sup> Not even your silver or gold  
can save you on that day  
when I, the LORD, am angry.  
My anger will flare up  
like a furious fire  
scorching the earth  
and everyone on it."

### Turn to the LORD

**2** You disgraceful nation,  
gather around,

<sup>2</sup> before it's too late.  
The LORD has set a time  
when his fierce anger  
will strike like a storm  
and sweep you away.

<sup>3</sup> If you humbly obey the LORD,  
then come and worship him.  
If you do right and are humble,  
perhaps you will be safe

on that day when the LORD  
turns loose his anger.

### Judgment on Philistia

<sup>4</sup> Gaza and Ashkelon  
will be deserted  
and left in ruins.  
Ashdod will be emptied  
in broad daylight,  
and Ekron uprooted.

<sup>5</sup> To you people of Philistia▷  
who live along the coast,  
the LORD has this to say:  
"I am now your enemy,  
and I'll wipe you out!"

<sup>6</sup> Your seacoast will be changed  
into pastureland  
and sheep pens.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The LORD God hasn't forgotten  
those survivors in Judah,  
and he will help them—  
his people will take your land  
to use for pasture.  
And when evening comes,  
they will rest  
in houses at Ashkelon.

### Judgment on Moab and Ammon

<sup>\*8</sup> The LORD All-Powerful,  
the God of Israel, said:  
I've heard Moab and Ammon  
insult my people  
and threaten their nation.▷

<sup>9</sup> And so, I swear by my very life  
that Moab and Ammon will end up  
like Sodom and Gomorrah—  
covered with thornbushes  
and salt pits forever.  
Then my people who survive  
will take their land.

<sup>10</sup> This is how Moab and Ammon  
will at last be repaid  
for their pride—  
and for sneering at the nation  
that belongs to me,  
the LORD All-Powerful.

<sup>11</sup> I will fiercely attack.  
Then every god on this earth  
will shrink to nothing,  
and everyone of every nation  
will bow down to me,  
right where they are.

**Judgment on Ethiopia**

<sup>12</sup> People of Ethiopia,<sup>></sup>  
the sword of the LORD  
will slaughter you!

**Judgment on Assyria**

<sup>13</sup> The LORD will reach to the north  
to crush Assyria

and overthrow Nineveh.

<sup>14</sup> Herds of wild animals  
will live in its rubble;  
all kinds of desert owls  
will perch on its stones  
and hoot in the windows.

Noisy ravens will be heard  
inside its buildings,  
'stripped bare of cedar.'

<sup>15</sup> This is the glorious city  
that felt secure and said,  
"I am the only one!"  
Now it's merely ruins,  
a home for wild animals.  
Every passerby simply sneers  
and makes vulgar signs.

**Sinful Jerusalem**

**3** Too bad for that disgusting,  
corrupt, and lawless city!

<sup>2</sup> Forever rebellious  
and rejecting correction,  
Jerusalem refuses to trust  
or obey the LORD God.

<sup>3</sup> Its officials are roaring lions,  
its judges are wolves;  
in the evening they attack,  
by morning nothing is left.

<sup>4</sup> Jerusalem's prophets are proud  
and not to be trusted.  
The priests have disgraced  
the place of worship  
and abused God's Law.

<sup>5</sup> All who do evil are shameless,  
but the LORD does right  
and is always fair.  
With the dawn of each day,  
God brings about justice.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD wiped out nations  
and left fortresses  
crumbling in the dirt.  
Their streets and towns

were reduced to ruins  
and emptied of people.

<sup>7</sup> God felt certain that Jerusalem  
would learn to respect  
and obey him.

Then he would hold back  
from punishing the city  
and not wipe it out.

But everyone there was eager  
to start sinning again.

**Nations Will Turn to the LORD**

<sup>8</sup> The LORD said:  
Just wait for the day  
when I accuse you nations.

I have decided on a day,  
when I will bring together  
every nation and kingdom  
and punish them all  
in my fiery anger.  
I will become furious  
and destroy the earth.

<sup>9</sup> I will purify each language  
and make those languages  
acceptable for praising me.<sup>></sup>  
Then, with hearts united,  
everyone will serve  
only me, the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> From across the rivers  
of Ethiopia,<sup>></sup>  
my scattered people,  
my true worshipers,  
will bring offerings to me.

<sup>11</sup> When that time comes,  
you won't rebel against me  
and be put to shame.  
I'll do away with those  
who are proud and arrogant.  
Never will any of them  
strut around  
on my holy mountain.

<sup>12</sup> But I, the LORD, won't destroy  
any of your people  
who are truly humble  
and turn to me for safety.

<sup>13</sup> The people of Israel who survive  
will live right  
and refuse to tell lies.  
They will eat and rest  
with nothing to fear.

### A Song of Celebration

- <sup>14</sup> Everyone in Jerusalem and Judah,  
celebrate and shout  
with all your heart!
- <sup>15</sup> Zion, your punishment is over.  
The LORD has forced your enemies  
to turn and retreat.  
Your LORD is King of Israel  
and stands at your side;  
you don't have to worry  
about any more troubles.
- <sup>16</sup> Jerusalem, the time is coming,  
when it will be said to you:  
"Don't be discouraged  
or grow weak from fear!"
- <sup>17</sup> The LORD your God  
wins victory after victory  
and is always with you.  
He celebrates and sings  
because of you,

### Notes

\*An asterisk preceding a verse number in a poetic passage of this book indicates that the contents of two or more verses have been joined together and rearranged beginning with the verse so marked.

Phrases enclosed in half square superscript brackets (‘<sup>1</sup>’) are those that are difficult to translate from the original Hebrew with great certainty. Consequently, the English rendering given should be understood as only one possible way of translating such texts.

- ▷ **1.8** *follow foreign customs*: Hebrew “wear foreign clothes.”
- ▷ **1.9** *worshippers ... gods*: The Hebrew text has “all who jump over the threshold.”
- ▷ **2.5** *people of Philistia*: The Hebrew text also mentions “Canaan” and “Cherethites.”
- ▷ **2.8** *threaten their nation*: Or “boast about their own nation.”
- ▷ **2.12** *Ethiopia*: The Hebrew text has “Cush.”
- ▷ **3.9** *I will ... praising me*: Or “I will change the hearts of all people and make them fit for praising me.”
- ▷ **3.10** *Ethiopia*: The Hebrew text has “Cush.”

and he will refresh your life  
with his love.”

### The LORD's Promise to His People

- <sup>18</sup> ‘The LORD has promised:  
Your sorrow has ended,  
and you can celebrate.’<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>19</sup> I will punish those  
who mistreat you.  
I will bring together the lame  
and the outcasts,  
then they will be praised,  
instead of despised,  
in every country on earth.
- <sup>20</sup> I will lead you home,  
and with your own eyes  
you will see me bless you  
with all you once owned.  
Then you will be famous  
everywhere on this earth.  
I, the LORD, have spoken!