

Zephaniah

The Argument

This prophet, by a somewhat larger account of his pedigree, gives us ground to guess of what family he might be; the last named may possibly be the good king Hezekiah; the names are the same in [Zep 1:1](#), and [2Ki 18:1](#). By his freedom with princes and the king's children, reproving them and threatening them, [Zep 1:8](#), with the loftiness of his style, may fairly be admitted a conjecture at somewhat more than ordinary in his descent: but whether of royal blood or not, he came with a Divine warrant, and with a prophetic spirit, sharply reproving all ranks of men for their sins; of which in particular idolatry, apostacy, and neglect to inquire for the true religion and the true God, and the sinful fashions as of great ones in their habits, and the violent oppression of the great ones, are named, [Zep 1:5-6, 8-9](#); which sins, and many others which then abounded amongst them, are threatened with severe punishments, and with utter desolation, which had already befallen some of the neighbouring nations named; and proposed as examples to the Jews, to move them to consider, repent, amend, and prevent the threatened judgments, which, unless they repent, will come suddenly. The prophet therefore affectionately exhorteth and presseth them to repentance, [Zep 2:1-15](#), by examples of those he mentioneth, whose impenitence, added to their sins, ruined them. By promises, and encouragements to expect mercy upon their hearkening to his counsel, he foretells the coming of the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, the preserving of a remnant of them amidst all the troubles and wasting judgments that should follow them, and a return out of captivity, with the re-establishing them as the church and people of God; which promise closeth his prophecy, and for which he calls on them to be thankful to and rejoice in their God, who in the midst of their sins, and his wrath for those sins, yet remembered his own mercies and covenant for them.

Chapter 1

The time when Zephaniah prophesied, [Zep 1:1](#). God's severe judgment against Judah for divers sins, [Zep 1:2-18](#).

[Zep 1:1](#)

The word; the declaration of the purpose of God, either spoken audibly, or clearly manifested by signs.

Of the Lord, God of Israel; here is the Divine authority of this prophecy with which the prophet's word is seconded.

Which came: the precise manner how it came we need not inquire into; *Zephaniah* did not hammer out of his own brain any such news, he received from God what he communicated to them. *Zephaniah;* by derivation of the name. it is one hidden of the Lord, whom God doth hide, or God's secretary; or else one that is God's Watchman, whom God hath set over the house of Judah, as *Ezekiel* is said to be, [Eze 3:17](#).

The son of Cushi, &c. his pedigree here gives us no certainty what his progenitors were, whether prophets, or only eminent known men; or whether he were, as some think him, the great-grandson of Hezekiah, the name being the same.

In the days of Josiah; before the captivity; he was then contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. prophesied before the captivity, and foretells much like what Jeremiah or Ezekiel did.

Amon; whose reign was very full of impiety and idolatry, and hastened the captivity upon Judah. This Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which Manasseh had made, [2Ch 33:22](#).

[Zep 1:2](#)

*I will utterly consume, Heb. *Gathering up I will gather up*, or take up, intimating particularly the manner how all should be consumed, i.e. swept away as a prey to the Babylonians.*

From off the land of Judah, the two tribes.

Saith the Lord: this is added to confirm and assure the truth hereof.

[Zep 1:3](#)

The former verse denounced the future desolation in general terms. This verse specifieth what desolation in particular God would bring upon the land.

I will consume man and beast; man shall be consumed for his own sin, and the beasts consumed for man's sake; men by the pestilence and famine, the beasts by murrain, and devoured by multitudes of hungry soldiers, that shall make greater havoc than any murrain ordinarily doth.

The fowls of the heaven; either by some unknown disease among them, or else by a distaste at the stench of putrefying carcasses, they fled away, so that none, or very few, appeared, insomuch that it looked as if all were consumed.

The fishes of the sea: by sea, some understand ponds, lakes, or smaller seas, such as that of Gennesareth and Tiberias, the waters whereof might be made noisome to the fish by the streams of blood and carcasses which might possibly be east into them; or God might destroy the fishes by some consuming disease too. He hath ways to do it, who hath once said he will do it.

The stumbling-blocks; the idols.

The wicked; the idolatrous priests, and others who worshipped them.

I will cut off man, all shall disappear, from off the land of Judah.

[Zep 1:4](#)

*I will also, Heb. *And I will, or, And I have*; so prophets speak of what shall most certainly be as if already done.*

Stretch out mine hand: this seems to intimate. some immediate stroke from God, he speaks so in [Jer 51:25](#); [Eze 6:14](#); [14:13](#); [25:13](#).

Upon Judah; Benjamin is included, though Judah only is named.

Upon all the inhabitants; it will be universal destruction of them, either by sword, famine, pestilence, or captivity; both citizens and sojourners, all shall perish, or suffer by some or other of these ways.

Of Jerusalem: though it was the holy city, beautified with the temple of God, yet all should not secure it, [Jer 7:4](#); [Eze 9:6](#).

I will cut off the remnant of Baal; whatsoever remains of the idolatry of Baal, both the idols, their temples, sacrifices, priests, ornaments, and worshippers: whether this refers to times after the reformation by Josiah, or to times before it, needs not scrupulously be inquired into.

From this place: this idolatry had filled Jerusalem itself.

The names; both the persons, and the memory of them also, for names includeth both.

The Chemarims; either called so from their black garments they went in, or from their swarthy colour accustomed by the black smoke of incense, which they were almost continually in; or door-keepers, sextons of Baal; or voluntary servants; or such as the popish monks, some ministers of Baal distinct from the priests.

The priests; either the priests of Baal, or the apostates of Aaron's house, who (though priests by birth and office) should have been stedfast to, but had fallen from the true God and his worship to Baal and his worship.

[Zep 1:5](#)

And them that worship; those among the people that adhered to this idolatry.

The host of heaven; the sun, moon, and stars, frequently in the Scripture called the host of heaven.

Upon the house-tops; openly, as the manner of those idolaters was, either because they thought those deities they imagined to dwell in the body of those stars better saw them, or were better pleased thus, or because these places were nearer heaven. On the flat roofs of their houses they were used to have their altars and worship.

That swear by the Lord, or, to the Lord, (as the Hebrew bears,) *and by Malcham;* persons that mix idol worship and the worship of the true God; that devote themselves to God and Baal, or Malcham; called Milcom, and Molech, and Moloch, [Am 5:26](#); probably it was their chief idol, fancied to be king of gods and men.

[Zep 1:6](#)

Them that are turned back; apostates, who have forsaken the Lord and his worship, or that are turned atheists, or that in matter of religion have taken up not what is purest and truest, but what is nearest and most in fashion.

That have not sought the Lord; sluggishly neglected to examine pretended religions, according to the law, which they might and ought to have done, and who have embraced a fall religion instead of the true.

Nor inquired for him: though the prophets have preached against this apostacy, and called the priests and people to forsake the idols, and inquire after God, yet they would not inquire; these also are here doomed to destruction.

[Zep 1:7](#)

Hold thy peace; thou that murmurest in discontent, or disputest out of frowardness against God, his worship, and his government, that thinkest of him but little better than of Baal or Malcham, cease all thy quarrels and dispute, stand in awe.

At the presence of the Lord God; who is almighty, omniscient, who ruleth and will avenge.

The day of the Lord; a day of vengeance from the Lord. The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice; the wicked among the Jews, whom he will sacrifice by the Chaldean's sword.

He hath bid his guests; summoned in beasts of the field and fowls of the air, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of slain Jews, whom the Babylonians slew.

[Zep 1:8](#)

It shall come to pass; it shall most certainly be fulfilled what I threaten I will most surely execute.

In the day of the Lord's sacrifice; of slaughter to be made by the Babylonians, called here a day of sacrifice, that we might see clearly the just and exemplary proceedings of God; these people sinned in sacrificing to strange gods, and God will punish them, making them a strange sacrifice to his anger.

I will punish; the punishment shall appear to be from my hand, as he threatens often by Ezekiel.

The princes; nobles about the court, the great ones, who dreamed of shifting better than others, but fell with the first, [2Ki 25:19-21](#).

The king's children; sons and grandchildren too of good Josiah. Jehoahaz died a captive in Egypt, [2Ki 23:34](#). Jehoiakim died on the way, or in Babylon, buried with the burial of an ass, [Jer 22:18-19](#). Jeconiah, carried to Babylon, sped somewhat, yet but little, better; there he died a captive. As for Zedekiah and his children, these were slain before his face, then his eyes put out, and he led into miserable captivity.

Clothed with strange apparel; some say the strange apparel of idolatrous priests; others say, and more likely, the garb of foreigners, imitated by the wanton Jews.

[Zep 1:9](#)

In the same day; not to be taken for a single day, but more largely for that time wherein God would visit and punish.

That leap on the threshold; insolently, and with rage, break open the doors of such whose goods they seize, upon pretence of forfeitures or fines; a sin that Ezekiel both taxed and threatened, [Eze 8:17](#); [12:19](#); [45:9](#).

Their masters; either the oppressing kings, whose officers these were, or public officers and judges, whose servants thus did (to enrich their masters) spoil the poor and the oppressed.

With violence; goods taken away by force, and kept as much against right, as at first taken away without right; *and deceit*, by false accusations, and by suborned evidence for proof, and by perjuries.

[Zep 1:10](#)

In that day: see [Zep 1:9](#).

Saith the Lord; to assure us of the certainty of the thing.

The noise, Heb. *the voice, of a cry*, i.e. a very great outcry and lamentation, from the fish-gate, which was on the west side of Jerusalem, through which gate they brought in fish from Joppa and other sea towns on the west sea, or great sea, now the Mediterranean, at which gate the Babylonians are said first to enter into the city when they took it: thus it will be a prediction at what gate the enemy should enter.

A howling, the great, horrid, and confused lamentations of desperate and undone multitudes, crying out and bitterly bemoaning themselves, from the second gate, which was in the second wall of Jerusalem, which on that side was fortified with three walls; or second part of the city, or the middle city, for it was divided into three parts. Others read second as a proper name, and make it the school, college, or university, and so render, the howling of the university, i.e. of students either slaughtered or captivated by Chaldeans.

A great crashing; breaking in pieces, or the noise of what is broken into shivers; possibly the noise of doors, windows, closets, and chests broken up, or burning, in the houses of nobles, likened here to hills; or, more literally, in *Gareb* and *Goath*, on which the fleeing Jews, pursued by the Chaldees, lost what they carried with them, and their life too: so all places were full of miserable slaughter and outcries.

[Zep 1:11](#)

Howl, cry aloud, and bitterly, ye inhabitants of Maktesh: some read it appellatively: the mortar in which of old, before the corn-mill was known and used, they did pound and beat their corn for bread; they also pounded spices. Others say it is the lower town, or valley of Cedron in Jerusalem, a deep valley that surrounded the mountain of the temple, to which, fancied like a deep mortar, they gave the name Maktesh.

All the merchant people; who were wont either to lodge in this place when they came to trade, or, if Jewish merchants, dwelt there, which was much to the advantage of the place; but now, by the invasion of the land, and by the siege, all trade is cut off, and many merchants either slain or made slaves.

All they that bear silver, that brought it with them to pay for what they bought up, and so enriched the inhabitants of this Maktesh, all that traded and paid ready money, *are cut off.* Others say the money-changers or bankers are here meant by them that bear silver, persons that furnished all sorts of people with silver for goods laid to pledge or bartered.

Are cut off, i.e. shall be as surely as if it were already done.

[Zep 1:12](#)

At that time; it was day. [Zep 1:10](#), which see.

I will search Jerusalem with candles; God speaks after the manner of man, who searcheth dark places with candles in hand. God's omniscience seeth all things, and-needs no help for discovery, but by this expression he foretells how fully he would both discover and punish. It is like enough this was literally fulfilled when the Chaldeans did search the vaults, and cellars, and sewers of Jerusalem for men or goods hidden in them.

Settled on their lees; in allusion to liquors, which, not being poured out from vessel to vessel to refine them, grow thick and settled; so men that have known none or little changes settle in security, and fear no menaces.

Say in their heart; entertain an opinion, or begin to flatter themselves into thoughts.

The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil; no Providence to countenance the good, or to punish the bad; no God, or none that regardeth what is done on earth; or as they, [Eze 8:12](#), think God hath forsaken the earth. These atheists God will punish severely, as the sin well deserveth; they shall see it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.

[Zep 1:13](#)

Therefore; as a punishment for other sins, so for this secure, atheistical denial of Providence; though they have denied, they shall feel, and confess, that the evil they suffer is both just, and from my hand too.

Their goods; stores in their shops and warehouses, furniture in their chambers, and wardrobes.

A booty; a prey divided among the Babylonish soldiers, invading, prevailing, wasting villages and cities.

Their houses a desolation; that they may remember the curse threatened in the law, executed on them, and acknowledge that he who gave the law rules by it.

Build houses, but not inhabit them, &c.; according to that [De 28:30](#), [39](#).

[Zep 1:14](#)

The great day; not the day of general judgment, but the day in which the great God will bring his great armies against Judah and Jerusalem, and do great things by those armies.

Of the Lord; appointed, foretold, and now actually brought on them by the Lord.

It is near; very near; it is doubled to show the nearness of it, and to assure us it is so.

And hasteth greatly; your enemies' eagerness for the prey, your sins and security, and the Lord's justly provoked anger, hasten this day.

The voice; it is within hearing, the sound of it is in mine ears, methinks you might hear it also.

The mighty man, the valiant and stout-hearted among the Jews, they who should support others, shall be really to sink themselves, and as much need a cordial themselves.

Shall cry there bitterly; their courage broken, they shall cry out most vehemently, or like hopeless women.

[Zep 1:15](#)

That day, great day, [Zep 1:14](#), *is a day of wrath*, from the Chaldeans; and from the Lord, actively, upon the Jews, passively.

A day of trouble and distress: here the prophet heapeth up words of much the same sense, to express the grievousness of the troubles of those times which shall suddenly come upon them; most distressing trouble, none knowing how to bear it, or where to hide from it.

Of wasteness and desolation; most desolate wasteness in city, villages, and fields; every where the spoiling soldier shall lay waste, carrying away all he can, and destroying what he cannot carry away, *Of darkness and gloominess*; possibly it might be so as to the temper of the air, dark and gloomy, but figuratively I am sure it was so.

Of clouds and thick darkness; either literally, from the heavens clouded over them, or (if it refer, as it may, to the day of sacking Jerusalem, and effects of it) darkness, gloominess, clouds, and thick darkness, arising from the smoke and fire of the city every where fired by the enemy; but metaphorically these speak the most unparalleled calamities.

[Zep 1:16](#)

The trumpet; God's trumpet calling the Chaldeans, the Chaldeans' trumpet also gathering together their troops.

Alarm, threatening and affrighting, against the fenced cities of Judah.

The high towers; stately palaces and strong munitions, fortified with high towers, built at the angles of walls, and therefore the Hebrew calls them high corners; it may mean also the great

men, which, as corners well built are the strength and beauty of a wall, so they of a state, [Jdg 20:2](#); [Zec 10:4](#).

[Zep 1:17](#)

I will bring distress; cast them into, and surround or besiege them with distress, calamities which shall greatly trouble and perplex.

Upon men; the chiefest among them, the richest, and who think themselves safest; the mighty men, as [Zep 1:10](#), *like blind men*, shall neither know what to do nor where to flee, neither be fit for counsel nor action.

Because they have sinned against the Lord; all this for their great sins against the Lord; these men of note have been as much greater in sin as in state above others, and shall be as much deeper in distress.

Their blood shall be poured out as dust; as freely, abundantly, and as contemptibly, as dust in the highway.

And their flesh as the dung; shall be spread as dung on the face of the earth to fatten and improve it; their life shall be of no more value than dust, their honour no more regarded than dung, and they shall be so used after death.

[Zep 1:18](#)

Neither their silver nor their gold: sometimes these have purchased friends, and redeemed a life at the hand of greedy soldiers, who have spared on promise of money; but now it shall not be so, neither silver nor gold shall help.

Shall be able to deliver; to pacify the enraged sultan of Babylon, who had been formerly appeased with presents and tribute money, but will no more. Nor shall his soldiers dare to spare or save any when they are charged to slay man, woman, and child, as in the taking of Jerusalem it is probable they were charged, [Ps 137:7-9](#).

The Lord's wrath: were it the wrath of man only, gifts might appease it; but it is the wrath of God, who is a righteous Judge, and receives not gifts.

Shall be devoured; utterly ruined, its wealth carried away, its provisions eat up, its stores exhausted, and its stock (which should continue their provision) utterly destroyed, as [Zep 1:2](#).

By the fire of his jealousy; to which their sins provoked the Lord, which their sins enkindled, and now it burns that none can quench it; see [De 28:15](#), to the end of the chapter; all which God will now make good against them.

For he shall make even a speedy riddance: though he had with wonderful patience waited and forbore, now he would wait no longer, but with speedy executions fulfil his threats and accomplish his wrath; which he did within less than twenty years after this prophecy, as is most likely, on the accuratest computation we can make of the times of Zephaniah's prophesying and Nebuchadnezzar's taking the city.

Chapter 2

An exhortation to repentance, [Zep 2:1-3](#). The judgment of the Philistines, [Zep 2:4-7](#) of Moab and Ammon, [Zep 2:8-11](#), of Ethiopia, [Zep 2:12](#), and Assyria, [Zep 2:13-15](#).

[Zep 2:1](#)

Gather yourselves together; call a solemn assembly, as [Joe 1:14](#), proclaim a fast. Let all have notice given to meet on this work, and, being gathered together, search yourselves, your hearts and ways, and repent.

Gather together; repeated to affect them the more, and to hasten them to it, and make them serious in it.

O nation of the Jews, yet a people, yet my people, though next door almost to being no people.

Not desired; neither desirous to return, nor desirable in your return; foolishly unwilling to return, and utterly unworthy to be received on your return: yet gather together, search your ways, and try what you may do for your safety.

[Zep 2:2](#)

Before the decree, the Word of the prophet which declares the purpose of God against this sinful people, bring forth: the degree is pregnant, nay, hath gone a great while, but is now like a woman near her full time, ready to bring forth: be you speedy in your repentance, lest your miseries break forth of the womb of Divine vengeance and destroy you. Before the day, the day of your calamities, Babylon's rage, and God's just displeasure, *pass as the chaff*; carry you away as the wind carrieth chaff away for the fire, while the good grain is gathered and preserved.

The fierce anger; the heat of anger. It was jealousy like fire, [Zep 1:18](#), and here it is the heat of that fire, intimating the greatness of the anger. Come upon you; as a storm from on high, with violence irresistible and destructive; and the warning is doubled to make them take it.

[Zep 2:3](#)

Seek ye the Lord; turn to him with sound and true repentance, pray for pardon, engage in new obedience, inquire in the law what is your duty, and do it; fear, worship, depend on the Lord alone.

All ye meek; ye humble ones, who have not hardened yourselves with the stubborn, proud, idolatrous hypocrites, but have trembled at the word of the Lord.

Of the earth; of Judea, which is here spoken of, as [Zep 1:2](#).

Which have wrought his judgment; obeyed his precepts; so doth the Scripture express obedience to the law of God by doing judgment, [De 4:5](#); [Ps 119:121](#).

Seek righteousness; inquire and know the righteousness which God commandeth, which you ought to persist in, and continue ye in it.

Seek meekness; carry it humbly towards God, and patiently under his corrections; so wait on the just and merciful God.

It may be: this is sufficient to raise hope; if it be not sure, if it be hard, yet it is not impossible.

Ye shall be hid; under the wing of Divine protecting Providence kept safe from, or in, these troubles they shall be either averted or abated.

[Zep 2:4](#)

For; it is time to seek some refuge, high time to seek it in God, for your neighbours, as well as you, shall be destroyed, there shall be no refuge for you among your neighbours.

Gaza; a chief city of the Philistines, very strong by its situation, and by art fortified; a frontier toward Egypt, and not full three miles from the sea.

Shall be forsaken; when the conquering army of the Chaldeans shall come against it, shall be forsaken either by the flight or captivity of the inhabitants.

Ashkelon; another of the strong cities of the Philistines, which fell to the tribe of Dan, and was a maritime town.

A desolation; utterly wasted, so the abstract doth imply.

They; Babylonians: see [Eze 25:15-17](#).

Shall drive into captivity, cast them out of their own and force them into a strange land. *Ashdod;* a strong fortified city of Palestina, called in aftertimes Azotus.

At the noon-day; it shall be taken by force at noon, or the citizens led away captive in the heat of the day, and under parching heats.

Ekron; famous for its infamous idolatry, where Baalzebub was worshipped, the chief seat of devil-worship.

Shall be rooted up; utterly extirpated, no more to spring up: see [Jer 47:4-5](#): it shall be as a tree pulled up by the roots; or maimed, as horses that are houghed, as [Jos 11:9](#).

[Zep 2:5](#)

Woe unto the inhabitants! now all the Philistines are threatened, whereas before he named only those four cities.

Of the sea-coasts; the coasts of the great or western sea, now the Mediterranean, on which the Philistines of old did dwell.

The Cherethites, or destroyers, men that were stout, but fierce, and perhaps terrible to neighbours and foreigners that had the hard hap to be forced on their coasts by violence of sea. They were great soldiers, and lived Switzerlike, guards to David, it may be to other kings also.

The word of the Lord; his purpose, his threats too by his prophet.

Canaan; that part that the Philistines did by three keep from the Jews.

I will even destroy thee: though the Chaldeans be the men that shall destroy, yet the Lord will do it also; they his servants, he chief, in doing it.

There shall be no inhabitant; no more cities, nor citizens to dwell therein.

[Zep 2:6](#)

This confirms the former, tells us what shall be in those parts; instead of cities full of rich citizens, there shall be cottages for shepherds watching over their flocks.

[Zep 2:7](#)

The coast, the sea-coast, the land of the Philistines, *shall be for the remnant*, either that escaped, as some did, or else survived the captivity; *of the house of Judah*; the two tribes, one named, both included.

They shall feed thereupon; their Rocks.

In the houses of Ashkelon, in places where houses of Ashkelon formerly stood, *shall they lie down in the evening*; both shepherds and flocks too.

The Lord, the everlasting Jehovah, *their God*, from their fathers by covenant, *shall visit them*, in mercy remembering his covenant with them, *and turn away their captivity*, or shall send to receive their prisoners or captives; or return their captivity, and by the command of Cyrus give them liberty of returning into their own country.

[Zep 2:8](#)

I have heard: either the prophet for himself, or for the people, speaks this; or else, more likely, in the name of God, assures the Jews that God had heard, observed, resented, and was highly displeased with that he heard.

The reproach of Moab; a people of near kin to the Jews, born of Lot's daughter, seated eastward of Canaan, upon the Dead Sea and Jordan, a powerful people, and as proud; whose pride broke out on all occasions against the Jews, as appears from first to last: [Isa 16:6](#), and [Jer 48:29-30](#), brand them as very proud.

The revilings of the children of Ammon; a people as near as Moab to Jewish blood, and as bitter against them, [Ne 4:2-3](#), bitter scoffers and jeerers.

Whereby they have reproached my people; either in the war, or at the taking of Jerusalem, or when the captive Jews were led by their borders into captivity: [Eze 25:3](#) puts these all together.

Magnified themselves; either boasting what they themselves were, or what they would have done, or what they will do against Israel, recovering their old pretended right and estate.

Against their border; invading their frontiers, and spoiling them with insolence.

[Zep 2:9](#)

As I live; the most solemn oath, fit for none but God himself to use: see [Eze 14:16](#).

Saith the Lord of hosts, who have all things at my disposal, and can arm all creatures against these proud revilers.

The God of Israel, who by covenant am Israel's God, and Israel is my people, in whose reproaches I am reproached.

Shall be as Sodom: this is a proverbial speech in Scripture phrase to speak great destruction, as [Isa 1:9](#). Moab and Ammon were not destroyed by fire, as Sodom and Gomorrah; but the next words are an explication of these.

The breeding of nettles; not cultivated, but run over with nettles, as if it were only to breed them.

And salt-pits; a salt, dry, barren earth, fit only to dig salt out of.

A perpetual desolation; never more to be manured and inhabited, or not for a long, a very long time.

The residue; either the few left with Gedaliah, or the remnant that returned out of Babylon.

Shall spoil them; provoked by the injuries of Moab and Ammon, shall take arms, overcome, and spoil them.

Shall possess them; settle upon their lands, and dwell in those parts that are fit for habitation.

[Zep 2:10](#)

This shall they have; this grievous ruin like Sodom's, this just retaliation; they insulted over Israel, Israel shall tread on them.

For their pride; haughty mind and carriage: see [Zep 2:8](#).

Reproached; defamed, spoken lies and scandals against the Jews, lessening them.

Magnified themselves; their persons and exploits.

Against the people of the Lord of hosts; against the only people of the Lord of hosts, who suffered reproach with his people and in them, for Moabites and Ammonites, as others, boasted of their gods above the true God.

[Zep 2:11](#)

The Lord will be terrible; or, the Lord, who is to be feared, is against or above them, and will make it appear that he is terrible in his doings.

Unto them; Moabites and Ammonites, and their gods, of whom they gloried.

He will famish; starve; though now their altars are filled with sacrifices, and their bowls run over, as if they designed to make their gods fat; but they shall want their sacrifices and drink offerings, these shall be few or quite cease, and their priests grow lean. There shall be a consumption among them all.

All the gods, idols, heathen gods, of the earth; of those lands, Dagon, Chemosh, Molech, &c., that are gods no where else but on earth, and among the deceived; or gods of the earth., as sons of the earth, vile, spurious gods.

Men shall worship him; men of that country whose gods are undone, or all men, shall know, own, and worship the God of Israel.

Every one from his place, where he dwelleth, not only at Jerusalem, or in this mount, but every where.

All the isles; either literally, as we now see it fulfilled, or as the Jews interpret isles to be transmarine places. So they wait for his law, as foretold [Isa 42:4](#).

Of the heathen; of all nations in all parts of the world. This is eminently fulfilled by the prevailing of the gospel.

[Zep 2:12](#)

The prophet doth not speak of the African Ethiopians, south of Egypt, but of the Arabian Ethiopians, much nearer to Canaan, whose country was called Cusaea, with the addition Ethiopia Cusaea. See [Hab 3:7](#).

Ye shall be slain, punished by war, and your people cut off, by my sword; Nebuchadnezzar and his Chaldeans, called here God's sword, for God employed and prospered them.

[Zep 2:13](#)

And he, the Lord God of Israel, or the Chaldean monarch as God's servant herein, will stretch out his hand, engage all his power, and use it to the utmost, against the north, i.e. as follows, Assyria, which lay northward of Judea, but more due north from Babylon, if I mistake not.

Destroy Assyria; overthrow that great and ancient kingdom of Assyria. of which more at large in Nahum. Nineveh; chief city of that kingdom. See [Na 1:1](#). A desolation; most desolate, [Na 3:10-12](#).

And dry like a wilderness; will turn those well-watered places into dry, thirsty, and barren land, as a wilderness.

[Zep 2:14](#)

Nineveh shall be so razed that flocks of cattle shall lie down in the midst of it, as before of the Philistines, [Zep 2:6](#).

All the beasts of the nations; all sorts of beasts which are found in those countries, the tame under the girard of watching shepherds, and wild ones seeking their prey, will attend about those places.

The cormorant and the bittern; birds that are solitary, and delight in desolate places, in reedy fens, where they seek their food, and are looked on as unlucky birds.

Shall lodge in the upper lintels; shall either make their nests there, or seek and choose their lodging there; they shall roost there in the night upon the pillars, or turrets, or pinnacles.

Their voice shall sing in the windows; these doleful creatures shall make a more doleful noise, that shall be all the music to be heard in their desolate windows.

Desolation shall be in the thresholds, the lowest part of their houses; from top to bottom nothing but wastes and ruin; instead of beautiful ladies looking out at windows and doors and singing, now cormorants and bitterns, and their doleful notes.

For he shall uncover the cedar work; or, when the Babylonian hath burnt the houses, or beat down the curious roofs and coverings of cedar, the beauty and the defence of their houses.

[Zep 2:15](#)

This is the rejoicing city: we may suppose the prophet, or the Jews, or all passengers, standing still and wondering, nay, upbraiding Nineveh, all mirth and jollity once, but now all sorrow and grief.

That dwelt carelessly; in so great confidence and security, as if it had been impossible she should ever have fallen from her glory.

That said in her heart; persuaded herself into an opinion very ill becoming any but God himself.

There is none beside me; none that can contend with me, that will be so hardy as to attempt against me, none able to overthrow me. Somewhat like Tyre, [Eze 28:12](#), &c.

How is she become a desolation! she thought none was like her in glory, power, and wealth. now there is none like her indeed, but it is for misery and desolations. It may be either the speech of one that laments and wonders at it, or of one that rejoiceth at it.

A place for beasts to lie down in: where palaces for princes stood, now are places for beasts; where nobles dwelt, now do ignoble cattle couch.

Shall hiss and wag his hand; deride their arrogancy, and condemn their ungodly pride and security, yet with some pity toward this desolate city.

Chapter 3

A sharp reproof of Jerusalem for divers sins, [Zep 3:1-7](#). An exhortation to wait for the restoration of Israel [Zep 3:8-13](#); and to rejoice for their salvation by God, [Zep 3:14-20](#).

[Zep 3:1](#)

The prophet showed us Nineveh in ruins for her sins; from this doleful spectacle he brings us to take a prospect of what would come upon Jerusalem, which ere long will be full of woes, because now full of sin.

Filthy; loathsome in her sins, so foul they are, and so abominably acted. A city, that, like an infamous woman, is branded for her impudence in sin. Or, Woe to the great *craw!* as pointing out the gluttony of Jerusalem literally, and their swallowing the poor who were a prey to the great ones.

Polluted; greatly polluted by this means.

To the oppressing city; or the city foolish and seduced, as a silly dove; so the Hebrew will bear: but our version is to be preferred; it is come to that pass, Jerusalem is a city that doth nothing but oppress, [Jer 6:6](#); [Eze 22:1-31](#).

[Zep 3:2](#)

She obeyed not the voice, of the law, her prophets or her faithful priests, (which were too few, yet some there were.) nor of God, by his mercy and judgments crying loud, warning, inviting, persuading to return.

She received not correction, or instruction, did not learn, would not be instructed; there is a meiosis in the words, she hated instruction, as that wicked one, [Ps 50:17](#); [Pr 5:12](#); [13:18](#).

She trusted not in the Lord; put her confidence in Egypt and Asshur, in any carnal refuges, rather than in her God; in her kings, princes, counsellors, warriors, and confederates, &c.

She drew not near to her God; when revolted did not return, when in distress did not seek him, did not draw near with prayer, &c.

[Zep 3:3](#)

Her princes; persons of principal place and authority about the king, chief officers in civil matters. and, which is worse, her own princes, born and bred among them, who should have been most tender and just.

Are roaring lions; which hunt for prey, are ever tearing or threatening, affrighting or devouring. Such the Assyrian princes were, [Na 2:11-12](#). Such, and no better, are the princes in Judah and Jerusalem.

Her judges; elders of cities, magistrates of lower rank; or it may be the sanhedrim.

Evening wolves; most hungry, insatiable, and cruel, like wolves of the evening whetted with hunger and fasting, [Hab 1:8](#).

They gnaw not the bones till the morrow; they leave nothing to be eat or the morrow, they devour all presently.

[Zep 3:4](#)

Her prophets; by education, profession, and unwarranted practice called so, false prophets; such Zedekiah, and probably Chenaanah, &c., were. Are light; unstable and inconstant, ready to comply with humours which they should have reprov'd, [1Ki 22:13](#).

Treacherous persons; men of treacheries, whatever pleasing temper they seem to be of, yet still they design treachery; the Hebrew seems to run it higher, treacheries in the abstract.

Her priests, of the house of Levi, of the stock of Aaron, *have polluted the sanctuary;* bound by office to keep holy the sanctuary, have defiled it, and all that is holy.

Have done violence to the law; wresting it by perverse interpretation to what sense best serveth a corrupt mind.

[Zep 3:5](#)

The just Lord is in the midst thereof: though unjust princes, judges, prophets, and priests do not think so, yet the Lord who is most just is in the midst of them; possibly the sanhedrim; he observeth all, condemneth their violence and injustice, he is sovereign as Lord, and just as Judge. lie will not do iniquity; to him it appertaineth to judge all, therefore the unjust shall be punished as well as the just approved.

Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light; daily he discovereth his displeasure against the wicked, and punisheth them.

He faileth not; lets not one fit season slip to convince and awaken secure sinners, by public and visible punishments, or judgments.

But the unjust knoweth no shame; but the wicked Jews proceed impudently, without shame, and without fear or amendment: there is no hope of better where is no shame for worst of doings, [Jer 3:3](#).

[Zep 3:6](#)

I have cut off the nations; of old the Canaanites, lately the ten tribes, later yet the Assyrians and others, have been cut off for their sins.

Their towers; either metaphorically, magistrates and great men, as [Zep 1:16](#); or literally, strong towers built on the angles of walls or palaces.

Are desolate; razed and demolished. I made their streets waste; I overthrew their houses, that there were no streets.

None passeth by; or none walked through them. Their cities, small or great, capital or not capital, are destroyed; taken, plundered, burnt, and ruined.

There is no man; all fled, or slain, or starved, or swept away with pestilence, or carried into captivity, not an inhabitant left in the places.

[Zep 3:7](#)

I said; I thought, (speaking as man would,) I concluded what was likely, what I might expect.

Surely thou, O Jerusalem, O Judah, wilt fear me, for the many and great judgments executed upon others in thy sight; thou wilt fear, by sinning still, to provoke me.

Thou wilt receive instruction; wilt learn thy duty, to do it; thy danger, to prevent it; thy sins, to repent of them; thy ways, to amend them.

So their dwelling, houses, villages, Jerusalem, *should not be out off*, sacked and burned, *howsoever I punished them*; whatever I had done against them, however I had chastised them, had they been bettered, humbled, and amended, I would have spared, not destroyed utterly.

But they rose early; but they grew worse, more eager in the pursuit of their vile courses; as if the day would be too short for their sins, they rise early, and begin betimes.

Corrupted all their doings; designedly and out of set purpose did worse and worse, when smitten they revolted more and more, [Isa 1:5](#).

[Zep 3:8](#)

Therefore, since you will not be amended by all, sines you grow worse and worse, wait ye upon me; ye refractory and incorrigible Jews, rulers, and people, attend my resolution, for I am resolved what I will do, and have set a day for it.

Until the day that I rise up to the prey; until I, as an enemy, rise up to destroy first, and next to take the spoil: you by your sins continue to be mine enemies, and I will by my judgments, by the Chaldeans, who shall rise up against you, and destroy and spoil you, show myself in arms against you, as all enemy to you.

My determination my fixed purpose, that which I have unalterably resolved upon.

The nations; all that are subjects to the Chaldean monarchy.

The kingdoms, which are confederate with or tributary to the Chaldeans: these thus gathered, listed, and marshalled in a mighty army, *to pour upon them mine indignation*; upon the obstinate, incorrigible, and impious Jews first; (afterwards I will punish Babylon;) *even all my fierce anger*, which by their sins they have kindled against themselves.

All the earth, the whole land of Judea and her cities, shall be devoured, consumed as if burnt up, *with the fire of my jealousy*; that jealousy wherewith God is jealous for his own glory, for his ordinances and statutes, which Jewish people, princes, and their prophets and their priests had notoriously violated.

[Zep 3:9](#)

For then, or, then, *afterwards*, i.e. when my judgments have been executed, and have cut off the wicked, *will I turn to the people a pure language*; I will give them a pure way of worshipping me, in prayer, praises, and the issue of a purified heart, [Eze 11:17-20](#); [36:26](#).

Call upon the name of the Lord; perform all religions service, all religion being expressed thus by calling on the name of the Lord.

To serve him, the Lord their God, not idols, with one consent; with one heart, and according to his own law and will; with one *shoulder* shall they bear the yoke of the law, alluding to porters that join shoulder to shoulder in carrying great burdens.

[Zep 3:10](#)

From beyond the rivers; the coasts which lie beyond the rivers of India, saith the Chaldee paraphrast, but I doubt whether the captive Jews were carried so far.

Of Ethiopia, in Arabia, bordering on Egypt, whither it is easy to conceive many Jews might betake themselves, who are here called *dispersed*, or dispersion, somewhat distinguished from captives.

My suppliants; praying to me, saith one version.

The daughter of my dispersed: this explains who the suppliant is; the praying remnant of the scattered Jews, who had gotten into those parts of Arabia that were coasting along the rivers which divided Ethiopia Cusaea from the rest of Arabia.

Shall bring mine offering; shall return to their land and bring themselves an offering unto the Lord, which was done when Cyrus, in league with these Ethiopians, procured their favour for the dispersed Jews, that they might return to Jerusalem, meet their captive brethren, and offer a gift to God.

[Zep 3:11](#)

In that day; when pardoned captives and dispersed ones shall return and serve the Lord with one consent, mourning for their sins, and seeking the Lord.

Not be ashamed, with a shame of reproach and confusion: when sin is pardoned, and sinful hearts are purified, reproachful shame may well cease, [Isa 54:4-5](#).

Thy doings; which are expounded in the following words: the prophet speaks of the sins they formerly committed against the Lord.

Them that rejoice in thy pride; hypocrites, proud formalists, that placed all religion in the gaudy outside; these removed, and those that worship the Lord doing it in sincerity gathered together, the Lord will accept and beautify them.

Thou shalt no more be haughty; thou, O nation of the Jews, formerly full of haughty thoughts of yourselves, your sacrifices, and your privileges; but you shall no more boast, or glory, or vaunt yourselves herein.

Because of my holy mount; either the city, or rather the temple, on which proud hypocrites did bear themselves high formerly, when they lived in notorious sins, and yet cried, *The temple of the Lord*, &c., [Jer 7:4](#), with [Jer 7:9-10](#).

[Zep 3:12](#)

I will also leave: the Chaldeans had spared none if the Lord had not preserved a remnant; it is he, rather than they, which did leave a remnant.

In the midst of thee; to return and dwell in Judea and Jerusalem.

An afflicted people; or a people of a broken spirit, a meek, humble, spirited people, instead of that proud heart which was once among them. Poor; not so much in outward respects as poor in spirit, such a people as the Lord can delight in.

They shall trust in the name of the Lord; not in city or temple, but in the Lord, and in his mercy, faithfulness, and power.

[Zep 3:13](#)

The remnant of Israel, preserved in captivity and dispersion, purified in the furnace of affliction, and now returned to their own land, shall not do iniquity; shall not commit the sins they formerly committed, not provoke God with their abominations as before; it is not a prediction of a sinless, but of a reformed state; they shall be righteous, and taught of God, no more idolaters.

Nor speak lies; they shall love truth, and speak truth, or, in a larger sense, shall be honest and upright amongst men.

A deceitful tongue; a false accuser or witness, like Doeg, or Jezebel's evidences against Naboth; according to that, [Ps 15:2](#); [24:4](#).

For they shall feed; or, they shall feed also, &c.; so it will be a blessing added as a crown of their piety and truth. Or if you read it, *for they shall feed*, &c., it gives you a reason why they shall not by frauds and lies, as formerly, sin against one another; they shall have a sufficiency by honest ways, and from God's blessing, and shall not be under any great temptation to dishonesty and lying.

None shall make them afraid: frights made David, Abraham, and others to forget truth; here none should fright them, and they should not fear to speak the truth: their lips pure, [Zep 3:9](#); they trust in the Lord, [Zep 3:12](#); therefore shall not lie. Here is a cluster of spiritual promises with the temporal.

[Zep 3:14](#)

For all these mercies the church is enjoined to be thankful, and to rejoice, and it is trebled, *Sing, shout, and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, Israel, and daughter of Jerusalem:* the same persons, the same duty, but differently expressed, but the whole heart required in all.

[Zep 3:15](#)

The Lord; who kills and makes alive, acquits or condemns, and none can reverse the judgment.

Hath taken away thy judgments; abolished and put an end to thy sufferings, the judgments thy sins brought upon thee; he hath pardoned thy sins and ended thy sorrows.

He hath cast out; cast the Babylonian out of the throne, and placed the Persian in it.

Thine enemy; the Babylonian who held thee captive; and placed in his room Cyrus mine anointed, and thy friend, who shall let thee go free, [Ezr 1:1](#).

The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thus it is evident that the Lord, who is thy King, O Israel, is with thee; that he taketh thy part, is returned to redeem and govern thee.

Thou shalt not see evil any more; no more such great evil as thou hast seen; whilst thy carriage is as becometh thy mercy received, and my presence with thee, thou shalt neither fear nor feel like evils.

[Zep 3:16](#)

In that day; the day or time of restitution, when the captivity returned shall be settled in their land.

It shall be said; by prophets, or by friends, congratulating them, or by each to other.

To Jerusalem; inhabitants of Jerusalem, the place being put for the people.

Fear thou not; disquiet not yourselves with fears, though you may apprehend some dangers from Sanballat and Tobiah, &c., though troublous times. as [Ne 4:1-2](#); [Da 9:25](#).

Let not thine hands be slack, in the work of the Lord, building the city and temple, and restoring the worship of God; take heart, O ye returned captives, for God your King is with you.

[Zep 3:17](#)

The Lord; the everlasting One, who changeth not.

Thy God; thine in covenant, never to be forgotten or repealed. Is mighty; can do all he will, can restrain and destroy enemies, can support and defend his own people. *He will save,* from thy fears, and thine enemies' rage.

Will rejoice over thee with joy; will greatly rejoice in thee. Will rest in his love; will take content and satisfaction in this his love. The love he showeth to thee shall be rest to him; not thy loveliness, but his own love shall satisfy him.

Will joy over thee with singing; will show greatest love and joy in most affectionate manner: all expressions borrowed from the entirest love of man toward dearest relations, [Ps 103:11, 13](#); [Isa 62:5](#).

[Zep 3:18](#)

This promise removes an objection which might be made by dispersed ones: How can we return? I will gather you, saith God.

That are sorrowful for the solemn assembly; mourn in their distance from the solemn worship of God, as David, [Ps 42:1-11](#); that are troubled more for want of God's ordinances than for any thing; which three times every year in great solemnity they celebrated, but now for seventy years had wanted them.

Are of thee; these longing mourners are thy children indeed, Israelites in whom is no guile.

The reproach; the taunts of enemies and triumphs over God and religion, such as [Ps 42:3](#), [10](#).

A burden; heaviest burden, or a sword in their bowels.

[Zep 3:19](#)

Behold; mark well.

I will undo; I will deal with them, do their work for them, as we say, I will break their power and dissolve their kingdom.

All that afflict thee; Babylonians who afflicted the Jews. and who were undone by Cyrus and his Persians.

I will save her that halteth; who is in great trouble and ready to fall, as [Ps 38:16-17](#); who is under greatest distress, and hath least strength to bear, or get out.

Driven out; by force of the enemy, carried away captives, and scattered into far remote countries.

Get them praise and fame; vindicate them, as a people that are not rejected of their God, as the people of the great God of heaven and earth, as [Ps 121:2](#).

In every land; among all people with whom they dwelt as strangers.

Where they have been put to shame; were scorned and reproached as slaves and objects, whose God could not, or would not, help them, or had cast them off, and none other would take care of them. But now, gathered together by the Lord, they shall appear to be still his peculiar people and his delight.

[Zep 3:20](#)

This verse is a repetition of the promise for the greater assurance of it, and seems to add but little to what was before promised, unless it be the speediness of what God doth for them, and the comprehensiveness of it; he will turn back their captivities, Heb. plural, whether under Manasseh, or Jehoiakim, or Jeconiah, or Zedekiah; all which is confirmed with the broad seal of Heaven, *Thus saith the Lord*. Believe, then, and rejoice in it.