
צפניה • ZEPHANIAH

INTRODUCTION

The superscription to the *Book of Zephaniah* traces his ancestry back to Hezekiah and dates his ministry in the reign of Josiah (640–609 BCE). Since the name Hezekiah is uncommon in the Old Testament, here it perhaps refers to the famous Judaeen king (715–687 BCE), who was favourably influenced by the preaching of Isaiah and Micah. Zephaniah's intimate knowledge of Jerusalem and its court circles, his failure to denounce the king personally, and the absence of any concern with the poor of the land, may support the inference that he was of royal descent.

The book can be divided into three sections: Chs 1:2–3:3 proclaim doom on Judah for its religious syncretism, in the form of the destructive Day of Yahweh, which is 'near and hastening fast'. Ch. 2 (vv. 4–15) extends the divine judgement to other nations (especially Israel's ancient enemies), which are also guilty; however, a humble seeking after righteousness may mitigate the wrath of that day. Ch. 3, after condemning Jerusalem (vv. 1–7), promises comfort and consolation to those who wait patiently for Yahweh and serve God 'with one accord'. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall rejoice that Yahweh their King is in their midst to save them and gather them home (3:20).

The *Book of Zephaniah* is 9th among the 12 'Minor Prophets' in both the *Masoretic Text* and the *Septuagint*. Fragments of the book are to be found among the *Qumran MSS*, in 4Q77 (4QXII^b) and 4Q78 (4QXII^c).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

His condemnation of the corrupt practices and religious perversions (1:4–6, 8, 9, 12, 3:1–3, 7), officially legislated against by Deuteronomy, suggest that Zephaniah prophesied before Josiah's reforms of 621 BCE (2K 23). The allusion to imminent threat from the north (see the footnote to 1:10), perhaps the barbaric Scythian hordes, further suggests the decade around 630 BCE for Zephaniah's public ministry. Some have argued that portions of the book date from after the monarchy (i.e. later than 586 BCE).

צפניה פרק א

א דְּבַר־יְהוָה | אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־צַפְנִיָּה בֶן־כוּשִׁי בֶן־גְּדַלְיָה בֶן־אֲמַרְיָה בֶן־חֲזַקְיָה בִּימֵי יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ בֶן־אָמוֹן מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה:

ב אֶסֶף אֶסֶף כָּל
מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
ג אֶסֶף אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה
אֶסֶף עוֹף־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְדֹגֵי הַיָּם
וְהַמְכַשְׁלוֹת אֶת־הַרְשָׁעִים וְהַכֹּרְתִי
אֶת־הָאָדָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
ד וְנִטִּיתִי יָדִי עַל־יְהוּדָה
וְעַל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם
וְהַכֹּרְתִי מִן־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֶת־שָׂאֵר הַבָּעַל
אֶת־שֵׁם הַכֹּמְרִים עִם־הַכֹּהֲנִים:
ה וְאֶת־הַמִּשְׁתַּחֲוִּיִּים עַל־הַגָּזִית
לְצַבֵּא הַשָּׁמַיִם

ZEPHANIAH 1

¹ The word of Yahweh that came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah:

- ² I shall sweep away everything
off the face of the earth, says Yahweh.
- ³ I shall sweep away humans and animals,
the birds of the air and the fish of the sea;
I shall make the wicked stumble
and wipe all people off the face of the earth, says Yahweh.
- ⁴ I shall raise my hand against Judah
and against all who live in Jerusalem
and from this place I will wipe out Baal's remnant,
and the name of the idolatrous priests with the priests,
- ⁵ and those who prostrate themselves on the roofs
before the array of heaven

ZEPHANIAH 1

- ¹ Three others in the OT are named 'Zephaniah' (2K 25:18, 1Ch 6:36, Zc 6:10, 14). Elsewhere, 'Cushi' (כוּשִׁי) means 'Ethiopian' or 'Cushite'.
- ² The phrase translated here as 'sweep away' combines an infinitive absolute (אֶסֶף – 'sweep') with a Hiphil prefixed 1P form (אֶסֶף – 'end').
- ³ The 3rd line is conjectural following the NRSV (the NJB has 'I shall topple the wicked'); the MT has 'and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked', connecting with the previous line rather than the next. The line does not appear in many LXX MSS and may be a later scribal addition.
- ⁴ The first word here translated as 'priests' (כֹּמְרִים) is used only of those of idols (cf. 2K 23:5, Ho 10:5), while the second (כֹּהֲנִים) is the normal word, used of both legitimate and other priests in the OT.
- ⁵ 'Milcom' follows some LXX MSS, the Peshitta & Vg (*Melchom*), and the NJB/NRSV; the MT (& NETB) has 'their king' (מֶלֶכָם), which NJPS transliterates as 'Malcam') and other LXX MSS have 'his kingdom' (βασιλείας αὐτῶν).

וְאֵת־הַמְּשַׁחֲוִים הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים לַיהוָה
וְהַנִּשְׁבָּעִים בַּמִּלְכָּם:
וְאֵת־הַנְּסוּגִים מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוָה
וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־בִקְשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה
וְלֹא דָרְשׁוּהוּ:
הֵם מִפְּנֵי אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה
כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה
כִּי־הֵכִין יְהוָה זֶבַח הַקֹּדֶשׁ קִרְאוּ:
וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם זֶבַח יְהוָה
וּפָקַדְתִּי עַל־הַשָּׂרִים
וְעַל־בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְעַל כָּל־הַלְבָּשִׁים
מִלְבוּשׁ נָכְרִי:
וּפָקַדְתִּי עַל כָּל־הַדּוֹלֵג עַל־הַמִּפְתָּן
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
הַמְּמַלְאִים בֵּית אֲדֹנֵיהֶם
חֶמֶס וּמְרֹמָה:
וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֹאֵם־יְהוָה

and those who prostrate themselves before Yahweh
but swear by Milcom,
⁶ and those who have turned their back on Yahweh,
who do not seek Yahweh
and do not consult him.
⁷ Silence before Lord Yahweh,
for the Day of Yahweh is near!
Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated his guests.
⁸ On the Day of Yahweh's sacrifice,
I shall punish the courtiers,
the royal princes
and all who dress
in outlandish clothes
⁹ On that day, I shall punish
all who go up the Step
and fill the Temple of their lords,
with violence and deceit.
¹⁰ On that day, says Yahweh,

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- ⁶ For the last 2 lines, here following the *NJB & NRSV*, *NETB* reads, “and do not want the LORD’s help or guidance,” assuming the 1st verb refers to praying for divine help and the 2nd to seeking his revealed will through an oracle; note the usage of the two verbs in 2Ch 20:3–4.
⁷ The 1st line is a liturgical command, the Day of Yahweh being seen as a sacrificial banquet at which the people of Judah are the victims.
⁸ This prophecy seems to date from the early years of Josiah’s reign, when Judah was being governed by regents in the Assyrian interest.
⁹ Those ‘who go up the Step’ (clearly, the steps of the Temple) are those who approach the king.
¹⁰ The enemy will approach Jerusalem from the north, first through the ‘Fish Gate’ (2Ch 33:14, Ne 3:1–6, 12:39, cf. Jr 1:13–16).

קוֹל צַעֲקָה מִשַּׁעַר הַדָּגִים
 ויללה מן־הַמִּשְׁנָה
 וְשֹׁבֵר גָּדוֹל מֵהַגְּבָעוֹת:
 הִילִילוּ יוֹשְׁבֵי הַמִּכְתָּשׁ יא
 כִּי נִדְמָה כָּל־עַם
 כָּנֻעַן נִכְרְתוּ כָּל־נִטְיָלֵי כֶסֶף: {ס}
 וְהָיָה בָּעֵת הַהִיא יב
 אֶחָפֵשׂ אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּנֵרוֹת
 וּפָקֵדְתִּי עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים
 הַקִּפְּאִים עַל־שְׁמֵרֵיהֶם
 הָאֲמָרִים בְּלִבָּם
 לֹא־יִיטִיב יְהוָה וְלֹא יֵרַע:
 וְהָיָה חֵילָם לְמִשְׁפָּה יג
 וּבְתֵיהֶם לְשִׁמְמָה
 וּבְנֵי בָתִּים וְלֹא יֵשְׁבוּ
 וְנִטְעוּ כֶרְמִים וְלֹא יִשְׁתּוּ אֶת־יַיִנָּם:
 קָרוֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל יד
 קָרוֹב וּמָהֵר מָאֵד
 קוֹל יוֹם יְהוָה

uproar will be heard from the Fish Gate,
 wailing from the New Quarter
 and a great crash from the hills.

- 11 Wail, you who live in the Hollow,
 for it is all over with the merchants;
 all the moneybags have been wiped out!
- 12 When that time comes,
 I shall search Jerusalem by lamplight
 and punish the men
 stagnating over the remains of their wine,
 who say in their hearts,
 "Yahweh can do nothing, either good or bad."
- 13 For this, their wealth will be looted
 and their houses laid in ruins;
 they will build houses but not live in them;
 they will plant vineyards but not drink their wine.
- 14 The great Day of Yahweh is near,
 near, and coming with great speed.
 How bitter is the sound of the Day of Yahweh,

11 The 'Hollow' (מִכְתָּשׁ) – literally, 'mortar' was a low-lying quarter of Jerusalem. The literal translation of 'merchants' is 'people of Canaan'.

12 The literal translation of 'stagnating' (the NRSV has 'resting complacently') is 'congealing', like wine that is not drawn.

13 The NRSV & NETB omit the opening 'for this', here following the NJB & NJPS (the latter of which has 'therefore').

14 As with Isaiah (Is 2:6–22) and Amos (Am 5:18–20), the 'Day of Yahweh' (יוֹם־יְהוָה) is a terrifying manifestation of the power of Yahweh. God is represented as a warrior (cf. Ex 15:3, 2S 5:24, Ps 18:7–14) but here he fights against his own people.

מִרְצָח שֵׁם גִּבּוֹר:
 טו יוֹם עֲבָרָה הַיּוֹם הַהוּא
 יוֹם צָרָה וּמְצוּקָה
 יוֹם שָׂאָה וּמִשׂוֹאָה
 יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וְאִפְלָה
 יוֹם עָנָן וְעֶרְפָּל:
 טז יוֹם שׁוֹפָר וְתְרוּעָה
 עַל הָעָרִים הַבְּצֻרוֹת
 וְעַל הַפְּגֹזֹת הַגְּבוּהוֹת:
 יז וְהָצַרְתִּי לָאָדָם
 וְהִלְכּוּ כְעֹרְיִים
 כִּי לִיהוָה חֲטָאוּ
 וְשִׁפְךְ דָּמָם כְּעֹפֹר
 וְלֶחֱמָם כְּגִלְלִים:
 יח גַּם-כֶּסֶף גַּם-זָהָב לֹא-יִבְלֶה לְהַצִּילָם
 בַּיּוֹם עֲבָרַת יְהוָה
 וּבָאֵשׁ קִנְאָתוֹ
 תֹאכַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ
 כִּי-כָלָה אֶד-נִבְהָלָה יַעֲשֶׂה
 אֶת כָּל-יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ: {ס}

when the warrior shouts his cry of war.

- 15 That Day is a day of wrath,
 a day of distress and anguish,
 a day of ruin and of devastation,
 a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of cloud and thick fog,
 16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
 against fortified town
 and high corner-tower.
 17 I shall bring such distress on the people
 that they will grope their way like the blind
 for having sinned against Yahweh.
 Their blood will be poured out like mud,
 yes, their flesh like dung.
 18 Nor will their silver or gold be able to save them.
 On the Day of Yahweh's anger,
 by the fire of his jealousy,
 the whole earth will be consumed.
 For, he will destroy, yes, annihilate
 everyone living on earth.

15 The NJB has 'retribution' in place of 'wrath', here following the MT & NRSV, and 'tribulation' in place of 'anguish'.

16 This description of the Day of Yahweh mixes the sounds of battle with frequent OT signs of devastation.

17 'The people' (the NJB has 'humanity') refers to mankind in general (see vv. 2-3) or more specifically to the residents of Judah (see vv. 4-13).

18 It is not certain where Yahweh's words end and the prophet's begin.

צפניה פרק ב

א הַתְּקוּשׁוּ וְקוּשׁוּ
הַגּוֹי לֹא נִבְסָף:
ב בְּטָרֶם לֵדֶת חֶק בְּמִץ עֶבֶר יוֹם
בְּטָרֶם | לֹא־יָבֹא עֲלֵיכֶם
חֲרוֹן אַף־יְהוָה בְּטָרֶם לֹא־יָבֹא עֲלֵיכֶם
יוֹם אַף־יְהוָה:
ג בִּקְשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה כָּל־עֲנֻי הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁפָּטוֹ פָּעִלוֹ
בִּקְשׁוּ־צֶדֶק בִּקְשׁוּ עֲנוּה
אוּלִי תִסְתָּרוּ
בְּיוֹם אַף־יְהוָה:
ד כִּי עֲזָה עֲזוּבָה תִּהְיֶה
וְאַשְׁקֵלוֹן לְשִׁמְמָה
אַשְׁדּוֹד בְּצַהֲרִים יִגְרָשׁוּהָ
וְעֶקְרוֹן תִּעָקֵר: {ס}
ה הֲוֵי יֹשְׁבֵי חֶבְל הַיָּם
גּוֹי כְּרֶתִים

ZEPHANIAH 2

- 1 Gather together, gather,
O nations without shame,
- 2 before you are dispersed like chaff
that disappears in a day;
before Yahweh's burning anger overtakes you,
before the Day of Yahweh's anger overtakes you.
- 3 Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the earth,
who obey his commands.
Seek uprightness, seek humility;
you may perhaps find shelter
on the Day of Yahweh's anger.
- 4 For, Gaza will be abandoned
and Ashkelon reduced to ruins;
Ashdod will be driven out in broad daylight
and Ekron uprooted.
- 5 Disaster to the members of the coastal league,
to the nation of the Cherethites!

ZEPHANIAH 2

- 1 The verb here translated as 'gather together' (הַתְּקוּשׁוּ) is rare and can also be translated as 'return to yourselves' or 'humble yourselves'.
- 2 'You are dispersed' is conjectural; the MT has 'birth of a decree'. In place of 'chaff', here following the MT, the LXX has 'a flower' (ἄνθος).
- 3 Alternative translations for 'humble' (עֲנֻי) are 'afflicted' or 'poor' (as NETB). In the LXX period, the word (עֲנוּה – 3rd line) comes to mean becoming poor and humble for the sake of others (Zc 9:9, see Mt 11:29, 21:5) and the victims of oppression (Is 53:4).
- 4 The Philistine cities of the 'coastal league' are listed, with the exception of Gath (probably already in ruins).
- 5 The 'Cherethites' were a people settled alongside the Philistines in the coastal areas of southern Palestine; they originally came from Crete.

דְּבַר־יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם
כְּנַעַן אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים
וְהָאֲבֻדִּים מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב:
וְהָיְתָה חֶבְל הַיָּם ^ו
נֹת כָּרֶת רָעִים וְגִדְרוֹת צֶאֱן:
וְהָיָה חֶבֶל ^ז
לְשֹׂאֲרֵית בֵּית יְהוּדָה
עֲלֵיהֶם יִרְעֹן
בַּבָּיִת אֲשֶׁקְלוֹן בְּעֶרְבַּיִר יִרְבְּצוֹן
כִּי יִפְקְדֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם
וְשָׁב שְׁבוֹתָם שְׁבִיתָם:
שְׁמַעְתִּי חֲרָפַת מוֹאָב ^ח
וְגִדְפִי בְנֵי עַמּוֹן
אֲשֶׁר חָרְפוּ אֶת־עַמִּי
וַיִּגְדְּלוּ עַל־גְּבוּלָם:
לָכֵן חֲיֵ־אֲנִי נֹאֵם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ^ט
כִּי־מוֹאָב כְּסֹדֶם תִּהְיֶה
וּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן כְּעֹמְרָה

This is the word of Yahweh against you:

I shall subdue you, land of the Philistines;

I shall destroy you until there are no inhabitants left.

⁶ The seacoast will be reduced to pastureland,
to grazing grounds for shepherds and folds for sheep.

⁷ The league will belong
to the remnant of the House of Judah;
they will pasture their flocks there;
at night, they will rest in the houses of Ashkelon;
for, when Yahweh their God has punished them,
he will restore their fortunes.

⁸ I have heard the taunt of Moab
and the insults of the Ammonites,
as they taunted my people
and boasted of their own domains.

⁹ For this, as I live, says Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel,
Moab will become like Sodom
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah:

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- ⁶ After 'seacoast', the NIV adds the phrase 'where the Cherethites dwell' as an interpretive gloss. The LXX has 'Crete' (Κρήνη) in place of 'seacoast'.
- ⁷ The literal translation of 'fortunes', following the NJB & NRSV, is 'captivity'. The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.
- ⁸ The literal translation of the last line (here following the NJB) is, "and they made great (their mouth) against their territory;" other possible translations are, "and made boasts against their territory" (as NRSV), "they enlarged their own territory" (as NEB) and "they bragged about (the size) of their own territory;" NETB, conjecturally, reads, "and verbally harassed those living in Judah."
- ⁹ According to Gn 19:30-38, Lot became the father of Ammon and Moab after his escape from Sodom.

מִמֶּשֶׁק חֲרוֹל וּמִכְרֵה-מָלַח וּשְׁמָמָה עַד-עוֹלָם
שְׂאֲרִית עַמִּי יִבְזֹם
וַיִּתֵּר גּוֹי יִנְחָלוּם:
זֹאת לָהֶם תַּחַת גְּאוֹנָם
כִּי חָרְפוּ וַיִּגְדְּלוּ
עַל-עַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
נֹרָא יְהוָה
עֲלֵיהֶם כִּי
רָזָה אֶת כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶי-לוֹ
אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ כֹּל אֲנִי הַגּוֹיִם:
גַּם-אַתֶּם כּוֹשִׁים
חֲלָלִי חֲרָבִי הֵמָּה:
וַיִּט יָדוֹ עַל-צָפוֹן
וַיֹּאבֵד אֶת-אַשּׁוּר
וַיִּשֶׁם אֶת-נִינְוָה לְשְׁמָמָה
צִיָּה כַּמִּדְבָּר:
וַרְבָּצוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ עֲדָרִים
כָּל-חִיתוֹ-גּוֹי

a realm of nettles, a heap of salt, a desolation forever.

What remains of my people will plunder them;
the survivors of my nation will take their heritage.

- ¹⁰ This will be the price of their pride
for having taunted and boasted
over the people of Yahweh Sabaoth.
- ¹¹ Yahweh will be fearsome to them,
for he will scatter all the gods of the earth,
and they will bow down to him, each from his own place –
all the islands of the nations.
- ¹² You Ethiopians too
will be run through by my sword.
- ¹³ He will raise his hand against the north
and bring Assyria down in ruins;
he will make Nineveh a waste,
as dry as a desert.
- ¹⁴ Flocks will rest inside there,
so will wild animals;

¹⁰ On the translation of the 2nd line, see #8.

¹¹ In place of 'scatter' (as NJB), the NRSV has 'shrivel' and NETB has 'weaken'; the Hebrew word is rare.

¹² 'Ethiopia' (or 'Cush' or 'Nubia') here denotes Egypt, where an Ethiopian dynasty was in power shortly before Zephaniah.

¹³ 'Assyria' was the great enemy and oppressor of Judah for nearly a century.

¹⁴ 'Wild animals' follows the Tg; the MT has 'nation'. 'The owl' is a conjectural translation following the NJB & NRSV; the MT has 'a voice' (קוֹל).
'The raven' follows the LXX (κόρακες); the MT has 'ruin'.

גַּם־קֶאֱת גַּם־קֶפֶד
בְּכַפְתֶּרֶיהָ יִלְיָנוּ
קוֹל יִשׁוֹרֵר בְּחִלּוֹן
חֶרֶב בַּסֶּף
כִּי אֶרְזֶה עֶרְהָ:
זֹאת הָעִיר הָעֲלִיזָה^{or} טו
הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת לְבֶטַח
הָאֹמְרָה בְּלִבָּבָהּ
אֲנִי וְאֶפְסִי עוֹד
אֵיךְ! הִיתָה לְשֹׁמֵה
מִרְבֵּץ לַחַיָּה
כָּל עוֹבֵר עָלֶיהָ
יִשְׁרָק יִגְיַע יָדָיו: {פ}

pelican and porcupine
will nest round her cornices at night;
the owl will hoot at the window
and the raven croak on the doorstep –
for he has torn down the cedar.

¹⁵ This is what the city will be like,
once living happy and carefree
and thinking to itself,
"I have no rival – not I!"
What will it be now? A ruin,
a lair for wild beasts to rest in
and everyone who passes by
will whistle and throw up his hands.

¹⁵ The 'whistle' was to ward off a similar fate (Jr 18:16); another possible explanation is that hissing or whistling and shaking the fist were apparently ways of taunting a defeated foe or an object of derision in the culture of the time.

צפניה פרק ג

א הוֹי מְרָאָה וְנִגְאָלָה
הָעִיר הַיּוֹנָה:
ב לֹא שָׁמְעָה בְּקוֹל
לֹא לָקְחָה מוֹסֵר
בִּיהוָה לֹא בָטְחָה
אֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ לֹא קָרְבָּה:
ג שָׂרֶיהָ בְּקִרְבָּה
אֲרִיֹת שֹׁאֲגִים
שִׁפְטֵיהָ זֵאֲבֵי עֶרֶב
לֹא גִרְמוּ לְבֹקֶר:
ד נְבִיאֶיהָ פִּחְזִים
אֲנָשֵׁי בִגְדוֹת
כְּהֲנֵיהָ חִלְלוּ־קֹדֶשׁ
חֲמָסוֹ תוֹרָה:

ZEPHANIAH 3

- 1 Disaster to the filthy, the befouled,
the tyrannical city!
- 2 She has not listened to the call,
she has not accepted correction,
she has not trusted in Yahweh,
and she has not drawn near to her God.
- 3 The rulers she has
are roaring lions;
her judges are wolves of the wastelands,
which leave nothing over for the morning.
- 4 Her prophets are braggarts,
impostors;
her priests profane what is holy
and violate the Law.

ZEPHANIAH 3

- ¹ In place of 'filthy', here following NETB & NJPS, the NJB has 'rebellious' and the NRSV has 'soiled'. This translation assumes that the adjective מְרָאָה is derived from the noun רֵאִי ('excrement'), an assumption supported by the following participle ('befouled'); the NJB derives the adjective from the verb מָרָה ('to rebel'), as do the NASB & NIV.
- ² The Hebrew phrase 'accept correction', when negated, refers elsewhere to rejecting verbal advice (Jr 17:23, 32:33, 35:13) and refusing to learn from experience (Jr 2:30, 5:3).
- ³ The literal translation of the last line is, "they do not gnaw (a bone) at morning;" the precise meaning is unclear – the statement may mean these wolves devour their prey so completely that not even a bone is left to gnaw by the time morning arrives.
- ⁴ In place of 'faithless men', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'impostors' and NETB has 'deceitful men'. The 'priests defile what is holy' by not observing the proper distinctions between what is ritually clean and unclean (see Ezk 22:26).

ה יהוה צַדִּיק בְּקִרְבָּהּ
 לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹלָה
 בִּבְקָר בִּבְקָר מִשְׁפָּטוֹ יִתֵּן לְאֹזֶר
 לֹא נֶעְדָּר
 וְלֹא־יִוָּדַע עוֹל בְּשֶׁת:
 ה הִכַּרְתִּי גוֹיִם
 נִשְׁמֹו פְּנוֹתָם
 הִחֲרַבְתִּי חוּצוֹתָם
 מִבְּלִי עוֹבֵר
 נִצְדּוּ עָרֵיהֶם מִבְּלִי־אִישׁ
 מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב:
 ז אִמַּרְתִּי אֲדֹתִירְאִי אוֹתִי
 תִּקְחִי מוֹסֵר
 וְלֹא־יִכָּרַת מְעוֹנָהּ
 כָּל אֲשֶׁר־פָּקַדְתִּי עָלֶיהָ
 אֲכֵן הַשְׁכֵּימוּ
 הַשְׁחִיתוּ כָּל עֲלִילוֹתָם:
 ח לֵכֵן חֲבוּלִי נֶאֱסִי־הָהּ

- 5 Yahweh the upright is in her,
he does no wrong;
every morning he gives judgement,
each dawn unfailingly,
but the wrongdoer knows no shame.
- 6 I have exterminated the nations,
their corner-towers lie in ruins;
I have emptied their streets,
no one walks through them;
their cities are desolate
and are now deserted and unpopulated.
- 7 I thought, "At least you will fear me,
at least you will bow to correction,"
and none of the punishments I brought on them
will disappear from their view.
But no, it only made them more anxious
to do whatever was corrupt.
- 8 Therefore, wait for me, says Yahweh,

⁵ Alternative translations for 'gives' (as NJB) are 'renders' (NRSV) and 'reveals' (NETB). The NJB places the last line in parentheses.

⁶ The word נִצְדּוּ ('desolate') occurs only here in the OT but its meaning is established from the context and from an Aramaic cognate.

⁷ The 2P verb form ('you will fear') is FS, indicating that personified Jerusalem is addressed. 'Their view' follows the LXX (ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῆς - literally, 'their eyes') & Peshitta; the MT has 'their home'.

⁸ 'As accuser' (the NRSV has 'as a witness') follows the LXX (εἰς μαρτύριον) & Peshitta; the MT has 'for plunder' (לְעֵד, or 'forever'); the difference is due to alternative vowel pointing. In place of 'on them', following the MT and NRSV, the NJB has the conjectural 'on you'. The original text

לְיוֹם קוּמִי לְעֵד
 כִּי מִשְׁפָּטִי לְאַסֹּף גּוֹיִם לְקַבְּצִי
 מִמְּלָכוֹת לְשַׁפֵּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמִי כָּל חֲרוֹן אַפִּי
 כִּי בָאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי
 תֹאכַל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:
 כִּי־אֲזֹ אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל־עַמִּים ט
 שִׁפָּה בְרוּרָה
 לְקַרֵּא כָּל־שֵׁם יְהוָה
 לְעַבְדּוֹ שָׂכֵם אֶחָד:
 מֵעֵבֶר לְנַהֲרֵי־כּוּשׁ עֲתִירִי י
 בַת־פּוּצִי יוֹבֵלֹן מִנְחָתִי:
 בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יא
 לֹא תִבּוֹשִׁי מִכָּל עֲלִילָתִיךָ
 אֲשֶׁר פָּשַׁעְתָּ בִּי
 כִּי־אֲזֹ אֶסִּיר מִקְרָבֶךָ
 עֲלִיזִי גִאֲוֹתֶךָ
 וְלֹא־תוֹסֵפִי לְגִבָּהָה עוֹד
 בְּהַר קֹדֶשִׁי:

for the day when I rise as accuser,
 for my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms,
 and on them to vent my fury, the whole heat of my anger,
 for the whole earth will be devoured
 by the fire of my jealousy.

- 9 Yes, then I shall purge
 the lips of the peoples,
 so that all may invoke the name of Yahweh
 and serve him shoulder to shoulder.
- 10 From Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,
 my suppliants, my Dispersion, will bring me tribute.
- 11 When that Day comes,
 you will never again be ashamed of all the deeds
 with which you once rebelled against me,
 for I shall rid you
 of those who exult in your pride;
 never again will you strut
 on my holy mountain.

seems to have ended vv. 6–7 by announcing punishments for Judah at the hands of the nations, as in Am 3:9–11; as it now stands, the text predicts the punishment of the nations themselves. The *NJB* parenthesises the last 2 lines, which adapt 1:18 as an introduction to vv. 9–20.

9 The gift of ‘pure speech’ symbolises fidelity (cf. Is 6:5–7) and removes the curse of Babel (Gn 11:1–9).

10 The *NJB* lacks ‘my Dispersion’ (the *NRSV* has ‘my scattered ones’); the meaning of the phrase (literally, ‘the daughter of my dispersed ones’) is unclear; perhaps the text is corrupt at this point or a proper name should be understood.

11 The 2P verbs & pronouns are FS, indicating that personified Jerusalem is addressed here.

יב וְהִשְׁאַרְתִּי בַקְרִיבִי עִם עֲנִי וְדָל
 וְחָסוּ בִשְׁם יְהוָה:
 ג וְשְׂאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־יַעֲשׂוּ עוֹלָה
 וְלֹא־יִדְבְּרוּ כָזָב
 וְלֹא־יִמְצָא בִפִּיהֶם
 לְשׁוֹן תְּרֹמֶת
 כִּי־הֵמָּה יֵרְעוּ וְרָבְצוּ
 וְאֵין מַחְרִיד: {פ}
 יד רְנִי בַת־צִיּוֹן
 הֲרִיעֵו יִשְׂרָאֵל
 שִׂמְחִי וְעִלְזִי בְכָל־לֵב
 בַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם:
 טו הִסִּיר יְהוָה מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ
 פָּנָה אֵיבֶךָ
 מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל | יְהוָה בַּקְרִיבִי
 לֹא־תִירָאִי רַע עוֹד: {פ}
 טז בְּיוֹם הַהוּא
 יֹאמַר לִירוּשָׁלַם אֶל־תִּירָאִי
 צִיּוֹן אֶל־יִרְפוּ יָדֶיךָ:

- 12 For, in you I shall leave surviving a humble and lowly people, will take refuge in the name of Yahweh.
- 13 Those who are left in Israel will do no wrong, will tell no lies; nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. Then they will be able to graze and rest with no one to alarm them.
- 14 Shout for joy, daughter of Zion; Israel, shout aloud! Rejoice; exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem!
- 15 Yahweh has repealed the judgements against you; he has turned your enemy away. Yahweh is king among you, Israel; you have nothing more to fear.
- 16 When that Day comes, it will be said to Jerusalem: Zion, have no fear; do not let your hands fall limp.

12 The terms 'humble' and 'lowly' here may refer to those who are humble in a spiritual sense.

13 For the 1st line, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, 'the remnant of Israel'.

14 These two psalms (vv. 14–15, 16–18^a), or at least the second, were added to form the conclusion of the book.

15 In place of 'the judgements against you', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'your sentence'.

16 For the 2nd line, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has 'the message for Jerusalem will be'.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּקִרְבְּךָ ז
 גְּבוֹר יוֹשִׁיעַ
 יֵשִׁישׁ עֲלֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה
 יַחְרִישׁ בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ יָגִיל עֲלֶיךָ בְּרִנָּה:
 נֹגֵי מִמּוֹעֵד אֶסְפְּתִי יח
 מִמֶּדֶד הָיוּ
 מִשְׁאֵת עָלֶיהָ חֲרָפָה:
 הִנְנִי עֹשֶׂה אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲנֶיךָ יט
 בְּעֵת הַהִיא
 וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶת־הַצֹּלֵלָה
 וְהַנִּדְחָה אֶקְבֹּץ
 וְשׁוֹמְרֵי לְתֹהֲלָה וְלִשְׁם
 בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ בְּשִׁתָּם:
 בְּעֵת הַהִיא אָבִיא אֲתֶכֶם כ
 וּבְעֵת קִבְּצִי אֲתֶכֶם
 כִּי־אֶתֶּן אֲתֶכֶם לְשֵׁם וּלְתֹהֲלָה
 בְּכָל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ

- 17 Yahweh your God is there with you, the warrior-Saviour.
 He will rejoice over you with happy song,
 he will renew you by his love;
 he will dance with shouts of joy for you,
 as on a day of festival.
 I have taken away your misfortune;
 no longer need you bear the disgrace of it.
- 18 as on a day of festival.
 I have taken away your misfortune;
 no longer need you bear the disgrace of it.
- 19 I am taking action here and now
 against your oppressors.
 When that time comes, I will rescue the lame
 and gather the strays,
 and I will win them praise and renown
 when I restore their fortunes.
- 20 At that time, I shall be your guide,
 at the time when I gather you in,
 I shall give you praise and renown
 among all the peoples of the earth

17 'Renew you' follows the LXX (καταλείψει σε) & Peshitta; the MT has 'he will be silent' but this makes no sense in light of the preceding and following lines; some take the Hiphil verb form as causative (see Job 11:3) rather than intransitive and translate, "he causes (you) to be silent by his love."

18 The 1st line follows the LXX (ὥς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐορταῆς) & Peshitta; the meaning of the MT (literally 'afflicted from a festival') is uncertain (NETB reads, "As for those who grieve because they cannot attend the festivals."). 'Misfortune' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'they were'. 'No longer need you bear' follows the Peshitta and Tg; the MT has 'a burden on her'.

19 'When I restore their fortunes' is a conjectural correction; the MT has 'their shame'.

20 This verse is a variant of v. 19, itself based on Mi 4:6. In the 2nd line, 'you' is masculine plural, indicating that the exiles are addressed.

בְּשׁוּבִי אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵיכֶם
אָמַר יְהוָה:

{ש}

when I restore your fortunes under your own eyes,
says Yahweh.