

Book of Zephaniah

Chapter 2:1-15

¹ ***Gather yourselves together***, yes, gather, ***O nation without shame***, ² ***Before*** the decree takes effect - the day passes like the chaff - ***before*** the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, ***before*** the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you.

Gather yourselves together > This is an interesting word in Strong's ... it comes from a word having the meaning of > to become sapless through drought ... to forage for straw, stubble or wood; figuratively, to assemble ... gather (selves)

We would say, "Come on! Now let's pull ourselves together!"

O nation without shame > (Robertson) literally, "O nation not shamed." ("Shamed" is niḵsap, from kāsap, "to be pale or white with shame." A related word kesep means "silver," the pale-colored metal mentioned in 1:11, 18.) Judah, because of her sin, was without shame (cf. 3:5); her face was not blushing or white or pale with embarrassment. Sin had hardened her sensitivity to sin (cf. 1:12).

Before ... before ... before > (Robertson) By the threefold use of the temporal term *before* (beherem), Zephaniah strengthens the urgency of his admonition. The additional negative (beherem lō') intensifies the need for urgency in action.

- *Before the decree takes effect - the day passes like the chaff*
- *Before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you*
- *Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you*

The Septuagint is so clear here > ¹*Be ye gathered and closely joined together, O unchastened nation;* ²*before ye become as the flower that passes away, before the anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the wrath of the Lord come upon you.*

³ ***Seek*** the LORD, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek ***humility***. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger.

Robertson > Against this solemn backdrop (verse 2 above), the gently phrased admonition of the following verse takes on much deeper significance. The only adequate refuge from the consuming wrath of Yahweh may be found in Yahweh himself. So the prophet informs the people that they must seek Yahweh. The arrival of the Day of Yahweh will be a terrifying experience to all except those who previously have found their refuge in him.

Seek > (Strong's) to search out (by any method, specifically in worship or prayer); by implication, to strive after

Humility > (Patterson) occurs elsewhere only in 2 Sam. 22:36 where it is used of God's *condescension* on behalf of His people and in Prov. 15:33; 18:12; 22:4, which emphasize the importance of the *fear of the Lord* and *lowliness of spirit* as preconditions to greatness.

2 Sam. 22:36 (NASB) > "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation, and Your **help** makes me great.

Help > (Strong's) condescension, human and subjective (modesty), or divine and objective (clemency)

⁴For **Gaza** will be **abandoned** and **Ashkelon** a desolation; **Ashdod** will be **driven out at noon** and **Ekron** will be **uprooted**. ⁵Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the **Cherethites**! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you so that there will be no inhabitant. ⁶So the seacoast will be pastures, with **caves** for shepherds and folds for flocks.

Gaza ... Ashkelon ... Ashdod ... Ekron > (Wikipedia) According to Joshua 13:3 and 1 Samuel 6:17, the land of the Philistines (or Allophyloi), called Philistia, was a pentapolis in the southwestern Levant comprising the five city-states of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath, from Wadi Gaza in the south to the Yarqon River in the north, but with no fixed border to the east.

Gaza > Abandoned ... Ekron > Uprooted > (Constable) "Gaza" and "abandoned" sound similar in Hebrew, as do "Ekron" and "uprooted."

Patterson > Adopting the literary style of Micah before him (Mic. 1:10-15), Zephaniah uses wordplay to begin his prophetic threats against the Philistine cities. In the case of the first and last cities, a pun between the name of the city and the fact of its judgment is intended: Gaza will be abandoned, and Ekron will be uprooted; in the other two instances, a play on the s sounds in the names of the cities adds a harsh note that heightens the fact of their coming destruction and desolation.

Driven out at noon > (Patterson) The reference to Ashdod's invasion at noon, a time for rest from the midday sun, may indicate a surprise attack: "In hot countries, work is suspended during the hottest hours of the day; therefore for anything to happen then is unexpected. The prophet means that Ashdod will fall by a surprise attack (cf. Jer. XV.8)."



Cherethites > (Strong's) a Kerethite or life-guardsmen

Caves > (Barnes) literally, cuttings or diggings

Barnes > The tracts once full of fighting men, the scourge of Judah, should be so desolate of its former people, as to become a sheep-walk. Men of peace should take the place of its warriors.

⁷ *And the coast will be for the **remnant** of the house of Judah, they will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; for the LORD their God will care for them and restore their fortune.*

Remnant > (Robertson) Now a new perspective on the judgment of Philistia is introduced. A new motivation for repentance on the part of the nation of Judah also emerges. For the first time the prophet mentions explicitly the expectation that a remnant shall remain. After the judgment of God has passed through, some community shall be left. To this remnant shall be granted the full possession of the land of promise, including the territory of the Philistines. The blessing of the law book of Deuteronomy shall be renewed, for they shall dwell in houses they had not built.

⁸ *"**I have heard** the taunting of Moab and the reviling's of the sons of Ammon, with which they have taunted My people and become arrogant against their territory.*

I have heard > This is the Lord talking. One very clear fact we have seen again and again throughout these studies is that the Lord KNOWS ... He sees and will respond to every wrong and right. In the case of Moab and Ammon Barnes lists page after page of the animosity exhibited by these two related nations against Israel

⁹ *“Therefore, as I live,” declares the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Surely Moab will be like Sodom And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah — a place possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them and the remainder of My nation will inherit them.”*

- Who was their father?
- What do we know about Lot and the final end of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?
- What will be the final end of the nations of Moab and Gomorrah as per this verse?

Benson > These countries were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem

¹⁰ *This they will have in return for their pride, because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the LORD of hosts.*

Robertson > Now the prophetic pronouncement shifts from having God himself speak in the first person to having the prophet speak about the Lord in the third person. The verse emphasizes the breaking of the pride that has characterized Moab and Ammon for so many centuries. Pride as a distinctive aspect of Moab’s reputation is underscored by the prophet Isaiah: We have heard of Moab’s pride— her overweening pride and conceit, her pride and her insolence— but her boasts are empty. (Isa. 16:6) Jeremiah repeats this same theme, possibly by alluding to the words of Isaiah: We have heard of Moab’s pride— her overweening pride and conceit, her pride and her arrogance, and the haughtiness of her heart. (Jer. 48:29) This same widespread reputation is reflected in Zephaniah’s similar I have heard (v. 8). Moab had become internationally repugnant for her arrogance.

¹¹ *The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place.*

¹² *“You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword.”*

Patterson > A touch of irony probably is intended, because doubtless Egypt is uppermost in Zephaniah’s thinking here. Egypt had been defeated by its southern neighbors, and a Cushite royal house (Egypt’s twenty-fifth dynasty) reigned over Egypt for more than half a century (c. 715-655 B.C.). At least four of its kings ruled over all Egypt >

- Shabako [716-701 B.C.] {During the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah}
- Shebitku [701-690 B.C.] {During the reign of Hezekiah}
- Taharqa [690-664 B.C.] {During the reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh}
- Tanwetamani [663 B.C.] {During the reign of Manasseh}

and their stranglehold on Egypt was broken only by the victories of Esarhaddon at Memphis in 671 B.C. and Ashurbanipal at Thebes in 663 B.C.

¹³ *And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and He will make Nineveh a desolation, parched like the wilderness.*

Robertson > Almost unbelievable is the description of desolation which is to characterize the cultural metropolis of Nineveh. This city shall be dry as a desert. The greatest city of an era shall have no remnant to mark its existence. So in about 401 B.C. Xenophon passed the site of Nineveh and found not a trace of its existence in the shifting desert sands.⁶ The judgment of the prophet found a most literal fulfillment.

Larry Walker > The prediction of Nineveh's utter desolation even while that Assyrian capital ruled the world testifies to the divine origin of Zephaniah's message. The prediction that God will leave Nineveh "dry as the desert" remarkable in view of the fame of the city's great irrigation system.

The **Septuagint** translates this phrase as > *and make Nineveh a dry wilderness, even as a desert.*

¹⁴ *Flocks will lie down in her midst, all beasts which range in herds; both the pelican and the hedgehog will lodge in the tops of her pillars; birds will sing in the window, desolation will be on the threshold; for He has laid bare the cedar work.*

All beasts ... > Don't get lost in trying to determine what animals are being mentioned here. There isn't an agreement among the commentators.

¹⁵ *This is the exultant city which dwells securely, who says in her heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." How she has become a desolation, a resting place for beasts! Everyone who passes by her will hiss and wave his hand in contempt.*

Exultant ... securely ... "I am ..." > (Robertson) Three features characterize Nineveh before its destruction: ecstasy, security, and self-sufficiency. A city rejoices when everyone prospers, when the economy is good, when the arts flourish, and the populace has time for leisure. No overburdening sense of responsibility and care oppresses the people. Assyria in the height of its glory revelled in these experiences of prosperity. She suffered no external threats from her neighbors. Plundering the wealth of all the nations, she lived in pleasure and prosperity. All this prosperity led Nineveh to a single conclusion. She assumed her own

self-sufficiency. Even the divine attribute of self-existence she attributed to herself: I alone am, and there is no other. The Assyrian capital blasphemously assumed to herself all the prerogatives belonging only to God. The city owed her existence to no one, and needed no one to maintain her.

The **Septuagint** translation of this verse is > ¹⁵*This is the scornful city that dwells securely, that says in her heart, I am, and there is no longer any to be after me: how is she become desolate, a habitation of wild beasts! every one that passes through her shall hiss, and shake his hands. Alas the glorious and ransomed city.*