

## **12 Prophets - Zephaniah Part 3**

As we begin the next part of our study, I've listed below the verses that use the phrase the "day of the LORD" in the Tanach to give us some context for its meaning.

If we understand it correctly in the context of the Hebrew scriptures, then we should gain a better understanding of it in the Apostolic Writings.

Zephaniah is a hard book to read because of the subject it is dealing with. It is perhaps easier to contextualise it only as historical so that we can then push it away from us and deny its relevance to ours or any future time. But the fact is, aspects of what we are seeing in these passages are not purely historical, although they apply on a limited basis. In some ways they are specific with who they refer to, but also to serve as an example of what the future will hold for those who follow the same path.

What becomes obvious from all of the passages below is that the "day of the LORD" is inevitable. But it is a fearful day, so we have to consider that although it is the rebalancing through the righteous judgment that is going to take place, we also need to remember that this is the end of life for those classified as "wicked" and not covered by "blood on the doorposts".

*Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice— "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.*

[\(Zephaniah 1:7-8\)](#)

This is going to be a solemn day.

*When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.*

[\(Revelation 8:1-5\)](#)

Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment. Who stirred up one from the east whom victory meets at every step? He gives up nations before him, so that he tramples kings underfoot; he makes them like dust with his sword, like driven stubble with his bow. He pursues them and passes on safely, by paths his feet have not trod. Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. The coastlands have seen and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble; they have drawn near and come. Everyone helps his neighbour and says to his brother, "Be strong!" The craftsman strengthens the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer him who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good"; and they strengthen it with nails so that it cannot be moved.

[Isaiah 41:1-7](#)

### Isaiah 13:6

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!

### Isaiah 13:9

Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.

### Jeremiah 46:10

That day is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, to avenge himself on his foes. The sword shall devour and be sated and drink its fill of their blood. For the Lord GOD of hosts holds a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

### Ezekiel 13:5

You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the LORD.

### Ezekiel 30:3

For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.

### Joel 1:15

Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.

### Joel 2:1

Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,

### Joel 2:11

The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?

### Joel 3:14

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

### Amos 5:18

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,

### Amos 5:20

Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

### Obadiah 1:15

For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.

### Zephaniah 1:7

Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.

### Zephaniah 1:8

And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice— "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.

### Zephaniah 1:14

The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.

## Silence, commerce, and the Day of the LORD

Verses 7&8 describe a specific group of people who are set aside for the time of sacrifice.

When we see the gathering of elite leaders, dignitaries, officials, and those who display their wealth, it can give rise to, for some, a desire to aspire to these heights. For the prophets and for those who walk humbly before HaShem, these verses are chilling in their telling, for those who would raise themselves above the general populace and regard themselves as elite will find that all of the “stuff” that they had placed reliance in will come to nothing.

An important thing to note is that what begins in the higher echelons of society can become aspiration to the masses as they believe that they are being denied their fair share, so as they see the seeming advantages come to the elites, they, when the opportunity comes, rather than creating a more ethical and morally upright society, in its desire for wealth and status, becomes more corrupt because of its belief in the importance of material wealth.

When we look at the context of Zephaniah, we see that after the death of King Josiah, rather than a continuation of the reforms that he began, his successor begins a program of seeking treaties with the surrounding nations and a reversion to the idolatry that was previously in place, making the kingdom of Judah, more acceptable in the eyes of its neighbours.

In our modern context, although the Abraham accords have been lauded as a step toward peace between Israel and some of its neighbours, one might ask whether this is actually the manner in which true peace is achieved in the context of the history of Israel and the prophets.

Yaakov Beasley in his commentary on Zephaniah, applies these ideas in the following manner:

*“He (Zephaniah) expresses that it is a combination of social injustice and idolatry that will cause the upcoming upheaval, which will encompass both Judah and its neighbours, even expanding to the entire world. Survival and deliverance are not guaranteed, even for the righteous”<sup>1</sup>*

In the context of Zephaniah and the other prophetic books in the Hebrew scriptures, we see the day of the LORD as consistently referring to a time of judgment and restoration of the kingdom to Messiah, King Yeshua. However, when we move across to the Apostolic writings, the commentators seem to find themselves in a bit of a muddle concerning the “LORD’s day”.

Many of the commentators seem to ignore the Hebraic background of John, so they apply a Christian perspective speaking of the Lord’s Day being a reference to Sunday and the association with the resurrection of Messiah. Some even go as far to point out that the only other reference to the Greek word *Kuriakos*, meaning the possession of the LORD, which is only found in one other reference in 1 Corinthians 11:20, referring to the LORD’s supper, which we know to be Passover, but again taken out that context has been applied to the eucharist on Sunday.

When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.

[1 Corinthians 11:20](#)

κυριακός

kuriakos

koo-ree-ak-os'

From [G2962](#); *belonging to the Lord* (Jehovah or Jesus): - Lord's.

κύριος

kurios

koo'-ree-os

From [κῦρος kuros](#) (*supremacy*); *supreme in authority*, that is, (as noun) *controller*; by implication *Mr.* (as a respectful title): - God, Lord, master, Sir.

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<sup>1</sup> Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah – Lights in the Valley – Yaakov Beasley p.179

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

### Revelation 1:10

The Delitzsch Hebrew NT translates the phrase as b'yom ha'adon – Day of the Master. What is clear from the Greek is that the use of the word *kurios* is possessive in stating that the day belongs to the LORD, and this would be consistent to the thought behind all the other references in the Hebrew scriptures.

For the follower of Messiah, the use of the phrase *day of the LORD* is probably most familiar through the words of the Apostle Paul.

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

### 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4

The phrase in this passage is just a reversal of the words used in the Revelation passage; here **hemera kurios**, in the passage in Revelation **kurios hemera**. There is no material difference in the meaning. Paul appears to be pointing to the Moedim and maybe even a specific one. This is not clear from the text, but it was of no mystery to the early followers. When applied to the Apocalyptic text, we see the similarities between the events set out by John in comparison to the events set out in Zephaniah. The argument can be made that Zephaniah's text only has a local application both in time and place. However, if the same types of issues arose at the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple through the rejection of Yeshua as Messiah and the Temple worship itself becoming a form of idolatry, then the words of Zephaniah are applicable there too, as are the words of John. However, what is clear from the text in both cases and placed alongside the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel amongst others is that the events culminating in the judgment that we see at the time is that they are set forth as examples and warnings to us to not make the same mistakes. It is for this reason that we see the final invocation of John.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

### 1 John 5:21

The words used here are interesting if thought of in the context of the Passover Seder, with John being the youngest at the time and perhaps being called upon to ask the question (s).

At the centre of all of these expressions lies the fact that the "day of the LORD" is a day set aside for HaShem and His Messiah and that the darkness has to grow, and the clock be set to arrive at midnight in order for the "thief" to come. Referring back to our Zephaniah text, we see also in verse 7 the idea of the guests being made ready, as they were commanded to at the time of the first giving of the Torah.

the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

### Exodus 19:10-11

Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.

### Zephaniah 1:7

The attire of those attending the feast is clearly important just as it was when they came for the receiving of the Torah. As we pointed out previously, the next verse seems to point to the dignitaries and officials who would dress themselves in their finest attire to show off their importance. Compare these two verses and consider their implication.

And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice— "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. **Zephaniah 1:8**

In Matthew 22, the parable of the Wedding Feast, we see an allusion to the verses in Zephaniah 1:8.

And again, Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again, he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'" But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So, the wedding hall was filled with guests. *"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.* Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

#### Matthew 22:1-14

The main allusion that we see to a wedding in the Torah is the giving of the Torah at Sinai. This event is practiced each year, and perhaps we can see a strand of this in Revelation 14 as well.

It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,

#### Revelation 14:4

Also, an allusion to Shavuot, perhaps.

What is clear from the text in Zephaniah is that the presence of HaShem is a truly awesome and fearful day. Contrasted against the Revelation in Exodus 19, the juxtaposition is striking as well as informative.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD,

#### Exodus 19:9

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

#### Exodus 19:16

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off

#### Exodus 20:18

The comparison with these verses to the expressions in Zephaniah 1:7 of the command to silence indicates a clamouring among the people of Judah and Jerusalem and the world. The command of silence is the same as we would experience if the King or Queen were to enter the room, or as we have experienced perhaps when the Bride comes in. At the revelation in Sinai, the silence came because of fear, trembling and awe.

Here, the silence comes because it is a command of the Creator.

*When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.*

#### Revelation 8:1-5