

## 12 Prophets - Zephaniah Part 5

The modern-day idolatry that we see is really no different from what existed in Zephaniah's time. At the heart of it is the adoption of commerce as being the vehicle through which most idolatry comes by the commodification of ideas and practices that were never to be used in this manner.

As we continue to delve into Zephaniah, we can also look to the explicit commands of Torah to examine what brought Israel, Judah and Jerusalem to the place where HaShem's message through Zephaniah becomes so stark.

Leviticus 26 begins with an explicit instruction against idolatry.

*"You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the LORD your God. You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.*

### Leviticus 26:1-2

As we noted in our last study, one of the elements of admonishment was against the inhabitants of "the Mortar" or hollow place. The hollowness is associated with trade and commerce.

*Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off.*

### Zephaniah 1:11

For the disciple of Messiah Yeshua, there is a similar exhortation to recognise that one who is entranced by the idolatry of "mammon" will not be able to serve both.

*"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

### Matthew 6:24

*The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

### Luke 16:8-13

*At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them." 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. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.*

### Zephaniah 1:12-18

The final part of Zephaniah 1 from verses 12-18 deal with the “hollowness” of all the hope that has been placed in desiring to be like the surrounding nations by adopting their idolatrous practices and becoming trade partners.

What is clear through Zephaniah that is a lesson to us today is that idolatry will manifest itself in the form of physical idols which we will be required to revere. This is a lesson that we can see not only through the scripture; the golden statue in Daniel being a prime example, but also through history in the accounts of the Maccabean uprising and the worship of the Caesars, right up to the dictators of modern history.

Going back to Zephaniah, we see that the problem has stemmed from the leaders of the people who, rather than teaching the Torah, have found it advantageous to themselves to turn a blind eye to the corruption and rottenness that has infiltrated the people.

*At that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are **complacent**, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.'*

Zephaniah 1:12

*A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers.*

Proverbs 17:8

*The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice.*

Proverbs 17:23

*Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.*

1 Samuel 2:22-25

An example of the corruption in the leadership is found in 1 Samuel 2 which relates the story of the sons of Eli the High Priest. Although Eli was aware of what his sons did and rebuked them, he did not stop them. Later in the passages when the death of Eli's sons is reported to him it speaks of how he falls backwards and breaks his neck because he is “heavy”, the Hebrew word being “Kaved”.

We use this example as the passage in Zephaniah speaks in similar terms regarding the nature of the complacency that the men of Jerusalem are indulging in. Their complacent nature has brought them to a point where their idolatry is now about to fall upon them.

If we examine the idea of a bribe then we also need to think about how the things we affiliate to enhance our standing in the world. Our world view also needs to be scrutinised so that we are not under any misapprehensions regarding the outcome of those affiliations or actions.

When we consider this in the obvious cases of politics or fame generally, we can find ourselves agreeing with particular viewpoints because they are fashionable and profitable, even though morally and ethically they are contrary to Torah. Or, and this requires even more consideration, that ideas which agree with Torah on the surface are not in fact in accordance with the mind of HaShem but do fit with the groupthink that we surround ourselves with and to remain in a place of popularity or leadership, a certain form of words and actions will be followed.

This is as much bribery/idolatry as those things that are outside of Torah. It is the motivation of the heart that is at the centre of any process, which if self-seeking that can cause a loss of sincerity in one's relationship with HaShem because it is self-protecting.

## H7087

קָפָא

qâphâ'

kaw-faw'

A primitive root; to *shrink*, that is, *thicken* (as unracked wine, curdled milk, clouded sky, frozen water): - congeal, curdle, dark`, settle.

**Total KJV occurrences: 4**

The complacent nature of their actions is not based on any one act, but it is a series of events and actions that bring a hardening of their heart. As a result, they lose sight of the covenant made with HaShem at Sinai and the suffer the consequences not purely of disobedience, but of a resistance to return.

The word complacent is aligned in nature to the word contrary that appears 7 times in Leviticus 26, and only there.

## H7147

קִרִי

qêrîy

ker-ee'

From [H7136](#); hostile *encounter*: - contrary.

**Total KJV occurrences: 7**

*At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.*

[Exodus 15:8](#)

In the song of the sea, the congealing of the waters that wiped out the Egyptians was not purely an act of judgment by HaShem to show His power, but they reflected the hardening/strengthening of Pharaoh's heart against the Israelites, ultimately causing his demise as well as the Egyptian armies. The word used for the heaping up of the waters is the same as the complacent hearts of the men of Jerusalem.

What we see being described in Zephaniah 1:12-18 is the same process being set out through the inhumanity of men against men, not through violence but through complacency by not exhorting repentance and return to the truth of Torah. The force of idolatry has become so strong that they are unwilling/unable to escape its vortex. The only solution is that a greater power has to be manifested to break its hold and, in the process, remove the unclean elements from the Land including the destruction of the Temple.

No amount of wealth will save only repentance.