

12 Prophets - Zephaniah Part 7

Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city!
She listens to no voice;
She accepts no correction.
She does not trust in the LORD;
She does not draw near to her God.
Her officials within her are roaring lions;
Her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning.
Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men;
Her priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the Torah.

The LORD within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame. "I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant.

I said, 'Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.'

But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.

"Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed."

"For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.

From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering."

"On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.

But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly.

They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, those who are left in Israel;

they shall do no injustice and speak no lies,

nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue.

For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.

[Zephaniah 3:1-20](#)

In our final examination of the prophet Zephaniah, we see in chapter 3 the speech of the prophet broken down into two main sections:

Verses 1-6 look at the condition of Jerusalem and its maladies.

What has become the cause of its unworthiness bringing about the judgment that it is about to suffer?

Verses 7&8 stand as the link between the two sections as a question raised by the Father regarding the events that are about to ensue and the purpose they are intended for. But they also contain the response as result of the judgments from the people.

Verses 9-20 speak of the aftermath of the judgment and the restoration of the city, the people and the nations who will join themselves to HaShem, His Torah and His people.

The Maladies

*Woe to her who is **rebellious** and defiled, the oppressing city!*

The open line of chapter 3 speaks of rebellion and defilement, which in the normal course of life, we might say is easy to identify and avoid. The problem is how do you identify these things because on the face of it they may not actually be unattractive at all.

The Hebrew helps us break this down as we can see the word used for obstinate/rebellious is also the word that expresses beauty. There is a change that takes place in the tense, but the word remains that same.

Consider the gold ring in the sow's nose. Context is everything! The form of the word in the Hebrew is also seen in Genesis 12:11, 24:16, 26:7 29:17 **מְרֹאֵה** – meaning: beautiful

Leviticus 13:4, 13:12, 13:20 **מְרֹאֵה** – meaning: sight, vision

H4758

מְרֹאֵה

mar'eh

BDB Definition:

1) sight, appearance, vision

1a) sight, phenomenon, spectacle, appearance, vision

1b) what is seen

1c) a vision (supernatural)

1d) sight, vision (power of seeing)

Part of Speech: noun masculine

A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number: from [H7200](#)

Same Word by TWOT Number: 2095i

כִּי אִשָּׁה יִפְתֹּחַ מְרֹאֵה אֶת־

(Gen. 12:11 WTT)

וְהִנְעֹרְךָ טַבַּת מְרֹאֵה מֵאֵד

(Gen. 24:16 WTT)

הוּי מְרֹאֵה וְנִגְאָלָה הָעִיר הַיּוֹנָה:

(Zeph. 3:1 WTT)

We see the word for rebellious is the same word that Naomi uses to describe herself when she returns to Beit Lechem with Ruth after the death of her husband and sons from Moab. An act of disobedience and a lack of trust on their part. The aleph added to the word implies a rebellious toward the father that is born out of bitterness.

H4784

מרה

mârâh

BDB Definition:

1) to be contentious, be rebellious, be refractory, be disobedient towards, be rebellious against

1a) (Qal) to be disobedient, be rebellious

1a1) towards father

1a2) towards God

1b) (Hiphil) to show rebelliousness, show disobedience, disobey

Part of Speech: verb

A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number: a primitive root

Same Word by TWOT Number: 1242

*Woe to her who is rebellious and **defiled**, the oppressing city!*

The other key word in our opening verse is “defiled”. Just as we see with the word rebellious having its association with the word beautiful, defiled is associated with the word “redeemed” coming out the same root word **גאל**

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגָּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל-רָע

(Gen. 48:16 WTT)

“May the angel who rescued (redeemed) me from all harm”.

הִוִּי מְרֻאָה וְנִגְאָלָה הָעִיר הַיִּנְהָה:

(Zeph. 3:1 WTT)

Woe to her who is rebellious and **defiled**, the oppressing city!

H1351

גאל

gâ'al

BDB Definition:

1) to defile, pollute, desecrate

1a) (Niphal) to be defiled, be polluted

1b) (Piel) to pollute, desecrate

1c) (Pual) to be desecrated (of removal from priesthood)

1d) (Hiphil) to pollute, stain

1e) (Hithpael) to defile oneself

Part of Speech: verb

A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number: a primitive root

Same Word by TWOT Number: 301

H1350



gâ'al

BDB Definition:

1) to redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin, act as kinsman-redeemer

1a1a) by marrying brother's widow to beget a child for him, to redeem from slavery, to redeem land, to exact vengeance

1a2) to redeem (by payment)

1a3) to redeem (with God as subject)

1a3a) individuals from death

1a3b) Israel from Egyptian bondage

1a3c) Israel from exile

1b) (Niphal)

1b1) to redeem oneself

1b2) to be redeemed

Part of Speech: verb

A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number: a primitive root

Same Word by TWOT Number: 300

What is Zephaniah speaking to?

The month of Zephaniah is associated with the month of Sivan which is the month in which we see the harvest of the first fruits and the feast of Shavuot, which is commemorated by the reading of the book of Ruth.

The uncleanness of a Moabite, Ruth is redeemed through the marriage of a kinsmen redeemer (Goel) Boaz bringing about the redemption of Israel through the lineage of King David and ultimately Messiah and all the nations.

This is the picture that is being painted to us through the book of Zephaniah, but we must understand that the rebellious and defilement has to be dealt with in order for redemption to take place.

Keeping what we know here in mind, as we look at the next section of our text in Zephaniah 3, we can see the elements that make up the rebelliousness that brings the judgment.

She listens to no voice;

She accepts no correction.

She does not trust in the LORD;

She does not draw near to her God.

Her officials within her are roaring lions;

Her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning.

Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men;

Her priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the Torah.

The issues that we see set out here are at the heart of what the problem is. It is the same issue in Jerusalem at the time of the prophets which is repeated at the time of Messiah and is applicable to our own time today. If we do not pay attention to this example, then we can expect the same results to come upon us as they did Jerusalem.

If we look at the first four indictments, we can see a form of disobedience that is not just about ignorance, but rather a wilful haughtiness and denial of the relationship of husband to wife. But this then merges into something further in that it is supported by an appeal to legal authority who take advantage to following the lead of the one who is disobedient because of the advantages that they might gain.

When we think about the characteristics of countries and nations, they generally assume a feminine characteristic. Perhaps this comes from the idea of the land being a nurturing mother who, if shown the respect she deserves, will provide all that her offspring need to thrive and survive. This is seen today in the Gaia movement and the idea of Mother earth on a global scale, but can be fined down to individual countries.

The feminine nature of the Land is then brought into play by the way her officials work within her. If she is a harlot and does not act obediently to her husband who is also her maker, then the encouragement to act corruptly is also nurtured as those within her feed from her adulteries and corruption which they have formulated. As a spiritual principle it is a powerful metaphor that we see at work within our society today.

Therefore, in these expressions we see that the officials and leaders both civic and spiritual are not leading the people correctly but are themselves part of the corruption that is growing because it is advantageous to them.

The judicial and civil aspect of society should then be subject to the spiritual leaders, who have the Word of HaShem and the spiritual sight to see the corruption, but they themselves are either unwilling or blind to acknowledge the truth.

The profaning of the holy, the set apart, is not just about the objects of religion or the Temple. It refers to the people themselves, the treasured possession of the Father.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;

Exodus 19:5

"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 14:2

And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments,

Deuteronomy 26:18

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

As with many relationships that can go sour, there is normally a process of deflection that takes place whereby the guilty party will blame the other part of the relationship and all the circumstances surrounding it. However, in this instance there is no room for blame when the partner is perfect.

The LORD within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame. "I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant.

Getting your attention yet?

*I said, 'Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction.
Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.'
But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.*

There is an interesting parallel to these words which is set out Psalm 65 where the sages speak of how the events that surround us which at the time feel unfavourable to us and seem to diminish us are in fact prompts to repentance and return.

What we see happening in our world, countries, towns, and our own lives can be examined the light of Torah to prompt us to change. They are perceived as judgments on the one hand because bad choices do come round to judge us in their outcomes, but when the issues appear to be out of our hands then the question arises about how trusting we are of the purposes that the Father has and whether we remain faithful to His intentions and will. Torah provides us with these insights not to condemn, but to guide through the difficulty and bring us into a marvellous light.

[For the leader. A psalm of David. A song:]

*To you, God, in Tziyon, silence is praise; and vows to you are to be fulfilled.
You who listen to prayer, to you all living creatures come.
When deeds of wickedness overwhelm me, you will atone for our crimes.
How blessed are those you choose and bring near, so that they can remain in your courtyards!
We will be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the Holy Place of your temple.
It is just that you answer us with awesome deeds, God of our salvation, you in whom all put their trust, to the ends of the earth and on distant seas.
By your strength you set up the mountains.
You are clothed with power.
You still the roaring of the seas, their crashing waves, and the peoples' turmoil.
This is why those living at the ends of the earth stand in awe of your signs.
The places where the sun rises and sets you cause to sing for joy.
You care for the earth and water it, you enrich it greatly; with the river of God, full of water, you provide them grain and prepare the ground.
Soaking its furrows and settling its soil, you soften it with showers and bless its growth.
You crown the year with your goodness, your tracks overflow with richness.
The desert pastures drip water, the hills are wrapped with joy, the meadows are clothed with flocks and the valleys blanketed with grain, so they shout for joy and break into song.*

Psalms 65:1-13

But if there is an unwillingness to change and the events that surround are only seen as opportunities to further oppress the poor and vulnerable by increasing lawlessness as we see in society when any excuse is used to riot, loot and kill, then the consequences of those actions will be inevitable, just as it will be for us if we continue to walk falsely and/or contrary to what we know is healthy for us.

A beautiful hymn of praise and redemption

Verses 9-20 set out a magnificent resolution of redemption and restoration. It is the perfect picture of Shavuot as it reflects the arrival of all nations who are able to stand at the foot of the mountain and to go up and dine with the Creator of the Universe and His Messiah.

*"Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey.
For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed."*

"For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.

From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering."

"On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.

But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly.

They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue.

For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.

Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors.

And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.

At that time, I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.

These verses establish the verses set out by Paul in Ephesians speaking of how the separation between the Jewish and Gentile nations who acknowledge Messiah as the King of Israel has been removed but in particular the celebration of the Moedim will not be reproached by any as it will be clear that these are times appointed by the King.

The time is coming when the oppressors will be shamed by their attitude and approach to the wishes of the King.

Chazak, chazak, ve'neet, chazaik!

Be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened!