

אש מן-השמים  
*the heavenly fire*

*Zephaniah*  
צפניה



*David Colo*

אש מן־השמים

*the heavenly fire*

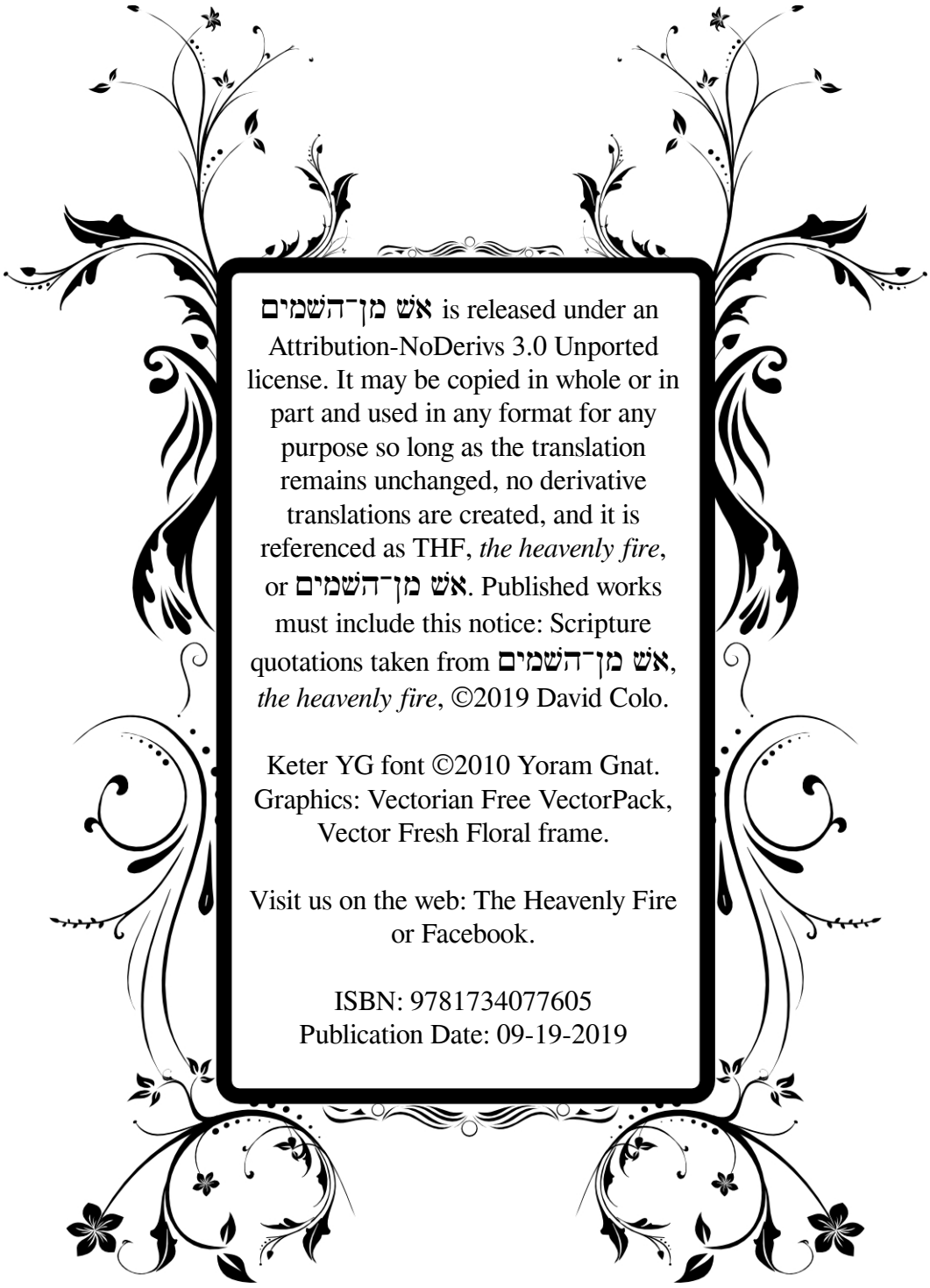
*the heavenly fire*

אש מן-השמים  
*the heavenly fire*

Zephaniah

David Colo

אש מן-השמים



אש מן־השמים is released under an Attribution-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported license. It may be copied in whole or in part and used in any format for any purpose so long as the translation remains unchanged, no derivative translations are created, and it is referenced as THF, *the heavenly fire*, or אש מן־השמים. Published works must include this notice: Scripture quotations taken from אש מן־השמים, *the heavenly fire*, ©2019 David Colo.

Keter YG font ©2010 Yoram Gnat.  
Graphics: Vectorian Free VectorPack,  
Vector Fresh Floral frame.

Visit us on the web: The Heavenly Fire  
or Facebook.

ISBN: 9781734077605  
Publication Date: 09-19-2019

*the heavenly fire*



ר' יהודה אומר המתרגם פסוק כצורתו הרי זה בדאי  
והמוסיף עליו הרי זה מחרף ומגדף

Rabbi Judah says: “The one who translates a verse equivalent to its form—  
that person is a liar. But the one who adds to it—  
that person is a reviler and defiler.”

—*b. Kiddushin 49a*



Fiumalbo Press

## Contents

Sigla and Abbreviations . . . . .	1
Preface . . . . .	5
Introduction . . . . .	7
(A) Names and Terminology	
1. Of The Translation, 2. Of The Israelite Deity, 3. Within Zephaniah	
(B) Maintaining Accuracy . . . . .	10
1. Historical Criticism, 2. Textual Criticism, 3. Rhetorical Criticism, 4. Redaction Criticism	
(C) Biblical Hebrew Poetry . . . . .	18
1. Meter and Parallelism, 2. Grammatical Alternation, 3. Sound-plays and Word-plays, 4. Other Poetic Devices	
(D) Understanding Gender . . . . .	26
1. Grammatical, 2. Semantic	
(E) Format . . . . .	27
1. Lineation, 2. Separation, 3. Versification, 4. Italics, 5. Parentheses, 6. Brackets, 7. Masoretic Notes	
Background . . . . .	31
Zephaniah . . . . .	35
Translation Notes . . . . .	41
Bibliography . . . . .	127

אש מן־השמים

*the heavenly fire*



## Sigla and Abbreviations

## GENERAL

√	Verbal root
ⲃ	Jacob ben Ḥayyim's printed compilation (Second Rabbinic Bible, 1524)
Ⲅ	Septuagint: Old Greek
Ⲅ <sup>s</sup>	Septuagint: Codex Sinaiticus
Ⲅ <sup>A</sup>	Septuagint: Codex Alexandrinus
Ⲅ <sup>B</sup>	Septuagint: Codex Vaticanus
Ⲅ <sup>L</sup>	Septuagint: Lucianic Recension
Ⲅ <sup>V</sup>	Septuagint: Codex Venetus
Ⲅ <sup>W</sup>	Septuagint: Codex Freer
ⲙ <sup>A</sup>	Masoretic Text: Aleppo Codex (AD 920)
ⲙ <sup>L</sup>	Masoretic Text: Leningrad Codex (AD 1008)
ⲙ <sup>P</sup>	Masoretic Text: Cairo Codex of the Prophets (AD 896)
Ⲥ	Syriac Peshitta
ⲥ	Targum of the Twelve
Ⲧ	Vulgate (Stuttgart)
α'	Aquila
σ'	Symmachus
θ'	Theodotion
8HevXII gr	Greek Minor Prophets Scroll, Nahal Ḥever (50 BC–AD 50)
b.	Babylonian Talmud tractate
BH	Biblical Hebrew
DSS	Dead Sea Scroll(s)
HB	Hebrew Bible
Heb	Verse number according to Hebrew versification
Mek.	<i>Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael</i>
MH	Mishnaic Hebrew
MurXII	Hebrew Minor Prophets Scroll, Wadi Murabba'at (AD 75–100)
NE	Near East
S-O-V	Subject-Object-Verb
S-V-O	Subject-Verb-Object
The Three	Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion
V-S-O	Verb-Subject-Object
Zeph	Zephaniah

## REFERENCE

AB	The Anchor Bible
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs's <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BHS	K. Elliger and W. Rudolph's <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CAL	Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project
COS	William H. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger's <i>The Context of Scripture</i>
GKC	Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar (28th edition)
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner's <i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
HCOT	Historical Commentary of the Old Testament
IBHS	Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor's <i>An Introduction To Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow's <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature</i>
JM	Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka's <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i>
KAI	<i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i>
KTU	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: einschließlich der keilalphabetischen Texte außerhalb Ugarits. Teil 1, Transkription</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

# TRANSLATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version
ESV	English Standard Version
Fenton	Ferrar Fenton's <i>The Holy Bible In Modern English</i>
Geneva	Geneva Bible (1560)
GW	GOD'S WORD translation
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
ISV	International Standard Version
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Bible (1917)
KJV	King James Version
Lamsa	George Lamsa's translation of the Aramaic Peshitta
LEB	Lexham English Bible
Leeser	Isaac Leeser's translation of the Hebrew Bible (1853)
Moffatt	<i>The Bible: James Moffatt Translation</i>
NAB	New American Bible (3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition)
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1997)
NET	New English Translation (NET Bible), 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPST	New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
Rotherham	Rotherham's <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> (1902)
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SET	Stone Edition Tanach
WEB	World English Translation
YLT	Young's Literal Translation



## Preface

For centuries, the sophistication and artistry of Zephaniah's oracles<sup>1</sup> have been ignored, downplayed, or disparaged. In the mid-1800s, in his commentary on the Twelve Prophets, Ebenezer Henderson wrote, "In respect to style, Zephaniah is not distinguished either for sublimity or elegance."<sup>2</sup> In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the celebrated scholar Georg Heinrich August von Ewald affirmed that "with the prophet Ssephanya we meet for the first time a considerable diminution of prophetic originality; he repeats a good deal almost verbally from older prophets; and, on the other hand, the style is sometimes very ornate and pointed."<sup>3</sup> In the first case, the language in Zeph was politely termed insipid and unrefined—lacking any celebrated quality of classical rhetoric. In the second case, the text was primarily noteworthy for its unoriginal character. Four verses stood out only for their sharpness or embellishment. In both instances, the poetry of Zeph was overlooked entirely. In the early 1900s, John Smith, writing for the acclaimed International Critical Commentary series, dedicated three pages to Zeph's poetry. His analysis was largely metrical. Smith concluded: "Zephaniah can hardly be considered great as a poet. . . . He has no great imaginative powers; no deep insight into the human heart is reflected in his utterances; nor any keen sensitiveness to the beauties of nature."<sup>4</sup> In other words, a text like Zeph, which looked nothing like the masterworks of Romanticism, could hardly be imaginative, let alone poetic. If translations are to some extent reflections of a real-life image—albeit warped, dark, and artificial—such routine dismissal could do nothing but fuel an abysmal treatment of Zeph at the hands of its translators.

Over the past fifty years, however, due in part to the many archaeological discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars began to study and compare the prophetic oracles of other societies in the ancient NE with the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible as well as investigate the distinctive traits of ancient Hebrew and other Semitic literature. The result was a profound paradigm shift and a newfound appreciation for the poetry, rhetoric, and artfulness of biblical texts. Nothing less could have produced the radical reversal of Zeph's characterization that now appears in biblical scholarship. In 1994, for instance, Adele Berlin called Zeph "a highly literate work"<sup>5</sup> and stated that, just like Jeremiah, it was marked by "staccato exclamations, rapid changes of scene and vantage point, frequent shifts of voice and discourse, use of invocation, plural

1 It is important to note at the beginning that when we speak of "Zephaniah," we speak of a canonical, textual entity to which we have direct access, not a historical, prophetic figure to which we do not.

2 Ebenezer Henderson and E. P. Barrows, *The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets, Translated from the Original Hebrew. With a Commentary, Critical, Philological, and Exegetical. With a Biographical Sketch of the Author*. Boston: W. H. Halliday and Company, 1868, p. 41.

3 Georg Heinrich August von Ewald, *Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament. Vol. III. Commentary on the Books of Nahûm, Ssephanya, Habaqqûq, "Zakharya" XII.-XIV., Yéremyá with Translation*. Translated by J. Frederick Smith. London: Williams and Norgate, 1878, p. 16.

4 John Merlin Powis Smith, William Hayes Ward, and Julius August Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*. ICC. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911, p. 176.

5 Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 25A. New York: Doubleday, 1994, p. 13.

command, and rhetorical question, a propensity for assonance and wordplay, a rich array of metaphors and similes from the natural landscape and from human crafts and trades, and precision of metonymy and synecdoche.”<sup>6</sup> Zephaniah—as the scholastic community is now admitting—is a superbly creative and powerful tapestry of imagery and discourse. Bible translations, however, have been slow to incorporate these insights into the creation of significant new reflections.

Issues like the one above are where this and subsequent volumes come into play. Each volume begins with an Introduction that describes which aspects of the Hebrew texts have been overlooked, ignored, or misunderstood by translations both ancient and modern. Examples and counter-examples are provided that make the issues visible and palpable, while technical details are discussed that pave the way for a new kind of translation. This is followed by a series of short, informative segments that provide a basic background for the featured text—usually an overview of the textual message, its historical setting, and the text's literary form and genre. What follows is an English rendering of the Hebrew-Aramaic text as taken from the forthcoming bible translation **אש מן-השמים**, *the heavenly fire*. The Translation Notes dissect the process into easily digestible fragments. The text is subjected to a comprehensive treatment in order to bring out its semantic nuances, reveal interpretive cruxes, explain the choices of other English versions, and, ultimately, advance a totally new type of biblical translation.

In this inaugural volume, the Introduction consists of five parts. The first sets the stage by defining the primary words, terms, or phrases utilized by Zeph, its translation, and, by extension, this very book. The second describes four methods of **criticism** (the process of critically examining and making judgments about the origin, make-up, interpretation, and/or transmission of biblical literature) with which a translator much engage in order to faithfully represent a Hebrew text. The third delves into a field particularly neglected by translators: Biblical Hebrew poetry. The fourth touches briefly on the highly controversial use or misuse of gender in bible translation. And the fifth prepares the reader to engage with the translation proper by outlining the particulars of its appearance and format. Throughout the Introduction, the first instance of a key term is set in bold to help the reader navigate through the wide array of topics. The volume then launches into the translation of the biblical text itself, which concludes with a rendering of any pertinent scribal markings in the manuscripts. The Translation Notes are divided by chapter and verse and subdivided by translation content, which is set in bold before it is described. A Bibliography concludes the text.

Throughout this process, we hope not only to confront long-established prejudices, but offer alternative possibilities to capture, in unprecedented fidelity, both the form and content of biblical texts. The *raison d'être* for this project is to help students, scholars, and translators to better understand the artistry and tapestry of Israel's ancient scrolls. Its *desideratum* is the progress and advancement of biblical translation.

---

6 Berlin, *Zephaniah*, p. 11.

## Introduction

A translation is just that. We do not presume to replace the original text with our own. Yet we do not believe the original so lofty or sacrosanct that it cannot be represented vividly and accurately in another language. If the biblical texts are to be believed, YHWH both *spoke* and *wrote*—the purpose of which must surely be *understanding*. The Rabbis, without anticipating its greater application, left us a saying that illustrates this well: דְּבַר־הַתּוֹרָה כְּלָשׁוֹן בְּנֵי אָדָם, “Scripture speaks in human language.” What follows, therefore, is a discussion of human language and its comprehension. We begin with a look at the various names and terms that are most pertinent.

### (A) Names and Terminology

#### 1. Of the Translation

אֵשׁ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם (*’ēš min-haššāmayim*) means “the fire from heaven,” or, more simply, *the heavenly fire* (THF). Such language is drawn from theophanic imagery, which likens the presence of YHWH to various manifestations of fire, and from an ancient Jewish conception of YHWH's word as fire. Early Rabbinic tradition equated the fire that fell from heaven on Sinai with scripture itself. This can be seen, for instance, in the following midrash, which uses word-play to phonetically link “Torah” (תּוֹרָה) with “its flame” (אֵשׁ): “Because YHWH descended upon it in fire (Exod 19:18). This shows that the Torah [is] fire, was given from fire, and is comparable to fire. . . . One can do nothing but warm himself [with] its flame” (*Mek. Bahodesh* 4).

#### 2. Of the Israelite Deity

By way of piety and tradition, the scribes who placed vowel points in the Hebrew manuscripts obscured the name of God by placing under its consonants the vowels of words like Elohim (God), Adonai (My Sovereign/Lord), and Ha-Shem (The Name). Some translations create the hybrid “Jehovah” out of this heterogeneous mix, while others translate the vowels. Still others trace the name back to a hypothetical form of the verb “to be” (Yahweh). Like translations of other religious texts, THF replicates the deity's name when that name is used. Since, however, its pronunciation was lost, we render the name as we have it and how scribes have written it for the last three millennia: YHWH. Much like how ancient Jews might use the paleo-Hebrew script to indicate the name's sacred status, we use a font quite different than the rest of the text. So too we use “Elohim,” “El,” and “Eloah” instead of “God,” but “The One God” when a definite article precedes it. Where the text intends to communicate something other than the deity's name or title, we follow intently.

#### 3. Within Zephaniah

A number of specialized words or phrases occur in Zeph, which warrant initial comment. They are provided below with their English rendering as used herein and a discussion of their respective meanings.

TERMS	DESCRIPTION
נאם־יהוה	<b>prophecy of YHWH</b> — The origin of נאם is not well understood. Some trace it to a cognate Arabic word meaning “whisper” ( <i>na’ama</i> ). Since Arabic (Arabian) is a totally different branch of Semitic than Hebrew (Northwest), that proposal is not satisfying. Both 𐤀 and 𐤁 treat it as the verb “to say.” Thus, it probably refers to speech. Following 𐤀 and 𐤁, translations typically render it as a verb. As Timothy Wilt noted, however, “the expression functions not to identify the speaker of a discourse, as many contemporary versions’ translation would suggest, but to insist on the authenticity of the words as having YHWH as their source and as being transmitted in legitimate prophetic tradition.” <sup>7</sup> Thus, translations should break with 𐤀 and 𐤁. The Masoretic vocalization and use of <i>maqef</i> supports that break. It indicates a noun in construct—not a verb. Thus, something like “utterance/statement/declaration/decreed” is preferable. Translations that render it similarly include HCSB (the LORD’s declaration), LEB (a declaration of YHWH), and YLT (an affirmation of Jehovah). Since נאם־יהוה became a highly marked expression for a prophetic utterance in prophetic texts, we render it “prophecy of YHWH.” Syntactically, the phrase interrupts the flow of speech and/or closes a quotation, which causes it to stand out and signals that it is not part of that utterance. We choose, therefore, to render it in an equally marked and disruptive manner (by inserting em dashes).
יום יהוה	<b>YHWH’s day</b> — Literally, “the day of YHWH.” Thanks to texts like this, “YHWH’s day” is now associated with destruction and end-of-the-world scenarios. In ancient Israel, however, that “day” was a time of joy, celebration, and sacrifice. It was likely a cultic holiday. It looked back at and/or forward to some great deliverance from Israel’s enemies by a divine warrior (see Zeph 3:17). It may have been what we now call “Sabbath” (Sabbath being instituted, according to Deut 5:15, in remembrance of the overthrow of Egypt’s dominion over Israel). Though there is no evidence that ancient Israelites celebrated an enthronement festival for YHWH on New Year’s as in Babylon (the Akitu festival), the idea that YHWH would show himself to be King by overthrowing Israel’s enemies seems to have been an element of the celebration (see Zeph 3:15).
פנות	<b>“corners”</b> — Few English translations render פנות as “corners.” Most prefer something like “towers” (KJV), “corner towers” (HCSB), “watch towers” (ISV), “battlements” (NRSV), or “bastions” (REB). Though פנות does refer to physical parts or places (usually when combined with words like “walls,” “hills,” or “mountains”), it also has another sense—it describes people of prominence, authority, or power. Thus, “corner-posts” describes “daughters” in Ps 144:12 and “corner” is used in Isa 19:13 to describe “princes.” To bring out this nuance, we place the word in quotes. See section B4.

7 Timothy L. Wilt, “Oracle of Yahweh’: Translating A Highly Marked Expression,” *BT* 50.3 (1999): 302.



כּוּשׁ

**Nubia** — Traditionally translated as “Cush,” this refers to a people-group located by ancient authors in southern Egypt, which they called “Ethiopia” (𐎢 and 𐎶). That area, however, is what we call Nubia, not Ethiopia. Thus, we render the place-name “Nubia” and the people “Nubians.” Berlin (AB) views “Cushite” as a reference to the Kassites (Akkadian *kuššu*), who ruled Babylon until the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, but were driven out into the Zagros Mountains. Berlin then identifies this people-group with the Assyrians since “Cush” is the father of Nimrod (Gen 10:8) and, since Nimrod built Nineveh (Gen 10:11), that must mean Nimrod, a “Cushite,” built Assyria. Such an interpretation must be rejected. First, it was Ashur, not Nineveh, that was the capital of Assyria during most of its history. Sennacherib was the first to make Nineveh a great seat of the empire—a greatness that was short-lived. Second, just because Nimrod was believed to have laid the foundation of an ancient Assyrian city doesn't mean that he was believed to have founded the Assyrian Empire. Nimrod is also said to have built Babel and Akkad (Gen 10:10). Why associate the Kassites with the Assyrian Empire instead of the Babylonian Empire, which they actually ruled? Berlin's argument supports the Babylonians more so than the Assyrians. Historically, the tribes in the Zagros Mountains cannot be equated with the Assyrians. The Annals of Sennacherib record that the Kassites were a different people than the Assyrians and that Sennacherib waged war against them and brought them out of their country into Assyria: “In my second campaign, Assur my lord, encouraged me, and against the land of the Kassites and the land of the Yasubigallai, who from of old had not been submissive to the kings, my fathers, I marched. . . . The people of the land of the Kassites and the land of the Yasubigallai, who had fled before my arms, I brought down out of the mountains and settled them.”<sup>8</sup> There is no reason why these people should be equated with Assyria above all other conquered and resettled people-groups throughout Assyrian history. “Nubia” is preferable.

הוּי

**Oh [no]!** — Traditionally rendered “woe” or “alas,” הוּי is an independent interjection adapted from laments for the dead and serves as the grammatical opening of an oracle of execration. NJB's rendering “Disaster!” captures the nuance well. The fact that it stands independent of the rest of the text is often shown by the use of a disjunctive Masoretic mark. Contrary, therefore, to most translations, we make a clear separation between this interjection and the following content.

שׁב שׁבוֹת

**turn the tide** — 𐎶, 𐎶, 𐎶, and 𐎶 all render שׁבוֹת as “exile/captivity” from שׁבַּח (to capture/take captive). In many places, however (Job 42:10, Ezek 16:53, the Sefire inscription, etc.), that makes no sense. Instead, שׁבוֹת seems to refer to a “turnaround/reversion” to a previous, positive state (from שׁוּב, “to turn/return”). As such, it can refer to the release from exile, but not necessarily. It conveys the wider sense of turning things around for the better. שׁב שׁבוֹת has an alternate form (שׁב שׁבִּית). The latter is probably the Aramaic version of the former (as seen in the Sefire

<sup>8</sup> Daniel David Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*. The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, Vol. II. Ed. James Henry Breasted. Chicago: University Press, 1924, p. 58.

inscription). Scholars are often puzzled by the switch from one form to the other. As noted by Timmer, “both statements are generic rather than precise.”<sup>9</sup> And we think both had come to take on the same idiomatic meaning. Therefore, we render both in the same generic, idiomatic manner (turn the tide), which also captures some of the assonance of the Hebrew.

פקד

One of the least understood roots in Biblical Hebrew is פקד. Common renderings include “to visit,” “punish,” “appoint,” and “be mindful of.” Creason provides the best analysis.<sup>10</sup> He noted that פקד gets its meaning from what happens to its object, not what its subject does. All English translations base their rendering on the latter. At a fundamental level, פקד identifies a change in the status of its object. From that point, the meaning differs in every stem. The Qal means “to put object in the proper place/order/position/status.” The Niphal is the passive form of the Qal. It means “for object to be assigned to the proper place/order/position/status.” The Hiphil means “to make object an authority over another.” The Hophal means “for object to already be in authority over another.” The Piel is an intensive form of the Qal. The Pual is an intensive passive of the Qal. The Hithpolel is reflexive (to put oneself in the proper place/order/position/status). The Hothpaal is its passive form (to have oneself put in the proper place/order/position/status). Other verbs or imagery may be utilized to flesh out a more precise meaning. Since the proper position or status is different in every case, the translation will be slightly different to reflect each situation. See Translation Notes (1:9, 12; 2:7; 3:7).

קרב

This root is used thematically throughout Zeph (1:7, 14; 3:2, 3, 5, 11, 12, 15, 17). It describes a close proximity. The basic meaning is “to draw near” or “approach,” but it is also used in a more cultic sense to mean “to present (an offering)” or “be present (for an oracle).” Its different instantiations and semantic nuances in Zeph make it one of the clearest examples of word-play in the text. To capture that word-play, we use different forms of the same word in every circumstance. See “root-play” in section C3.

## (B) Maintaining Accuracy

### 1. Historical Criticism

Something is always changed and/or obscured in the transition from original to representation. There are ways, however, to curb distortion. One is by understanding the historical and cultural context out of which a text was created and into which it spoke—a field of biblical scholarship called **Historical**

9 Daniel C. Timmer, “The Non-Israelite Nations in Zephaniah: Conceptual Coherence and the Relationship of the Parts to the Whole,” p. 249 in *The Book of the Twelve & The New Form Criticism*. ANEM 10. Eds. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015.

10 Stuart Creason, “PQD Revisited.” Pages 27-42 in *Studies in Semitic and Afroasiatic Linguistics Presented to Gene B. Gragg*. SAOC 60. Ed. Cynthia L. Miller. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007.

**Criticism.** One place where translations commonly introduce error is Zeph 1:16, which says “A day of horn-blast (שׁוֹפָר) and battle-cry.” The שׁוֹפָר (*shophar*) is a ram's horn (see “metonymy” in section C4 for the rendering “horn-blast”). It is different than the “trumpet” (חֲצֹצֶרֶת), which is a hammered-metal instrument and not a growth on the head of an animal. Strangely, almost all English translations ignore the difference. The distinction is explicit in Ps 98:6, where no English translation renders שׁוֹפָר as “trumpet.” The KJV's rendering of this word as “cornet” in Ps 98:6 doesn't refer to the cornet as we know it today (a trumpet), but was derived from the Latin *cornu*, referring to a “horn,” “antler,” or “tusk.” Inconsistently, however, the KJV altered its rendering from “horn” in Ps 98:6 to “trumpet” in Zeph 1:16. The rendering “trumpet” probably comes from Ⲫ, which often uses “trumpet” (σαλπιγγος) for both metal trumpets and animal horns without distinction. Ⲯ's *tubae* (trumpet) follows Ⲫ. Note that 8HevXII gr renders שׁוֹפָר as κερατινης (horn instrument) instead of σαλπιγγος (trumpet). Clearly, Jewish translators in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD knew the difference even if modern translators do not.

## 2. Textual Criticism

Through careful analysis of all the different witnesses to a text, it is also possible to determine where errors have crept into the textual tradition and correct them. This is called **Textual Criticism**. For this process, THF makes use of the best witnesses such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Masoretic codices like Aleppo, Oriental 4445, and Leningrad (our base text), Targumim, Septuagintal codices, Greek translations like those by Aquila, Symmachus, or Theodotion, Origen's Hexapla, Samaritan texts, the Vulgate, texts from the Cairo Genizah, Rabbinic Literature, the Peshitta, and manuscripts with both Babylonian and Palestinian pointing. And to help decipher rare or difficult words, we utilize texts in other ancient Semitic languages like Ugaritic, Aramaic, Arabic, Assyrian, and Phoenician. The end of Zeph 3:15 provides an excellent illustration of how the text can be restored by means of Textual Criticism:

Geneva (1560): thou shalt *see* no more evil

King James (1611): thou shalt not *see* evil any more

Note, however, the Coverdale (1535) and Bishops' (1568) bibles: “thou needest no more to *fear* any misfortune.” Geneva and KJV represent תִּרְאִי, from רָאָה/√ (to see), whereas Coverdale and Bishops' represent תִּירְאִי, from יָרָא/√ (to fear/be afraid). Which is correct? One of the earliest Hebrew Bibles to go to the printing press was assembled by Jacob ben Ḥayyim in 1524. That bible contained a disastrous amount of errors. Most were quite minor. In Zeph 3:15, however, ben Ḥayyim's text read “you will not see”: תִּרְאִי. Because it was one of the first and most complete editions in print, ben Ḥayyim's text not only gained tremendous notoriety, but was widely utilized. It was one of the primary sources for the Hebrew text as used by the translators of the Geneva and King James bibles. The reading “see” also occurs in the Greek version of Zeph used for centuries by the Christian church. Of the multitudes of Hebrew manuscripts in existence, however, Kennicott lists only one with תִּרְאִי. And since the Greek departs from the Hebrew of Zeph numerous times, we have no reason to suddenly trust it here. It stretches probability beyond the breaking-point to assume that one Hebrew manuscript has preserved the original text, while all others—including the ancient Jewish oral tradition recited every day in the synagogues of Palestine, Babylonia, and Egypt, Jerome's Vulgate, which was influenced by Rabbinic exegesis, and the Targumim—had it wrong. “See” must be a scribal error or exegetical alteration. The first official or

“authorized” revision of the KJV (the English Revised Version), corrected the error. For more on Historical and Textual Criticism, see John H. Hayes' and Carl R. Holladay's *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*.

### 3. Redaction Criticism

The texts contained in the Hebrew Bible, though passing through a history of selection, composition, revision, and reinterpretation, have come to us as wholes. These wholes contain meaning just like the individual units from which they are composed. A fascinating difference between the texts of ancient Israel and modern books is that biblical texts speak both forward and backward in time. A later speaker or writer may carry on the work of another without distinction and without qualm. The meaning of one part may exist both in harmony and contrast with another. Biblical texts are, by nature, polyvalent. To treat them as if every part were harmonious is to ignore and disrespect a part of them. Yet to cut a text apart and treat each part separately is to dishonor and deny their purposeful and artful arrangement.

THF strives to offer a translation that is both **synchronic** and **diachronic**. The first deals with how the parts have been put together as a whole; it does not ask whether there are distinct viewpoints that came before or after each other. The second highlights how an earlier text has been reused and redefined to become the form of the text that now exists. The attempt to discover these is called **Redaction Criticism**. It is a challenging task because many of the qualities that make earlier or later portions unique have been smoothed away by the combination. Sometimes scribes use a structural technique called **repetitive resumption**, which is when part of the text after which new content was inserted is restated in order to signal that the text is now returning to or resuming from where it originally left off. **Superscriptions**, which stand outside the oracles and bring information to the reader/hearer about a prophet by speaking in the past-tense and third-person and by describing times and circumstances that post-date the prophet, are the most conspicuous expansions of previously existing content. Therefore, they are separated from the text and italicized. In order to guard, however, against false identifications of earlier and later content, a methodology must be defined by which such content is ascertained.

In any given text, content is controlled by both conceptual **coherence** and grammatical **cohesion**. As explained by Timmer, coherence refers to “the integrity of a text’s semantics or overall message,” whereas cohesion refers to “the harmony of surface-level features like vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and so on.”<sup>11</sup> A text may lack grammatical cohesion, but still be conceptually coherent. It may lack conceptual coherence, yet still be grammatically cohesive. The first case may be nothing more than a phenomenon of the language. The second case may be a misreading by the interpreter. In either case, it is better to assume unity and treat the text synchronically. When, however, a text lacks both cohesion and coherence, there is good reason to believe that earlier or later materials have been identified. One example comes from Zeph 2:6-7. The original part of the oracle seems to have looked like this:

She will become meadows cut [for] shepherds  
and pens [carved for] flocks.  
In place of them, will they graze.  
Among Ashkelon's edifices,  
by evening, will they repose.

<sup>11</sup> Timmer, “The Non-Israelite Nations,” p. 246.

These verses begin with “she” because, as seen in v. 4, the oracle is portraying its subject in the guise of a *woman*. Likewise, the start of the oracle, which actually occurs in v. 5, has a *feminine* subject “territory.” Thus, the verse flows naturally from what came before. The shift from “she” to “them” is an example of grammatical alternation typical of Hebrew poetry (see section D1). The word “edifices” (or “houses”) refers to human structures that have now been reduced to meadows or pens. The two groups that move in are shepherds and flocks. The flocks are those who “graze” (or “feed”) on Philistine land while the shepherds are those who “repose” (or “crouch”) among the ruins. The phrase “by evening” works well with v. 4’s “in half a day.” Just as it will take no more than half a day for the cities to be laid to waste, so shepherds will be moving their herds in and resting among the deserted buildings before the day is done. The picture painted by this oracle is of land and cities being swiftly abandoned by Philistines, but just as quickly taken over by flocks of sheep and their nomadic caretakers. The meaning is simple, its interpretation clear. Yet this is the form in which we now find it:

She will become the coastal league  
meadows cut [for] shepherds  
and pens [carved for] flocks.  
[The] league will be possessed  
by the remnant of Judah's house.  
In place of them, will they graze.  
Among Ashkelon's edifices,  
by evening, will they repose.  
Because their god YHWH will set them right,  
will turn their tide.

Suddenly there is a lack of conceptual coherence. Unlike Ashkelon’s “houses,” Judah’s “house” refers to a national or ethnic people-group. There is also a change in speaker. At the start of the oracle (v. 5), YHWH was speaking: “I will.” Till this point, there was no indication of another speaker. Now, YHWH is mentioned by someone else: “their god YHWH will.” At what point did the speaker change? Why did it change? It is possible that new content was introduced by a new speaker. The mention of “the remnant of Judah’s house,” which is further explained by YHWH “turning their tide,” seems to introduce a new concept: sheep and shepherds as symbols of Judah’s remnant. And the use of “remnant” seems to alter the picture from one about a dearth of Philistines to one about the few remaining Judahites. For them to “graze” and “repose” becomes symbolic for settling the land and repopulating its cities. Use of the verb **רָבַצַּ** to describe Judahites possessing the land and dwelling in its cities is also peculiar. A verb like “to dwell/inhabit” would be more natural.

Yet many of these markers of incoherence could be explained as natural turns of the text. The use of “house” in a sense other than “building/edifice” could result from artistic license. There is no reason why the same word should always be used in the same sense (see “antanaclasis” in section C3). The speaker could switch because the prophet is speaking instead of YHWH. And the use of a verb like “to repose/crouch” makes sense of a metaphor in which people are described as animals. Alone, therefore, an apparent lack of conceptual coherence is not enough to identify separate content.

In this case, however, there is also a lack of cohesion. Verse 6, for example, goes from “she will become” (a feminine verb) to “the coastal league” (a masculine noun). Even though “coastal league” inhabits the spot that syntactically belongs to the subject, it does not fit as the subject of a feminine verb. It must serve as clarification. Furthermore, the sentence “[The] league will be possessed by the remnant of Judah's house” does not look like poetry. It contains no parallelism, word-play, repetition, assonance, or other poetic device. It could be cut out of this poem and placed in a narrative and no one would know either that something was missing in Zeph or that the sentence didn't belong in its new narrative context.

Thus, lack of coherence and lack of cohesion work together to reveal two literary strata: the first was concerned with the desolation of the Philistines, while the second was concerned with the restoration of desolated Judahites. Both are present and both deserve attention. To signify these strata in our translation, we place the secondary portions in parentheses. For more on Redaction Criticism, see John Barton's *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*.

#### 4. Rhetorical Criticism

When it comes to translation, we take it as not just axiomatic, but necessary, that *how* a text speaks is not separated from what it says. The *how* is bound up not just in structure or form, but rhetorical intent. Although the study of rhetoric has been around since Aristotle, it wasn't until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that most scholars and students of the Hebrew texts began to seriously ask how the composer(s) intended to influence or persuade his or her audience by the choice and arrangement of words. Words are more than vessels for the conveyance of information—they are often meant to *do something*. “One of the great achievements of modern critical study of the prophets has been to stress that their message was always addressed to a concrete historical situation, and that they . . . spoke rhetorically and with an awareness of the effect their words would be likely to have on their immediate audience.”<sup>12</sup> For prophetic texts in particular, it is the art of persuasion with which they engage. In Zeph, the rhetorical purpose for the oracles of judgment is explicitly stated:

I thought if you would fear me  
     [and] receive correction,  
 then her dwelling would not be eradicated  
     [by] all whom I rightly set against her.  
 —Zeph 3:7a

Zephaniah's oracles of judgment were specifically composed to put the “fear of God” into Judahites so that they would turn away from their unjust, idolatrous, and oppressive deeds, and thereby escape destruction. A number of oral and/or literary devices were utilized to accomplish that task. One weapon in that rhetorical arsenal was **hyperbole**. The prophet wanted his audience to envision the end of the world. Therefore, he molded his message in universal terms. “I intend to utterly end all,” the prophet began. Timmer has this to say about the universal rhetoric in the following verse: “The scope of the hyperbolic prediction in 1:3 shares with the primordial flood its nature as retribution against sin, but also exceeds that of the deluge by including aquatic life in its scope.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, the text uses words that could evoke the flood story (the phrase **מַעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה** is used in Gen 6:7 to describe the destruction

12 John Barton, “Ethics in Isaiah of Jerusalem,” *JTS* 32.1 (1981): 15.

13 Timmer, “The Non-Israelite Nations,” p. 252.

of the flood), but surpasses it in extent. The implication is that this will be an even greater judgment than in Noah's time! Of course, the world was not going to end and the prophet knew it. He spoke with hyperbolic language to save, not to deceive. His primary audience and concern was Judah, not the earth:

“I plan to swing my hand against Judah  
and against the whole populace of Jerusalem.”  
—Zeph 1:4a

Judah is not just one place in a world that could be demolished—it *was* the world that could be demolished. And when Babylon's wrath fell on the people of Judah, it would certainly look and feel as though the world was being destroyed! Therefore, when the first chapter ends with the phrases כל-הארץ and כל-ישובי הארץ, one need not be confused or led to think that this is really about *the earth*, as it is rendered in so many translations. This is about *the land*. Judah and הארץ are one and the same. That is why 1:4 uses the same language to speak of Jerusalem: כל-יושבי ירושלם. And when 3:8 concludes the judgment oracles with כל-הארץ and כל-ישובי הארץ, it is not the whole “earth” that will be consumed or the whole populace of the “earth” on which YHWH's judgment will fall, but the whole “land” of Judah. Mistaking hyperbole for mere description results in a translation that says something other than what either prophet or text intended.

In many places, words and phrases are used to transport the audience to the time and circumstance described by the oracle. The audience is invited to listen to the sounds and see the sights of an alternate world. The author of the ancient treatise on rhetoric entitled ΠΕΡΙ ΥΨΟΥΣ (On the Sublime) called this *phantasia* (mental visualization). The exclamative particle קול (“Listen!” or “Hark!”) is one word that Zeph uses to introduce a series of sounds to the hearer's imagination. If the hearer engages with the sounds, then there is a merging of present and alternative worlds. The hope of the prophet is that the audience will accept the alternate world and thereby change their behavior in the present one, but the audience can always disengage from or deny that world. It is in the interest of the prophet, therefore, to use vivid and powerful language that will capture the audience's attention and stimulate their imagination. Notice how the rendering of Zeph 1:10 in THF accomplishes that: “Listen! Clamor from the Fish Gate!” Compare that with a few popular translations: KJV (There shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate), NASB (There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate), and NRSV (A cry will be heard from the Fish Gate). To treat קול as nothing more than description (“there will be a sound” or “a sound will be heard”) not only departs from the Hebrew (there is no verb in this phrase), but deadens the rhetorical force and impact that the word was meant to convey. Sound itself may also be used for rhetorical effect. In some cases, it is **mimetic** (enacted). In other words, it actually imitates what the words convey. One example comes from 1:14:

Listen! YHWH's day!  
One shouts sharp: “There! A warrior!”

An exclamative קול opens this part of the verse in order to draw the listener into an alternative world. A “sharp” sound (usually rendered “bitter”) is then introduced from within that world. Most translations treat the whole thing as **diegetic** (descriptive):

the mighty man shall cry there *bitterly* (KJV)  
 In it the warrior cries out *bitterly* (NASB)  
 the warrior cries *aloud* there (NRSV)

In this verse, however, the text does more than simply call a sound “sharp.” It consists of a series of brief, staccato statements that actually sound sharp due to their swift, yet abrupt division. Here is the text, divided according to its disjunctive accents:

Text	Accent	Pause Length	Literal Rendering
קוֹל	<i>yetiv</i>	short	Listen.
יוֹם יְהוָה	<i>zaqef</i>	medium	Day of YHWH.
בְּרֹחַ צֶרֶחַ	<i>tifḥa</i>	short	Sharp shouting.
שֵׁם גִּבּוֹר	<i>silluq</i>	long	There warrior.

These words are intentionally arranged to help the listener hear in their imagination the words of that alternate world and perhaps even see, in their mind's eye, a finger pointing toward an oncoming enemy warrior. Yet there is no hint of this structure or its rhetoric in other English translations.

**Anaphora** is a repetition of the same word at the start of successive sentences or phrases. It is utilized many times throughout Zeph to build intensity. Translations are often able to capture it. Note, for example, 3:8:

Because my intent [is]  
*for a mustering* (לְאַסֵּף) of nations;  
*for a gathering* (לְקַבֵּץ) of kingdoms;  
*for pouring* (לְשַׁפֵּךְ) over them my scourge—

Here we find the thrice-repeated form of *lamed* + infinitive, which we mimic by using the same type of rendering in each instance. With each repetition, the statement intensifies, culminating in the final iteration “for pouring over them my scourge,” which is further identified, through an ABC / BC couplet (see section C1), with YHWH's “fuming rage.” Notice the movement in these statements: what begins as an act of earthly nations is transformed into the scourge or rage of Israel's god against “them,” which must be those to whom these oracles were delivered and/or for whom they were written. Yet this structure is ignored by some translations and its impact is lost:

for my determination is to gather the nations,  
 that I may assemble the kingdoms,  
 to pour upon them mine indignation (KJV)  
 to gather nations together  
 and assemble kingdoms,  
 so I can pour out my fury on them (NET)

*the heavenly fire*



**Analogies** may also be used to create rhetorical effect. By likening a subject or object to something else in the world, that subject or object takes on a new characteristic or identity. Note the analogy in Zeph 1:16 and 3:6:

A day of horn-blast and battle-cry  
against the fortified cities  
and against the “grandiose corners.”

I eradicated nations.  
Reduced to ash are their “corners.”  
I devastated their roads.  
Vacant [is the] wayfarer.

As described in section A3, “corners” refers to people of prominence, authority, and/or power. In the first instance, “corner” is linked to “fortified cities” and characterized as “high/elevated.” A towering wall or the top of a massive battlement looms in one's mind. And most translations treat it that way. But this is more than description and far more than metaphor. It is rebuke! The word “high/elevated” (גבה) also means “proud/arrogant/haughty.” The reason for the instruments of war to sound “against” them is thus explained by means of the analogy: like high corners, they have elevated themselves against the way of their god. Thus, YHWH will “lay siege” to their positions of power and influence (1:17).

In the second instance, “corner” is one part of a contrasting parallelism with “wayfarer.” Whereas “corner” refers to a person of stability and permanence, “wayfarer” refers to a person of transience and transition. These two expressions are used to create a **merism** (a pair of contrasting words that express totality), which signifies that *no one* will be left—just as the use of “nations” (the inner realm) and “roads” (the outer realm) point to the wiping away of all human civilization. The rhetoric is thick in verses like these, but English translations that reduce “corner” to nothing more than a “tower” or “wall” have all but erased the message.

**Anastrophe** is an inversion of normal word-order used to create emphasis. Since Biblical Hebrew typically contains a V-S-O word-order, one of the most common forms of anastrophe is the “fronting” of the subject, thereby creating an S-V-O or S-O-V word-order. Zephaniah is prone to using this technique in his oracles of execration against surrounding nations and/or city-states. Such language draws attention to those places as particularly worthy of judgment:

Gaza—a ghost-town will she be (2:4)  
Moab—the same as Sodom, will she be (2:9)  
You Nubians—those run through [with] my sword [are] they. (2:12)

Unlike Hebrew, English is an S-V-O language. Thus, there is nothing emphatic about translating the above verses so that “Gaza,” “Moab,” and “Nubians” begin a sentence. Most English translations don't seem to care if they bury highly marked expressions within ordinary English structures. Something else must be done if a translation is to remain faithful to the emphatic nature of the text. Hopefully, our attempt to isolate the subject with an em dash and then restate it brings out that emphasis. For more on Rhetorical Criticism, see Phyllis Tribble's *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah*.

Because form and content are inseparable, another way to maintain accuracy in translation is by understanding the literary structures and devices of the text. In 1899, Bullinger wrote that “an unusual form (*figura*) is never used except to add force to the truth conveyed, emphasis to the statement of it, and depth to the meaning of it. When we apply this science then to God's words and to Divine truths, we see at once that . . . it lies at the very root of all translation; and it is the key to true interpretation.”<sup>14</sup> Zephaniah, like most other prophetic texts, was composed almost entirely in a form best termed “poetic.” What follows, therefore, is a description of Biblical Hebrew poetry.

### (C) Biblical Hebrew Poetry

#### 1. Meter and Parallelism

At first, under the influence of Greek and Latin poetry, scholars were determined to find **meter** in Biblical Hebrew poetry. And when that meter proved incoherent—as was so often the case—they were tempted to change or ignore parts of the text that did not align with the metrical structure they created. Few scholars seemed intent on asking whether the forms of poetry common to Greek and Latin (or even English) were applicable to Biblical Hebrew. Despite numerous commentaries and translations that, even today, deal with Biblical Hebrew poetry in terms of meter, we now know that, like virtually all other ancient Semitic languages, it has none. Though stress and accent can create rhythm and sound patterns, these are not continuous, regular, or controlling.

In 1753, Robert Lowth identified **parallelism** as the chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry. He defined parallelism as repetition or restatement and classified it according to three primary types: synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic. Lowth's rudimentary concepts were expanded by James Kugel, who saw parallelism as a method for creating virtually limitless types of correspondence between parts and noted that Hebrew poetry involved more than mere parallelism; a compression of language as well as a high density of word-pairs (like “listen” and “hear”) were important characteristics as well. Here is one type of parallelism, which Lowth would have called “synonymous” and Kugel “seconding”:

She listens not to the message,  
                    receives not correction.  
—Zeph 3:2a

In that type of parallelism, the second line restates the content of the first using slightly different terminology in order to further define, limit, or expand upon its meaning. The most common type of ancient Semitic parallelism is the ABC / BC couplet, where the initial verb (slot A) governs the phrases in both lines. For example:

I have heard Moab's slur  
                    and the Ammonites' offense—  
—Zeph 2:8a

In this case, the conjunction carries on the sense of the previous verb or stands in for it. One could replace it with a repetition of the verb and the meaning would not change. Sometimes the conjunction is

<sup>14</sup> Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated*. New York: E. & J. B. Young & Co., 1898, p. vi.

not used, but the form remains. Zeph 3:16 provides an example that was clearly identified by some early English translations with only a nascent understanding of Hebrew poetry, yet has since been lost in many modern translations:

it will be said to Jerusalem, “Have no fear!”,  
[to] Zion, “Don't lose your grip!”

In that instance, it is not just the verb that is elided in the second phrase, but also its helping particle:  $\text{ל} + \text{אמר}$  (to say to). Because this pattern is so common in ancient Semitic poetry, its absence is unremarkable. Yet when translations don't recognize it, they destroy the structure and throw the rest of the oracle into confusion. No longer do we have two neat little sayings standing in parallel, but one long, continuous statement—running to the end of v. 17—that, absurdly, is *all* going to be said to her. And the second half of the oracle, which tells Judahites *why* they can have faith in such future statements (because YHWH will prove himself a “delivering warrior”), becomes nothing more than a declaration of a fact that Jerusalem already experiences in that future time (and is, therefore, as pointless then as it is before that time when YHWH isn't yet ready to deliver them). No wonder so many have read this exciting and jubilant oracle in English translation, but forgotten it as soon as their eye left the page. By abandoning the poetic structure (made evident even by the Masoretic accentuation), it has lost all power and substance. For more on Hebrew parallelism, see Adele Berlin's *The Dynamics of Biblical Hebrew Parallelism*.

## 2. Grammatical Alternation

Beginning in the late 1900s, a new generation of scholars emerged who were intent on understanding the poetic nature of the Hebrew texts on their own terms. Such investigations yielded an explosion of new information. Thanks to them, we now know that Biblical Hebrew poetry involves patterns of **grammatical alternation**—where the gender, number, person, or aspect may shift from one line or colon to another. That shift does not provide new information. Neither does it have semantic significance. Its purpose is to produce dramatic effect. Zeph 2:7 provides one example: “In place of *them* (עליהם), will they graze.” Many commentators and translators get hung up on the masculine plural “them” because there is no masculine plural antecedent. The previous subject was a feminine singular (she), thus many assume it must be some kind of textual error. Some argue for a text that reads על-הים (by/along the sea) instead of עליהם as in the following:

By the sea shall they pasture (NAB)  
By the sea they will graze (NET)  
They will pasture . . . by the sea (REB)

Kselman proposed reading עליהם as עֲלֵיהֶם from עולֵה (to suckle), meaning “their infants.”<sup>15</sup> That interpretation was favored by Smith in his volume in the Word Bible Commentary series.<sup>16</sup> Other

15 John S. Kselman, “A Note on Jer 49,20 and Ze 2,6-7,” *CBQ* 32.4 (1970): 579-81. He rendered it “their nurslings.”

16 Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*. WBC32. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1984. He rendered it “their young.”

translations alter or eliminate the suffix to create a relative clause and/or point to a particular place. Thus, HCSB and NJB render **עליהם** as “there.” RSV, ESV, and NRSV render it “on which.” NASB says “on it.” NJPST says “on these.” Geneva and KJV say “thereupon.” All of those renderings depart radically from the text. But alternation in both number and gender is a common characteristic of ancient Semitic poetry. There is nothing odd here and certainly no reason for either omission of the pronoun or alteration of it (especially since **עליהם** is attested in MurXII). Zeph 3:16 provides an example of grammatical alternation typical of Hebrew poetry:

On that day,

it will be said to Jerusalem, “*Have no fear* (אל-תיראי)!”

[to] Zion, “*Don't lose* (אל-ירפו) your grip!”

The first verb is a second-person, feminine singular imperative (you, feminine one, do not fear). The second is a masculine plural imperfect (they, the masculine ones, will not lose). Yet the shift in number, person, and form does not indicate a change in the sense of the verb. Imperfects can and often do function as commands. Structurally, it is evident that the imperfect occupies the same place as the former imperative: it is parallel to the previous command, it follows the same negative particle, and it fills the same contextual space created by the verbal statement “it will be said to X.” English translations implicitly recognize this reality, which is why none of them translate the imperfect as a third-person plural (they will). Yet, quite incoherently, virtually all of them indicate a shift in verbal form from imperative to imperfect by rendering the imperfect with the phrase “do not let” or “let not” (NAB is one of the few exceptions).

### 3. Sound-Plays and Word-Plays

At the start of the second millennium, Paul Raabe was still pleading with translators to produce translations that mimicked the sound qualities of the source text:

“In cases where the biblical writer played with sound in a particularly striking way, where the sound is of equal value and importance as the sense, translators should translate for sound. Where the biblical writer intentionally chose a word or phrase for its sound as much as for its sense, something of the sound play deserves to be communicated to the reader of the English translation.”<sup>17</sup>

THF breaks new ground by mimicking the actual qualities of sound created by sound-plays and word-plays that make Biblical Hebrew so vibrant and invest the text with so much meaning.<sup>18</sup> One of the

17 Paul R. Raabe, “Translating for Sound,” *BT* 51.2 (2000): 202.

18 It should be noted that any discernment of sound patterns based on the Masoretic (Tiberian) system of vocalization faces a number of formidable obstacles. Arthur Keefer (“Phonological Patterns in the Hebrew Bible: A Century of Studies in Sound”) provides a helpful discussion of the most pertinent. We summarize it as follows: (1) The Masoretic pronunciation differs from more ancient pronunciations, (2) the texts of the HB were written over a long period of time and, thus, reflect different stages in the language's development, (3) by pointing their texts uniformly, the Masoretes smoothed over and/or erased many dialectical and developmental distinctions, (4) due to the variety of vocalization traditions, it is difficult to tell precisely how any particular text would have sounded, (5) the same consonants can sometimes have different pronunciations, (6) there is a

most common word-plays is **root-play**, where two or more words are selected that share the same root, resulting in both phonological and semantic coherence. Root-play creates meaningful connections between different parts of the poem and is a common feature of Hebrew poetry, yet English translations typically ignore it, which results in significantly less meaningful and equivalent renderings. The primary thematic root in Zeph, which is used to define its message(s) and unite the text together, is קרב (see section A3). In the first chapter, it indicates temporal closeness (soon).

Hush before Sovereign YHWH  
because *presently* (קרוב) [is] YHWH's day!  
—Zeph 1:7a

*Presently* (קרוב) [is] the great day of YHWH!  
*Presently!* (קרוב) Yes, so very soon!  
—Zeph 1:14a

In v. 14, קרוב is fronted twice to produce emphasis and immanency (see “anastrophe” in section B4). By the way the text is rendered in most translations, it is evident that such emphatic constructions play no part in their rendering. In the third chapter, the root is used for both spatial and relational closeness:

In YHWH, she trusts not,  
before her god, *is not present* (לא קרבה).  
—Zeph 3:2b

Her princes [are] *in her presence* (בקרבה)  
lions roaring—  
—Zeph 3:3a

[What is] right [is] *present to her* (בקרבה):  
“One must not do wrong!”  
—Zeph 3:5a

because I will then remove *from your presence* (מקרבך)  
the champions of your infamy  
—Zeph 3:11ab

---

question as to whether the intentionality or unintentionality of a sound pattern is important or whether it is even possible to discern between them, and (7) there is always the danger of identifying insignificant sound patterns due to one's zeal in locating them. Despite these difficulties, we agree with most interpreters that a rather close approximation of the sound is possible—especially when it comes to the consonants. We find that there is greater certainty of a sound pattern where and when such a pattern recurs. And instead of presuming that what we find in the text is what the author or authors intended, our goal is simply to represent a text that exists—a text containing ancient consonants, young vowels, and a localized and homogenized reading tradition.

“. . . I will cause to remain *in your presence* (בקר־בך)  
[the] people afflicted and powerless.”  
—Zeph 3:12a

Verse 2 uses the thematic root to describe the relationship of the city towards its god: she has no interest in “approaching” YHWH to hear his words. Verse 3 uses it to describe how the city's rulers relate to her: they are predatory animals “within her.” Verse 5 describes YHWH's relationship with the city: despite her unwillingness to draw near, YHWH's demand is continually “present to her.” Verse 11 states that those who supported her corruption will be removed “from her presence.” Verse 12 identifies the people who will remain “within her.” By vv. 15 and 17, Israel's state and relation to YHWH are reversed.

Root-play may occur in the same colon as in 1:8 (and all *those garbed* [in] others' *garb*) or 2:1 (*creep* and *crawl*, you nation uneager). It may also span several cola as in the following verses:

In her midst *will repose* (ורבצו) packs  
of every creature of the nation. . . .  
How can it be that she turned to ruin—  
[to] *a reposal* (מרבץ) for [wild] creatures?  
—Zeph 3:14aa, 15ba

“*I will cause to remain* (והשארתי) in your presence  
[the] people afflicted and powerless.”  
They will seek the protection of YHWH's nature—  
*the remnant* (שארית) of Israel.  
—Zeph 3:12-13a

Over a century ago, Casanowicz made special mention of Zeph 1:15. He used it as an example of the Hebrew Bible's most “vivid and impassioned passages, in which the whirl of similar sound is meant to reflect the inner excitement and impress the hearer with the certainty and magnitude of an event or threatened calamity.”<sup>19</sup> It begins thusly:

A day of fury [is] that day.  
A day of *stress* (צרה) and *distress* (מצוקה).  
A day of *ruin* (שאה) and *ruination* (משואה).

Numerous things occur in the verse to create such a whirl. There is anaphora in the repetition of the phrase “a day of” (see section B4). The number of iterations may also create significance (see section C4). There is root-play in the use of שאה and משואה, which we mimic with our renderings “ruin” and “ruination.” There is also **assonance**—the repetition of the same sounds within closely arranged yet unrelated words.<sup>20</sup> צרה and מצוקה have different roots and meanings, but share many of the same

19 Immanuel M. Casanowicz, “Paronomasia in the Old Testament,” *JBL* 12.2 (1893): 120-21.

20 In a scholastic field still striving to define its terminology, we do not mean for our definitions to ignore or

sounds. Those sounds connect the words together so that they share their meaning and increase their impact. We mimic that with “stress” and “distress.”

Zephaniah 1:2 and 2:14 provide more examples of assonance:

1:2: I *intend* to utterly *end* (אֶסֶף אֶסֶף) all

2:14: I am *about* to *thin out* her city (אֶרְזֶה עֲרֵהָ)

Sometimes the use of assonance spans several cola (see “offense” and “launched an offensive” in 2:8). In all such instances, the words sound extremely similar to each other even though they are dissimilar in root, grammatical form, and syntactic function (see Translation Notes for more). Few, however, are the translations that care as much about word-choice as did the composers or scribal artisans of the Hebrew texts. **Alliteration** is similar to assonance in that one or two particular sounds are shared between words. With alliteration, however, the point is not that words should be similar, but that the same sound should be repeated. Note the following:

*ûbānû bātîm* — though they **raise** **residences** (1:13)

*we’ašqelôn lišmāmâ* — while **Ashkelon** [is turned] to **ashes** (2:4)

*we’eqrôn tē’āqēr* — while **Ekron** is **excised** (2:4)

*mor’â wenig’ālâ* — She is **defiant** and **defiled** (3:1)

*šāreyhā beqirbāh* — Her **princes** [are] in her **presence** (3:3)

*hiškîmû hišhîû* — a **continuation** of **contamination** they made (3:7)

*lō’-tîr’î rā’ ôd* — You will never **fear** [such] **severity** again (3:15)

In the phrases above, words were chosen specifically for the way they repeat the sound in the other words around them. Such sound-plays are ubiquitous, yet most translations never capture them. One may not be able to represent the precise sounds that were emphasized in the Hebrew text, but a translation that tries to create its own phonetic and semantic coherence in accord with the source text is one that takes textual fidelity seriously.

Consider another instance of sound-play: “Yes, *Gaza* (עֲזָה)—a *ghost-town* (עֲזוּבָה) will she be.” This phrase from Zeph 2:4 contains an example of **paronomasia**. Paronomasia occurs when a word that sounds like a person, place, or thing is placed next to the thing it sounds like in order to create an association between them that does not otherwise exist. Readers might confuse this with etymology (the attempt to explain the origin of some one or some thing) or even etymology (the explanation of a word or name’s origin). But there is nothing about Gaza, its origin, or its name that has anything to do with an *עֲזוּבָה*. They simply sound similar. By placing the two together, a link is created between them by means of the sound. The purpose may be to commemorate a notable event, teach an important lesson, or, as in v. 4, imply that Gaza’s judgment is more than retributive justice—it is a re-alignment of Gaza’s current condition with its own inherent nature. Translations may fail at providing the same impact communicated by the Hebrew, but to treat the text as nothing more than descriptive (Gaza will be an abandoned place) is a greater failure. When used to shock, disturb, or amuse, this device may also be called a “pun.”

---

replace others. We seek simple working terms and definitions that contribute to an understanding of the kinds of things we find in the text. For those who wish to further define or refine the terms and/or their application, we laud the effort, but do not wish to expend the time here.

Verse 4 provides an example of a **recursive pun**, where the second part of a statement introduces something that provides an entertaining spin on what came before: “[As for] Oustville (Ashdod)—in half a day will they eject her.” You don’t see these word-plays coming until the punchline. The name “Ashdod” doesn’t mean anything like “Oustville.” Modern scholars and lexicons are probably right that the root is אשד even though some suggest שדד.<sup>21</sup> However, when Zeph’s audience heard גרש, which means “to drive out,” mentioned alongside Ashdod, the verb שדד, which also means “to drive out,”<sup>22</sup> would be conjured up from Ashdod’s consonants (אשדד). In this manner, regardless of the actual grammatical and semantic background of the name, Ashdod takes on the meaning “Ousted One.” To represent this word-play in English, we render Ashdod as “Oustville,” yet provide the name itself in parentheses so that people will know of what place “Oustville” refers. To do nothing more than name the city (as do most English translations) is to lose a major part of what the text was crafted to convey.

**Antanaclasis** is different from root-play, alliteration, and assonance in that the same word or root is reused, but not to restate the same sounds or ideas. Rather, the point is to play with the semantic range of a word so that it means one thing in the first instance, but something different in the next. Bullinger called this “word-clashing.”<sup>23</sup> Note the example from Zeph 1:5b:

And those who *swear* [allegiance] (הנשבעים) to YHWH,  
yet *swear* [an oath] (הנשבעים) by their Molek.

This type of word-play creates nuance and movement. In the first case, the meaning of שבע is “to swear allegiance” or “ally with.” In the second, שבע means “to swear an oath” or “make a solemn promise.” To render both verbs the same (as do most English translations) would be to miss a great deal of the statement’s meaning and force.

Because Biblical Hebrew is not a fully inflected language, end-rhymes are uncommon. When, therefore, one does occur, there is a good chance it was intentionally crafted. One example comes from 1:13: “Plunder will become of their *stashes*, their residences [turned to] *ashes*!” In that instance, each section of the statement ends with a prepositional *lamed* prefixed to a feminine noun with similar consonants (למשסה and לשממה). By couching a statement in rhyme, the writer or speaker creates a more memorable statement and imprints the vision of divine judgment on the audience’s mind. By reordering the phrases (see Translation Notes), THF mimics the rhyme and assonance of the Hebrew.

#### 4. Other Poetic Devices

**Simile** and **metaphor** are ubiquitous in prophetic texts.<sup>24</sup> An example of a lesser known poetic device is **synecdoche**—a reference to the whole by naming one or more of its parts. An example occurs in Zeph 3:9: “Yet I will then endow to pagans *a lip* (שפה) purified.” To purify one’s lip or lips means to be cleansed from sin or corruption and transformed for divine service. In Isaiah’s call vision, for instance,

21 Such as Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Chaldäisches Handwörterbuch: über das Alte Testament*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1883, p. 776.

22 For the meaning “drive out,” see Translation Notes.

23 Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, p. 286.

24 Since simile and metaphor are well-known, we decided to skip over a discussion of them here.



the prophet laments that his lips are impure when he finds himself standing before YHWH's throne. To remedy this, a messenger takes a glowing coal from the altar and touches it to his lips. This ritual symbolizes the removal of his sin (see Isa 6:5-7). Likewise, in ancient Mesopotamia, there was a ritual called *mīs pî*, meaning “the cleansing of the mouth.” This ritual was usually performed on the cult statue in a temple. The lips of the statue were washed, which purified the whole statue from contamination and enabled a deity to inhabit it. Contrary, therefore, to many translations, one should not render the word “lip” in Zeph 3:9 as “speech” or “language.” This is not about transforming what someone says or how they say it; rather, it is about the conversion of pagan peoples. The use of the singular word “lip,” which might otherwise denote speech or language, represents the transformation of one's entire being.

An example of **metonymy**—when something is named due to its association with something else—occurs in 1:16: “A day of *horn-blast* (שׁוֹפָר) and battle-cry.” Literally, שׁוֹפָר refers to a ram's horn (see section B1). In some instances, however, it refers to the sound of the horn instead. Verse 16 is one such case. It is not the instrument itself, but its sound that will blast out against the fortified cities. To translate it as nothing more than an instrument (as in KJV, NASB, ASV, etc.) misses the point.

Repetition is a powerful instrument. It can hold a text together, bring something into focus, or expand on it with greater detail. The number of repetitions can also invest special meaning. Seven iterations will heighten a thing to its greatest degree. In Ps 119:164, for instance, to show the extent of his reverence and delight, the psalmist says that he praises YHWH seven times a day. In Gen 33:3, Jacob bows to his brother seven times to indicate the fullness of his submission and abasement. In Josh 6:4, seven priests blowing on seven ram's horns march around Jericho seven times on the seventh day. Since no greater symbolic assault can be achieved, the walls of Jericho collapse. Such numerical symbolism isn't just a phenomenon of Israelite thought, but of the whole ancient NE. Watson notes how, in one stanza of the Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.3.iii:20-5), the term *rgm* (meaning “word/message/story”) and its synonyms occur seven times,<sup>25</sup> which authenticates the transcendent and unfathomable nature of the message. Likewise, in the Akkadian wisdom text entitled *The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* (COS 1.153), the negative particle *ul* (not) occurs seven times to indicate the totality of divine indifference to the righteous one's plight.<sup>26</sup> In Zeph 1:15-16, the word “day” or “the day,” an abbreviated reference to YHWH's day (see section A3), is repeated seven times, which brings the list of descriptions to a horrifically complete and climactic end.

**Hendiadys** is the use of two nouns or verbs, often synonymous and usually placed side-by-side with a conjunction between, to emphasize a more emphatic idea. A common English example would be “sick and tired.” Such a statement doesn't mean that one is both sick and tired. It means that one is *thoroughly sick* (has reached the utmost limit of what they are willing to endure). One of the words functions adverbially or adjectivally to provide emphasis for the other. In Biblical Hebrew, hendiadys is also used to create a superlative sense as in Zeph 1:15:

A day of *blackest dark* (חֹשֶׁךְ וְאִפְלָה).

A day of *murkiest haze* (עָנָן וְעִרְפָּל).

25 Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*. JSOTSS 26. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986, pp. 288-9.

26 Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, p. 289.

Literally, חשך ואפלה is “dark and blackness” and ענן וערפל is “cloud and murkiness.” Most translations render the phrases in such a way. Yet the point is not to say that the day is both “black and dark” or “cloudy and murky”; such statements are clearly redundant and add nothing to the description. Rather, by appending synonymous words together with a conjunction, two superlative statements are created. That emphasis is lost when the text is treated as nothing more than the sum of its parts. In rare cases, where a Hebrew expression in hendiadys matches an English one, there is good reason to reproduce the device. Thus, the phrase שמחי ועליי in Zeph 3:14, which literally says “rejoice and exult,” but more properly means “joyfully exclaim,” has an almost exact parallel in the English expression “whoop and holler.” Therefore, THF reproduces the hendiadys in that place. For more on Biblical Hebrew poetry, see Wilfred G. E. Watson's *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*.

## (D) Understanding Gender

### 1. Grammatical

Unlike English, Hebrew is gender-inflected. The purpose of gender inflection is to show the relationship between grammatical units (syntax). Any correspondence between grammatical gender and the actual gender of a person or creature is usually coincidental. The word “father,” for instance, is an unmarked masculine (אב), whereas “fathers” is a marked feminine (אבות). If “fathers” had a masculine plural form, it would be אבים. Since grammatical gender does not necessarily reflect real-world gender, the feminine ending on “fathers” is unremarkable. To complicate matters, a verb’s gender may conflict with its subject’s. As a rule, masculine gendered terms receive preferential treatment whether the text means to say something about the gender of its subjects or not. It is important, therefore, to treat gender as nothing but an indicator of syntax when that is the case, but to mimic the gender of the language when and where it is semantically significant. “Formally equivalent” and “paraphrase” translations may follow the former, but ignore the latter. “Literal” translations may follow the latter, but ignore the former.

Two examples of **grammatical gender** can be seen in Zeph 1:3 and 2:11. In the first instance, where Zeph is proclaiming the dark and disastrous day of YHWH, the word אדם appears, which has both a specific and generic referent (the first man “Adam” and a “person” or “people,” respectively). The fact that אדם is masculine shows the grammatical preference for masculine-gendered words. As evident from the categories provided by the text (birds of the sky, fish of the sea, and beasts), אדם describes a category of created being. It does not tell us anything about gender. YHWH is threatening to destroy all people, not just males. The most accurate rendering, therefore, is something like “humanity” or “humankind,” which avoids gender associations that are irrelevant to the meaning and intent of the text.

In the second instance (2:11), the text announces an event in which entire nations will be wiped out. Verse 9 uses the imagery of a lifeless wasteland to emphasize the desolation. Verse 11 states that divine authorities will be diminished. Obviously, this judgment transcends both nationality and gender. Thus, when 2:11 says וישתחוּ-לוֹ אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ (they will bow down to him, a man from his place), אִישׁ does not refer to a “man” and the masculine plural verb does not have “men” as its subject. The masculine form is grammatically preferred for representing a group regardless of the gender of those within it and אִישׁ has a distributive sense that applies to anyone (see JM §147d). The KJV (men shall worship him,

every one from his place) is correct insofar as it represents שֶׁאֶחָד as “one” (“person,” “human,” or “humanity” would also be appropriate), but misses the point when it renders the subject of the masculine plural verb as “men.” It is more than just men who will worship YHWH when he overthrows the earth! NKJV was right to correct it: “*People* shall worship Him.”

## 2. Semantic

In some cases, the gender reflected by the grammar actually serves a real semantic purpose. Throughout Zeph, for instance, nations and/or city-states are personified as a woman. In those cases, the feminine gender should be reflected by English translations. In numerous places, however, modern translations give no indication that a feminine figure is portrayed. Compare, for example, the rendering of Zeph 2:4 in THF with that of a translation representative of the vast majority:

THF	NASB
Yes, Gaza—a ghost-town will <b>she</b> be,	For Gaza will be abandoned
while Ashkelon [is turned] to ashes.	And Ashkelon a desolation;
[As for] Oustville (Ashdod)—	Ahdod
in half a day will they eject <b>her</b> ,	will be driven out at noon
while Ekron is excised.	And Ekron will be uprooted.

In this verse, four Philistine city-states are personified as a woman. The noun describing Gaza as “abandoned” (עֲזוּבָה) as well as that depicting Ashkelon as “desolate” (שְׁמִמָּה) are both feminine. The verbs for which Gaza and Ekron are both subjects (תִּהְיֶה and תִּעֲקַר, respectively) are also feminine. Ashdod is directly referred to as “her” (יְגֵרָשׁוּהָ). Since, as a rule, the masculine gender is preferred grammatically—even when speaking about a group of women—this verse stands out prominently for its use of feminine words and word-forms. As noted by Zalcman (“Ambiguity and Assonance at Zephaniah II 4”), the four cities are provocatively envisioned as socially stigmatized women—one who is “abandoned” by her husband, one “deserted” before marriage, one “driven away” (i.e., divorced), and one “barren.” One might be hard-pressed to understand the association between the conditions of the city-states and the stigmas of married or divorced women in the ancient world without a keen knowledge of Hebrew. Yet a translation that makes some gender references explicit would, at the very least, make a reader aware that feminine personification was a possibility. By reading v. 4 in virtually all English translations, one would have no clue of the personification that is so vital to its meaning. For more on gender in Biblical Hebrew, see Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor's *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*.

## (E) Format

### 1. Lineation

**Lineation** is the arrangement of the lines of a text according to content and/or strophes. Although, by the time of the Masoretes, many poetic texts were written in a special format, it was not so

in antiquity. The lineation herein is an interpretative measure meant to differentiate poetry from prose and to better elucidate textual content. It usually follows the accentual divisions used by the medieval synagogues and documented by the Masoretes. When it does not (the accents were placed in the texts to aid in oral recitation, not to demarcate distinct units of poetry or narrative), the reason(s) for that deviation are usually indicated in the Translation Notes.

## 2. Separation

Unlike narrative, which is grouped into paragraphs, prophetic texts are grouped into oracles. When individual oracles contain a clear beginning and end, the text is separated so that the oracles may be read on their own. Oracles may open with imperatives (like “Creep and crawl” in 2:1 and “Rejoice” in 3:14) or exclamatives (like “Hush” in 1:7). What follows are stock words and phrases that open prophetic oracles in Zeph:

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא (When that day comes)

וְהָיָה בְּעֵת הַהִיא (When that time comes)

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא (On that day)

הוּי (Oh [no]!)

It is far more difficult to identify the end of an oracle. It may use *inclusio*—the repetition of a word, phrase, or idea at the start and end of a textual unit—to provide a conceptual framework for the content inside. One example comes from the Oracle of Execration Against Assyria, which begins (2:13) with the motion of a hand in judgment (Now let his hand swing against [the] north and wipe out Ashur) and ends (2:15) with the motion of a hand in response to that judgment (Anyone who passes by her will hiss—will shake their fist). Another example comes from the Oracle of Execration Against Moab and Ammon, which both begins (2:8) and ends (2:10) with a reference to the “slur” and “offensive” of those people-groups.

Scribes often inserted content from other places at the termination of an oracle since it was easy to do so at that junction and the insertion would not interfere with the sanctity of the original text. This is evident in the Judgment Oracle Against Elites, which ends (1:13) with a quotation from Amos 5:11; at the end of the Execration Oracle Against Assyria (2:15), which quotes from Isa 47:8 and, perhaps, Jeremiah (see Translation Notes); and in the Oracle of Restoration for Pagans, which ends (3:10) with an augmented quotation from Isa 18:1.

In order to not interrupt the text's arrangement, rubrics or explanations are not provided. Instead, THF lets the text flow freely from oracle to oracle. Chapter indications are the only exception to this rule.

## 3. Versification

**Versification** refers to the division of the text into verses. That division is ancient, but it was oral long before it was written. The earliest Rabbinic literature utilized verse division. By the time of the Masoretes, verse divisions were already standardized. Copiers counted the verses within a text in order to guarantee that the text was copied precisely. THF follows the verse division as documented in the Hebrew manuscripts. Most translations instead follow the verse divisions created by Christians for the Vulgate half a millennium (or more) later.

*the heavenly fire*

#### 4. Italics

Italics are used primarily to identify and separate **superscriptions** from the body of a text. They are used secondarily to indicate **quotations** within a text. And, thirdly, they may be used, in rare instances, to highlight words or phrases with special significance (as explained in Translation Notes).

#### 5. Parentheses

Parentheses are used primarily to indicate where an **editorial insertion** has taken place within the body of a text. This is done for literary purposes. No judgment is intended as to the value or authority of the original or secondary portions. Sometimes our parentheses correspond to marks made by the scribes themselves in their manuscripts. Other times, it is based on our own textual analysis. See section B3 for a description of the methodology used to locate insertions and see Translation Notes for the evidence and arguments in each particular case. Occasionally, parentheses are used to further explain something within the text that would otherwise escape the reader.

#### 6. Brackets

Square brackets indicate words that are not present in the Hebrew text itself, but which, nevertheless, are represented by the tone or context of the language, are required by English, or are included for reasons of style. One of the most common uses of square brackets is to accommodate the linking verb or **copula**. In Biblical Hebrew, a noun or phrase is often juxtaposed with another in order to indicate predication; as such, the use of a copula is unnecessary. English, however, requires the verb “to be” in order to signal predication. Thus, it must be inserted.

Another example involves **oaths**. Oaths take the form of a conditional sentence in which a promise or vow is followed by a statement of consequence. In Biblical Hebrew, however, the negative expression is usually elided. Though the curse is not mentioned, it is assumed nonetheless (otherwise the oath would have no force). To express that in another language requires reinserting the elided portion. At other times, the opening of the oath is elided and must be supplied as seen in Zeph 2:9:

Therefore, [by] my life, . . .  
[I swear] that Moab—

The type of discourse is contextualized through the statement “[by] the life of X,” which invokes the name of someone important to stand as a witness of the oath. Instead of using a formal opening and then launching into the content of the oath, however, the opening was elided. If the elided portion is not reinserted in translation, the swearing of an oath may be lost to the reader. English translations are either ignorant of oaths in the Hebrew Bible or purposely choose to ignore them. In Zeph 2:9, most translations ignore the particle **כִּי**, which functions as a complementizer of the elided verb “to swear.” Others mistake it for a statement of certainty as in NET (be certain that) or KJV, NASB, NIV, etc. (surely). Other than THF, SET is the only English translation that both recognizes and represents actual oath statements within the text.

Curly brackets are used in places where there is high probability that a scribe accidentally duplicated part of the text (a common transmission error known as **dittography**). In some instances, where duplication is beyond reasonable doubt, we remove the duplication and mention its presence in Translation Notes.

## 7. Masoretic Notes

Sometimes in the Translation Notes, reference will be made to Masoretic notes that appear in the margins of the Leningrad Codex (or other manuscripts). Usually, these notes indicate that ancient Jewish tradition read (*Qere*) the consonantal text differently than it was written (*Ketiv*). Reasons for different readings include, but are not limited to: a different pronunciation, the existence of a variant, reinterpretation of a passage, or the correction of what was presumed to be a scribal error.

At the end of every text or scroll, the Masoretes kept notes of things such as the total number of verses, the number of sections according to the triennial reading cycle, or the number and types of paragraphs. These are called **Masorah Finalis**. Since each manuscript differs in the way it records that information, THF reproduces the notes at the end of every biblical text according to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. The following notes, for example, appear at the end of Deuteronomy:

Aleppo Codex	Leningrad	Oriental 4445
The total number of verses in this scroll [is] 955.	The total number of verses in this scroll [is] 955.	The total number of verses in this scroll of Moses in Torah [is] 955.
	The total number of verses in Torah [is] 5,845. 8 100 40 5.	All the verses in Torah [equal] 5,845. 8 100 40 5.
	The total number of words in Torah [is] 79,856.	The amount of open sections in Torah [is] 290 and the amount of closed sections in Torah [is] 379.
	The total number of letters in Torah [is] 400,945.	The [section] total [is] 669.

For more on the Masorah, see Page H. Kelly, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford's *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary*.

## Background

Before God's Wrath is Present,  
Present Yourselves Before God

Zephaniah is a herald of a “day of YHWH” quite different than ancient Israelites expected. “YHWH's day” was one of worship, celebration, and the offering of sacrifice. Instead, due to idolatry and injustice, it will be defined by cataclysmic upheaval. The wicked and unjust will become the sacrifice. Prosperous cities and kingdoms will be abandoned by humans and claimed by wild beasts. Even Jerusalem will fall. But those who turn from wrongdoing and seek YHWH may be spared. When YHWH purifies his people of falsehood and arrogance, he will remove their enemies and reverse their state from despair and shame to joy and acclaim. Rejoice, Israel, and join with the gentiles in the worship of YHWH!

### The Threat of Babylon

The superscription places the text during the reign of King Josiah. Since Zephaniah speaks against rampant idolatry and no other reference is made to a king, the text may originate while Josiah was still a child and before he carried out his religious reforms (circa 622 BC). Much of the focus is on Judah's and other nations' destruction by Babylon when Josiah's predecessors ruled. The use of language common to Jeremiah points to that time. Since Ezekiel quotes from and expands on 1:18 and 3:4-5, some portion must come from the late monarchic or early exilic periods. The notion of a remnant, the knowledge of Isaiah 47:8, and the call for hope in a future restoration, all indicates textual expansion near the end of the exile.

### The Prophet

The prophet himself is shrouded in mystery. Though Zephaniah begins with a superscription with one of the longest genealogies of any prophetic text, the prophet is anonymous in the oracles themselves. Some believe the ancestral reference to “Cushi” is a gentile designation referring to Zephaniah's ethnicity (Nubian), which could explain why Nubia is mentioned (2:12), but not Egypt (though oracles against Egypt may not have been preserved). It is possible that, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, he was both prophet and priest. Three others share his name and all of them were priests (2 Chron 6:21; Jer 21:1; Zech 6:14). Though the Masoretes believed that the name came from צִפְנִי (to hide/conceal), the Greek (σοφοντιαν) preserves an older pronunciation consisting of the name of the northern

mountain on which the gods resided (Mount Zaphon). With its theophoric ending, the Hebrew name would mean something like “Mount of Yah” and have strong, sacred connotations. The subversion of cultic celebration and sacrifice also suggests a temple setting. The call to silence in the presence of YHWH, which occurs in 1:7, was probably based on a liturgical call that took place during worship and sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple (see Habakkuk 2:20). Such silence was intended to show honor and reverence toward the deity and express a willingness to hear the prophetic voice. In this case, however, where the text assumes a lack of reverence and unwillingness to heed the deity's words, the silence summoned is, first, the muteness of shock and horror, and last, the vacuous taciturnity of death. Furthermore, the phrase “horn-blast and battle-cry” in 1:16, full of violence and horror, once had positive cultic associations. 2 Samuel 6:15 uses the same words to describe how David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem “among *triumphant shout* and with the *blast of horn*.” And Psalm 47, an “enthronement” hymn that may have been used by pilgrims on the journey to the Jerusalem temple for the New Year's festival, uses the same words to celebrate how “Elohim ascends among *hurrah*; YHWH, with *horn-blast*, [goes up]” (v. 6). In Zephaniah, the day of YHWH's ascension is one of him “rising up for [the] catch” (3:8) with the powerful and elite Israelites who perpetrated injustice and idolatry as his prey.

### Form & Genre

Zephaniah is a *prophetic text*—not a *book*, which is the product of a long history of social, cultural, economic, and technological developments originating in Greece after most biblical texts had already been written. Prophetic texts are collections of individual prophetic oracles and/or narratives about a prophet. In the ancient NE, our only evidence of this kind of collection comes from Israel (though the Balaam Text from Deir Alla, on the east of the Jordan, may qualify). They were ordered and arranged at the time they were assembled. Oracles of judgment, oracles of restoration, and oracles of execration were often clumped together. Stories and prophecies with similar words were placed together, or words and phrases were crafted to create continuity between the parts. They might be interpreted through further prophetic statements or with scribal commentary. A superscription was often affixed to identify the prophet whose pronouncements gave impetus to the written text. Within Zephaniah, speakers shift back and forth with few formal indicators. Changes in voice and content provide the primary means of identifying speakers. Similar to other prophetic texts like Jeremiah or Second Isaiah, where dialogue between parties (such as the deity and the prophet) serves



as a major literary and rhetorical device, Zephaniah is composed of pairs of speeches: oracles and/or declarations by the deity followed by explanations and/or declarations by the prophet. Though his division of the text into seven sets of speeches by the deity and the prophet is far too neat and tidy, Paul House successfully showed that Zephaniah takes its formal structure and rhetorical flow from the arrangement of these interchanging units of speech.<sup>27</sup> Oracles of judgment using the rhetoric of a universal overthrow of creation (1:2-6) define the collection. The text then moves into several declarations against Judah (1:7-2:3) followed by execrations of surrounding nations (2:4-15). A final lament is left for Judah (3:1-5) before the judgment oracles close with the pronouncement of Judah's inevitable end (3:6-8). Oracles of restoration are appended (3:9-20), which speak of the conversion of both Israelite and gentile, look forward to the coming redemption of Judah, and rejoice in the presence of YHWH, the conquering warrior-king. The purpose of the textual arrangement would seem to be both theological and liturgical. It offers hope for those who are suffering and afflicted that divine judgment will not continue forever. It expresses Judah's judgment in cultic terms as a sacrifice that brings appeasement. It celebrates, in hymnic melody, a future day when the reign of God is consummated through Israel's restoration, the removal of the wicked, and the honor and praise bestowed on both YHWH and Israel by gentiles. It suggests that the only way to fix Israel's rebellious ways is through inner transformation. It rationalizes historical realities like the dominion and destruction perpetrated by Babylon as a justified consequence of injustice, impiety, violence, arrogance, deception, and rebellion.<sup>28</sup> Within the context of the canon, Herbert Marks calls it "a powerful schema which gives narrative organization to Israel's inherently ambivalent relation to YHWH, a God 'merciful and gracious . . . and [who] will by no means clear the guilty' (Exod 34:6-7)."<sup>29</sup>

27 Paul R. House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*. JSOTSS 69. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988.

28 One of the primary purposes of prophecy according to John Barton, "History and Rhetoric in the Prophets," pages 51-64 in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*. Ed. Martin Warner. Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature. London: Routledge, 1990.

29 Herbert Marks, "The Twelve Prophets," pages 207-33 in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1987.

### The End of Gods

Zephaniah contains what was, and what would be for over a thousand years, a ludicrous prophecy—that “the gods of the earth” would be diminished and replaced by the worship of the god of Israel from every corner of the globe (2:11; 3:9-10). In modern times—especially in Western culture—it is easy to take for granted that most people believe in a single deity, whom they would identify as the god of Israel, and that those who do not are either atheist or agnostic. The ancient world, however, was entirely polytheistic. Ancient societies might believe that one deity reigned supreme over all others, but they could not fathom a world in which there was only one god toward whom all peoples would show obeisance. Ancient history knows of only one major attempt to convert a polytheistic people to the worship of a single god. Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, circa 1350 BC, changed his name to Akhenaten, established a new capital of Egypt, instituted a new religion, destroyed the monuments and images of competing gods like Amon, closed their temples, and attempted to convert his kingdom to the exclusive worship of the Sun-disc, Aten. Yet not even the power and might of Egypt's Pharaoh could sway common religious sentiment. Akhenaten's ambitions were quickly overturned. In ancient Iran, a priest (or wanna-be priest) named Zarathustra began to preach that there was only one god: Ahura Mazda. Zarathustra's preaching was widely rejected, but over time, his ideas were taken up by Magi in Persia and Media and developed into the religion we know today as Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism looked forward to the day that a savior would arise to lead all people to the Spirit of Truth, at which point Ahura Mazda would defeat the Spirit of Evil. None of that would happen, however, until the end of time. The prospect of conversion to a single deity by people of every nationality as their own gods fell into oblivion was preposterous. That Zephaniah could foretell such a day so utterly alien, yet so commonplace today, is a tribute to the power and farsightedness of its prophetic vision.

# Zephaniah



## Chapter 1

## 8

<sup>1</sup> *The oracle of YHWH that came to Zephaniah, son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, during the reign of Josiah, son of Amon, King of Judah.*

<sup>2</sup> “I intend to utterly end all  
over the earth's surface!”

—prophecy of YHWH—

<sup>3</sup> “I intend to end human and beast!

I intend to end the birds of the sky  
and the fish of the sea

and the pitfalls along with the wicked!

I plan to eradicate the earthling  
over the earth's surface!”

—prophecy of YHWH—

<sup>4</sup> “I plan to swing my hand against Judah  
and against the whole populace of Jerusalem.

I plan to eradicate from this place Baal's trace,  
the existence of the [syncretistic] clerics  
among the priests.”

<sup>5</sup> And those who bow on their roofs  
to the celestial host.

And those who swear [allegiance] to YHWH,  
yet swear [an oath] by their Molek.

<sup>6</sup> And those deterred from YHWH's wake—  
that is, they who sought not YHWH  
nor consulted him.

<sup>7</sup> Hush before Sovereign YHWH

because presently [is] YHWH's day!

Because YHWH readied a sacrifice,  
consecrated his guests.

<sup>8</sup> When YHWH's day of sacrifice comes,

“I will rightly set in siege the princes,  
and the royal family,  
and all those garbed [in] others' garb.

<sup>9</sup> I will rightly set in siege every one  
who [flagrantly] crosses the line  
(on that day)—

those who fill their masters' home  
coercively and fraudulently.

<sup>10</sup> When that day comes,”

—prophecy of YHWH—

“Listen!

Clamor from the Fish Gate!

Ululating from the Second [District]!

And a loud crash from the hills!

<sup>11</sup> They ululate—the mortar's populace,  
because destroyed

is the whole tribe of Canaan,

eradicated

are all stacks of silver!

<sup>12</sup> When that time comes,

I will scour Jerusalem with lamps,

rightly set in siege the elites—

those who congeal on their [wine] dregs,

those who think to themselves,

‘YHWH brings neither benefit  
nor detriment.’

<sup>13</sup> Plunder will become of their stashes,  
their residences [turned to] ashes!

*Though they raise residences,*

*they will not move in.*

*Though they plant vineyards,*

*they will not drink their wine.”*

<sup>14</sup> Presently [is] the great day of YHWH!

Presently! Yes, so very soon!

Listen! YHWH's day!

One shouts sharp: “There! A warrior!”

<sup>15</sup> A day of fury [is] that day.

A day of stress and distress.

A day of ruin and ruination.

A day of blackest dark.

A day of murkiest haze.

<sup>16</sup> A day of horn-blast and battle-cry

against the fortified cities

and against the “grandiose corners.”

<sup>17</sup> “I will lay siege against the people

so they move like those without sight!”

because, against YHWH, they sinned.  
 Dumped will be their blood like debris,  
 and their offspring like feces.  
<sup>18</sup> Their silver and their gold combined  
 will not possibly rescue them  
 on the day of YHWH's fury,  
 when, by his fervid fire,  
 the whole land will be consumed.  
 Yes, a consummation quite terrifying  
 he will execute  
 on the whole populace of the land!

## Chapter 2      כ

<sup>1</sup> Creep and crawl, you nation uneager,  
<sup>2</sup> before engendering conviction—  
 [before], like chaff, time passes;  
 so it may not come upon you—  
 the fuming of YHWH's rage;  
 so it may not come upon you—  
 the day of YHWH's rage!  
<sup>3</sup> Seek YHWH!  
 Any [who are] humble [in] the land,  
 whatever his demand, do!  
 Seek [what is] right! Seek humility!  
 Perhaps you will be concealed  
 on the day of YHWH's rage.  
<sup>5</sup> Oh [no]!  
 [You] populaces of the coastal league—  
 nation of the Cut-off-ones (Cretans)—  
 this oracle of YHWH [is] against you:  
 “Canaan, territory of Philistines,  
 I will wipe you out—void of populace!  
<sup>4</sup> Yes, Gaza—a ghost-town will she be,  
 while Ashkelon [is turned] to ashes.  
 [As for] Oustville (Ashdod)—  
 in half a day will they eject her,  
 while Ekron is excised.  
<sup>6</sup> She will become (the coastal league)  
 meadows cut [for] shepherds

and pens [carved for] flocks.”  
<sup>7</sup> ([The] league will be possessed  
 by the remnant of Judah's house.)  
 “In place of them, will they graze.  
 Among Ashkelon's edifices,  
 by evening, will they repose.”  
 (Because their god YHWH will set them right,  
 will turn their tide.)  
<sup>8</sup> “I have heard Moab's slur  
 and the Ammonites' offense—  
 how they slurred my people,  
 launched an offensive against their border.  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore, [by] my life,”  
 —prophecy of YHWH, [Lord] of Legions,  
 God of Israel—  
 “[I swear] that Moab—  
 the same as Sodom, will she be,  
 while the Ammonites [become] like Gomorrah:  
 a perpetual expanse  
 of weed, salt-pit, and ashes.  
 (The remnant of my people  
 will seize what is theirs.  
 Yes, of the rest of the nation,  
 will they become heirs.”)  
<sup>10</sup> This [comes] to them for their insolence  
 since they slurred  
 (launched an offensive against)  
 the people of YHWH, [God] of Legions.  
<sup>11</sup> Terrifying is YHWH's opposition to them!  
 When he has thinned out all earthly majesties, then,  
 wherever one may be, all the regions of the nations  
 will bow to him.  
<sup>12</sup> “Moreover, you Nubians—  
 those run through [with] my sword  
 [are] they.”  
<sup>13</sup> Now let his hand swing against [the] north and  
 wipe out Ashur. Yes, let him turn Nineveh to ashes  
 —[to] desiccation like the wilderness.  
<sup>14</sup> “In her midst will repose packs  
 of every creature of the nation.

Both scops owl and lizard,  
in her [pillar] capitals, will retire.  
Listen! One warbles in the sill!  
Swelter [will pass] through the entryway  
because I am about to thin out her city.”  
<sup>15</sup> *This [is] the championed city;  
she whose settlement is secure;  
she who thought to herself,  
“*No one else but me*”?*  
How can it be that she turned to ruin—  
[to] a reposal for [wild] creatures?  
*Anyone who passes by her will hiss—*  
will shake their fist.

### Chapter 3 א

<sup>1</sup> Oh [no]!  
She is defiant and defiled,  
the city—the oppressor!  
<sup>2</sup> She listens not to the message,  
receives not correction.  
In YHWH, she trusts not,  
before her god, is not present.  
<sup>3</sup> Her princes [are] in her presence  
lions roaring—  
her judges, wolves of evening  
[that] disperse not by the morn.  
<sup>4</sup> Her prophets are shifty—  
men of treachery.  
Her priests desecrate [what is] holy,  
violate YHWH's directive.  
<sup>5</sup> [What is] right [is] present to her:  
“*One must not do wrong!*”  
Morning by morning, his demand emanates  
as a light never-failing,  
yet [the] wrongdoer ignores reproach!  
<sup>6</sup> “I eradicated nations.  
Reduced to ash are their 'corners.'  
I devastated their roads.  
Vacant [is the] wayfarer.  
Destroyed are their cities—  
vacant of person, void of populace.

<sup>7</sup> I thought if you would fear me  
[and] receive correction,  
then her dwelling would not be eradicated  
[by] all whom I rightly set against her.  
Nevertheless, a continuation of contamination  
they made of all their affairs.  
<sup>8</sup> Therefore, wait for me, all of you”  
—prophecy of YHWH—  
“for the day I rise up for [the] catch.  
Because my intent [is]  
for a mustering of nations;  
for a gathering of kingdoms;  
for pouring over them my scourge—  
all my fuming rage;  
when, by my fervid fire,  
the whole land will be consumed.  
<sup>9</sup> Yet I will then endow to pagans a lip purified”  
for collectively invoking YHWH's name;  
for serving him shoulder-to-shoulder.  
<sup>10</sup> “*From across the rivers of Nubia,*  
my supplicants [will come].  
*Lady Libya will convey my offering.*  
<sup>11</sup> On that day, [Lady,]  
you will have no reproach from all the affairs  
[in] which you defied me  
because I will then remove from your presence  
the champions of your infamy  
and you will not continue  
to have contempt any more  
for my sacred mount.  
<sup>12</sup> I will cause to remain in your presence  
[the] people afflicted and powerless.”  
(They will seek the protection  
of YHWH's nature—  
<sup>13</sup> the remnant of Israel.)  
“*They will not do wrong  
and will not speak a lie,  
since in their mouth will not be found  
a tongue of deceit.*”  
(Yes, [it is] they who will graze and repose  
since [the] intimidator has vanished.)

<sup>14</sup> Exclaim, Lady Zion! Shout, [all] Israel!  
Whoop and holler—whole-heartedly,  
Lady Jerusalem!

<sup>15</sup> YHWH dismissed the verdicts [against] you,  
cleared out your foes.

Israel's King, YHWH, [is] in your presence.  
You will never fear [such] severity again.

<sup>16</sup> On that day,  
it will be said to Jerusalem, "Have no fear!",  
[to] Zion, "Don't lose your grip!"

<sup>17</sup> Your god, YHWH, [will be] in your presence  
a delivering warrior  
who delightfully rejoices over you;  
who lovingly schemes;  
who loudly cheers for you.

<sup>18</sup> "Sufferers, [at] the appointed time,  
I will remove from you  
they who were a mark on her of disgrace.

<sup>19</sup> Watch [what] I do to all your violators!  
At that time,

I will deliver the crippled [city].  
Yes, she [who] was scattered, will I rally.  
I will give them acclaim and fame  
whose disgrace [was] throughout the earth.

<sup>20</sup> At that time, I will bring you [all] in,  
and at that time, rally you.

I will, in fact, grant you [all] fame and acclaim  
among all the earthly tribes  
when I turn your tide before your eyes!"

YHWH has spoken.

The total number of  
verses [is]  
53.





## Notes





- 1:1 **oracle** — Literally, “word/thing/matter.” When used in prophetic texts, it becomes a technical term for a prophetic utterance or “oracle.” Thus, **ⲉ** rendered it “the word of prophecy.” NET did likewise (the prophetic message).
- that** — Since the following clause is restrictive (it identifies this as the oracle that came while Josiah was king as opposed to an oracle that might have come at some other date), English grammar requires the use of *that*, not *which*.
- reign** — Literally, “in the days.” When used with reference to a king, this is an idiomatic expression referring to the particular time in which such a person *reigned*, not during which that person *lived*, which is what the usual English translations suggest. Thus, when Esther opens with the statement **ויהי בימי אחשוורוש**, it means “During *the reign* of Xerxes.”
- 1:2 **intend** — The verb **אסף** has the form of a Hiphil jussive. The normal indicative form would be **אסף** (Jer 8:13). If there was purpose behind this word choice (we approach the text as if there was), one should not render the verb as if it were a simple imperfect “I will.” The jussive is typically used to express will or intent. Thus our rendering “I *intend*.” See also the next verse. THF appears to be the only English translation that treats this word according to its precise verbal form.
- utterly end** — The phrase **אסף אסף** is strange because the normal syntactic construction in BH is an infinitive absolute followed by a finite verb of the same root. The infinitive absolute is used to create emphasis for the finite verb. Here, however, we have two different roots. The first is a Qal of **אסף** (to gather/remove) and the second a Hiphil of **סוף** (to end/finish). The same syntactic construction occurs in Jer 8:13 (but with a pronominal suffix). Even though typical grammar is subverted (probably to create poetic assonance), one root is obviously functioning to emphasize the other. So which is primary? One could take the infinitive as the primary root (despite the fact that it is the typical marker of emphasis), in which case we have a meaning like “I will gather completely” (**ⲉ** and Coverdale) or “I will totally remove/take away” (NASB, Rotherham, and Leeser). Some interpret that root in an agricultural sense based on the festival of ingathering (Exod 23:16), which makes use of the same root. Thus Fenton (I will reap). Notice that the language is that of extremely violent destruction. The Hebrew phrase “over the earth's surface” (**מעל פני האדמה**) as used here occurs elsewhere with verbs like “to wipe out” (Gen 6:7), “to exterminate” (Deut 6:15), “to eliminate” (1 Sam 20:15), and “to finish off” (Exod 32:12). These verbs align perfectly with **סוף**, but less so with **אסף**. Thus, we take **סוף** as the primary root, which is the typical function of the finite verb in such constructions. This is supported by **ⲉ**: “With an end, put to an end!” The origin of the rendering “sweep away” (as in RSV, HCSB, NRSV, etc.) appears to be an attempt to introduce ambiguity by refusing to limit the meaning to a single root. To sweep away could mean “to remove” or “to destroy.” Cleverly, the English consonants S-W-P in “sweep” correspond to the Hebrew consonants **ס-ו-פ**. The rendering “consume” (introduced in KJV and followed by others) has no support. The KJV should have followed the Geneva and Bishops' bibles with the rendering “destroy,” which appears in **ⲉ**. Several English translations prefer that sense (LEB, SET, REB, etc.). We mimic the assonance of the phrase with our use of the words “intend” and “end.”

**over the earth's surface** — Literally, “over the surface/face of the earth.” מעל is an emphatic version of על, meaning “above/over/upon.” It does not function as two separate prepositions: מן (from) and על (over). Neither does it function as a simple מן (from) even though most English translations treat it that way here. It could refer to the place where something used to be as in Gen 24:64: “she got down *off of* the camel.” This is reflected in Geneva and KJV (from off). Since the preposition is not being used here to indicate a previous position, however, we stick with its typical rendering. This phrase is repeated in the next verse.

**prophecy of YHWH** — In prophetic texts, the phrase נאם־יהוה (and its longer variants) became a highly marked expression for a prophetic utterance. Therefore, we render it “prophecy of YHWH.” See section A3.

1:3 **the sky** — We prefer a rendering like “sky” or “air” as opposed to “heaven(s)” since the latter has other-worldly connotations that are not intended by the Hebrew.

**the pitfalls** — The way the text is pointed by the Masoretes (הַמְכַשְׁלוֹת), the word means “ruins.” So HCSB and NASB (ruins), ESV (rubble), and WEB (heaps of rubble). Early English translations added a verb to help it make more sense. So Geneva (ruins shall be) and the Bishops' Bible (great ruin shall fall). We repoint it, however, as a feminine plural form of the noun “stumbling-blocks” or “obstacles” (הַמְכַשְׁלוֹת). Our interpretation is supported by א, which uses the same word here as it does in Ezek 3:20 and Isa 57:14 for “stumbling-blocks/obstacles.” Since the idea is that these things actually contribute to the behavior of the wicked (they do more than stand in their way), we render it “pitfalls.” Cathcart and Gordon (*The Targum of the Minor Prophets*) translate it as “snares.” Fenton (vice) and ISV (sin) follow that interpretation loosely. המכשלות could be read as a substantive plural participle in the Hiphil (הַמְכַשְׁלוֹת), but written defectively, meaning “the stumble-makers” (or “those which make the wicked stumble”). The interpretation of this word as “idols” is probably based on that reading and some translations reflect it (NIV and NET). Others emend the text to הכשלתי (I will cause to stumble) as in NRSV (I will make stumble), NJB (I shall topple), NAB (I will overthrow), and REB (I shall bring to their knees). That is probably done under the influence of S: “I will bring a stumbling block” (Lamsa). There is, however, no evidence for that reading among Hebrew manuscripts. Because this whole line did not exist in G and it seems out of place next to a taxonomy of created beings, many think it to be a later scribal addition. Both θ´ and σ´ support αἱ. θ´ represents יכשלו (they will be ruined). The rendering σκανδαλα (obstacles/stumbling-blocks) in σ´ supports our reading. The earliest witness to this line is probably Matt 13:41: “and they will remove from his kingdom all *the stumbling-blocks and the workers of wickedness*.” If so, the author of Matthew understood this the same way we do.

**along with** — Since we understand המכשלות to be a noun, not a verb, we take את as a preposition (with/together with/along with) instead of an object marker.

**I plan to eradicate** — Anaphora is characteristic of Zephaniah's style. Curiously, however, that style is broken here. One would expect another iteration of the verb “to end.” והכרתי is an inverted perfect (*w-qatalti*). The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction. It inverts the aspect or tense

of the verb, which most translations understand. Some older ones, however (KJV, JPS, YLT, etc.), as well as a few newer ones (such as NASB), insert “and” based on the old assumption that the inverted verbal form always indicates succession (thus the common name “*waw-consecutive*”). We now know that to be mistaken. Inverted verbs, for instance, may begin individual books and, therefore, cannot possibly indicate succession. Inverted verbs have a multiplicity of semantic functions. Context, therefore, is the best indicator of meaning. In this case, the inverted verb, which functions as an imperfect, carries over the modal quality of the previous jussives. Because the verbal form is different, however, we shift the rendering in English from “intend” to “plan” while retaining the same modal quality.

**the earthling** — Literally “the human.” We render it “earthling” to mimic the word-play between **האדם** and **הארמה**.

**over the earth's surface** — Literally, “over the surface/face of the earth.” See notes on previous verse.

1:2-3 These verses are quoted by the Talmud (*b. Avodah Zarah* 55a). There, the text is interpreted as an interrogative: “Should I utterly end all over the earth's surface?” The answer is negative—YHWH would not destroy his own creation on account of the wicked. Such a rendering is only possible, however, when the text is divorced from its historical, rhetorical, and literary implications. The point is not to state a simple fact concerning the end of creation, but to influence change within the hearts and lives of monarchic Judahites by forceful rhetoric. The wrath of Babylon raining down upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem would feel to them as though the world was being undone, and this event is precisely what these verses are all about. Thus, we do not follow that Rabbinic reading.

1:4 **I plan** — The inverted verb carries over the modal quality of the previous jussives. See 1:3.

**swing** — Literally, “extend/stretch out.” An idiom for striking with one's hand (in punishment). Thus, Isa 5:25 uses it in parallel with the verb “to strike.” We communicate both the idea of extension and striking by our rendering “swing.” NJB (I shall raise) captures only the former nuance. NET (I will attack) captures only the latter nuance.

**the whole populace of Jerusalem** — Literally, “all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

**from this place** — This phrase occurs multiple times throughout Jeremiah, but does not occur in any other prophetic text other than Zeph and Haggai (2:9). This may signal some level of influence or, perhaps, a shared time-frame and viewpoint.

**Baal's trace** — Literally, “the remnant of the Baal.”

**existence** — Literally, “name.” In the ancient NE, one's “name” was an indicator of their character, nature, and existence. To eradicate their name is, therefore, to put an end to their very being. That is why the bestowal of a name is integral to the creation of heaven and earth in Genesis as well as in the Babylonian Creation Epic, which begins “When in the height heaven was not named, and the earth beneath did not yet bear a name, . . . when of the gods none had been called into being, and none bore a name” (*The Seven Tablets of Creation*).

**[syncretistic] clerics** — **כמר** is a common Semitic term, quite ancient, referring to a priest. It occurs rarely in the HB. In the two other instances where it occurs (2 Kgs 23:5; Hos 10:5), it refers to priests who were considered illegitimate because they combined the service of

YHWH with practices done by those who served other gods. To render it, therefore, as “idolatrous priests” is imprecise. The problem, rather, is syncretism. By the late fifth century BC, the term was used in Jewish Aramaic at Elephantine to describe priests of gods other than YHWH. That interpretation then continued into Rabbinic times. Thus, to interpret it as “pagan priests” (so NET and HCSB) is to read a later interpretation into the text.

**among** — אֵל can mean “with/together with,” but also “among.” We prefer the latter because the point is not that YHWH is going to eradicate two different kinds of priests, but those priests whose position is illegitimate due to their syncretism. Berlin (AB) agrees.

**among the priests** — This line not present in ❸. ❹ eliminates it by switching the word-order from “[syncretistic] clerics / priests of YHWH” to “devotees [of Baal] / pagan priests.” The translators of ❹ probably had difficulty with the idea of YHWH wiping out his own priests (a misunderstanding of אֵל as noted above). For ❹'s understanding of כַּמָּרִים, see [syncretistic] **clerics**. The line should be retained. It is present in the Masoretic tradition and 8HevXII gr.

1:5 **their roofs** — Literally, “the roofs.”

**the celestial host** — Literally, “the host of the sky.” A similar ritual circumstance is described in Jer 19:13.

**And those who swear** — The Masoretic tradition (supported by 8HevXII gr) preserves a double reading. Literally, “And those who bow those who swear.” Note that there is no conjunction (and/but) between “those who bow” and “those who swear” despite its presence in virtually every English translation. The text is not describing two different actions. Nor is it describing two different people-groups. Perhaps the participles stand in apposition with one helping to explain the other. As Smith (ICC) noted, the structure is “rough and broken . . . creating a Hebrew syntactical usage otherwise unknown.” Most likely, one verb has been secondarily added. ❸ is missing “those who bow,” but does that mean ❸ purposely dropped the verb because it considered it secondary or that its *Vorlage* lacked it? Unfortunately, it is not possible to know. We think that “those who swear” is original because the verb “to swear,” when combined with different prepositions, results in antanaclasis (see note below). Therefore, we think “those who bow” is secondary and chose to remove it. The resulting text makes far more sense.

**swear [allegiance]** — This verb may be secondary (see note above). Its presence, however, results in a poetic device called antanaclasis (when the same word is used in different places for the express purpose of playing with its semantic nuances). The Niphal of שָׁבַע combined with *lamed* means “to pledge allegiance to” or “swear loyalty to,” whereas the Niphal of שָׁבַע with *bet* means “to swear an oath by.” The double use of “to swear” has a more significant meaning in this verse than the double use of “to bow.” This suggests artistic intent. The reason for the insertion of the other verb would then be to clarify the text by pointing out that in the first instance, “to swear” does not refer to oaths, but to devotion. Few translations other than NET (who swear allegiance / while taking oaths) perceive any antanaclasis here. See Berlin (AB).

**their Molek** — The vocalization of מֹלֶכֶם by the Masoretes (*malkam*) has two possible references. The first is “their king.” This is the way ❸ interpreted it. However, there is no

prohibition against taking an oath by the name of a king. Some suggest that “king” is really a reference to some unspecified deity. This could be true, but on what basis? The second possible reference is to the people or country of Ammon. “Malkam” is used this way in Amos 1:13-15, Jer 49:1-3, and 2 Sam 12:26-31/1 Chr 20:1-3. Ammon, however, would be entirely out of place. More likely, this is the name or title of some other god (as suggested by the parallelism with “YHWH”). The consonantal text could be vocalized as “Milkom,” patron deity of the Ammonites, which is how **ס**, **פ**, and **מ**<sup>L</sup> interpreted it. See 1 Kgs 11:5, 33 and 2 Kgs 23:13. Another possible god is “The Molek,” to whom Israelite children were supposedly sacrificed in the Valley of Hinnom. Either would find support from **ע** (their idols). The problem with Milkom is that we know of only one place where Israelites were involved with the deity of Ammon and that site was supposedly made inoperable by Josiah. Our available evidence does not show a large degree of support for Milkom in Judah. Multiple times in both Kings and Jeremiah, however, passing children through fire to The Molek is described as one of the primary activities that arouses YHWH's fury (see, for instance, 2 Kgs 17:13-17 and Jer 19:4-6). It is specifically mentioned in the Law as something that defiles YHWH's name and sanctuary (Lev 18:21; 20:3). We feel, therefore, that this is the most likely option. Berlin (AB) agrees. So does NIV. Note that this was suggested when the Geneva Bible was translated. It transliterated the word and then explained it in the margin: “He alludes to their idol Molech.”

1:6 **those deterred** — This rendering represents the passive quality of the Niphal. KJV and ASV (them that are turned back) do likewise. Translations like “who turn back” (HCSB) or “have turned back” (ESV) represent a Qal, which is not present. Although this is a participle, the next two verbs are perfects—a typical example of grammatical alternation in Semitic poetry. No change in tense or aspect is indicated by that shift.

**YHWH's wake** — Literally, “from behind/after YHWH.” So YLT (from *after* Jehovah). The KJV (from the LORD) ignores “behind/after.” It follows **מ**, which lacks it. Note, however, that “behind/after” is contained in 8HevXII gr (οπισθεν). It should, therefore, be retained. The most common English rendering (from *following*) is paraphrastic. The use of this word indicates the space and location where YHWH has gone, not the action of the one who is behind YHWH. Thus, we render it “wake.”

**that is** — This *waw* is epexegetical. It introduces a phrase that further explains what the previous phrase meant. The fact that it doesn't introduce a new category of people who will be eradicated is evident in the grammar. Each new category of person is introduced by *waw* + direct object marker. There is no direct object marker here.

**consulted him** — Or “inquired of him (via prophecy).” See, for instance, 2 Kgs 3:11.

1:7 **Hush** — This rendering mimics the actual sound of the Hebrew interjection **ח**. There is some kind of connection between Habakkuk and Zeph as revealed by the language here (see Hab 2:20) and in 3:3 (see Hab 1:8).

**Sovereign YHWH** — The divine name is vocalized with the vowels of “Elohim,” so one would read “Sovereign *God*.” Since, however, the divine name is original, we render it in that manner.

**presently** — An instance of the thematic root קרב. Here and in the rest of ch. 1, it indicates temporal proximity (soon/presently). See sections A3 and C3.

**YHWH's day** — Literally, “the day of YHWH.” See sections A3.

**readied** — This verb has many nuances: to establish/fix/arrange/prepare/ready/provide. Exactly how it should be understood here is uncertain. Since, however, the day is so very near, the sacrifice must certainly be “ready.”

**sacrifice** — ש says “his sacrifice.” ט says “slaughter” instead of “sacrifice.” Perhaps its translators were disturbed by the cultic metaphor. We follow the Hebrew.

**consecrated** — Instead of “consecrated,” from the Hiphil of קראשׁ, ט says “called/summoned/invited” as though reading the Qal of קרא. Perhaps its translators altered the text here for the same reason they preferred “slaughter” over “sacrifice” (see note above). Or perhaps they were smoothing the text out by making the verb match the following participle. The KJV's rendering (he hath bid), which is followed by others like NKJV (he has invited) or Leeser (bidden), follows that Aramaic shift.

**his guests** — Literally, “those summoned/called of him.”

1:8 **When YHWH's day of sacrifice comes** — Literally, “it will occur/happen/be on the day of the sacrifice of YHWH.” ויהי is often used at the beginning of new oracular material (see section E2). It functions like redactional glue to create a sense of continuity between what came before and that which comes next. See also 1:10 and 1:12.

**rightly set in siege** — In the Qal stem, which occurs here, פקד means “to put object in the proper place/order/position/status” or simply “to be set right.” Those set right are the princes, royal family, and whoever wrongly confiscates others' clothing. The use of a particle of opposition (על), in combination with surrounding context, indicates that the proper position of the people in this verse is to undergo hostile attack by outside forces. Thus, we render ופקדתי על as “I will rightly set in siege.” See section A3 for a fuller discussion of פקד.

**royal family** — The phrase בני + X is frequently used to refer to the members or class of some family or social group. Here, the structure of the verse suggests the meaning “royal family.” Thus, Ben Zvi (*A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah*) states that “the title refers to the enlarged royal family and not only to the biological sons of the king.” Smith (ICC) agrees: “In accordance with a very common usage of the word 'son' in Hebrew, it may and probably does denote those characterized by the fact of membership in the royal family, . . . Cf. The similar phrase 'sons of the prophets.'” The verse expands from the narrow and specific (princes) to the less specific (any member of the king's family) and then, finally, to something applicable to any of Judah's leadership (all who X). ש's rendering (the king's household) gives ancient support for our interpretation. So REB (the royal house).

**others'** — Often rendered “strange/foreign.” The point, however, is not that these are from another place, but that they *belong to someone else* (making them strange or foreign to those who now wear them). Similar uses of נכרי can be found in Prov 5:20, 6:24, and 7:5 with reference to the woman who is another man's wife (there in the feminine form). The problem



in Proverbs, of course, is not intimacy with a foreign woman, but intimacy with a woman who *belongs to another*. The issue in this verse is not what type of clothing one wears, but how those in positions of power unjustly use their power to take possession of that which is not theirs.

**garbed . . . garb** — THF mimics the poetic root-play between מלבוש and הלבושים.

1:9 **rightly set in siege** — See notes in 1:8. See also section A3.

**every one who** — Since the participle is both singular and definite, we render this “every *one* who” instead of “everyone/all who.” Some translations, following KJV, change it to a plural “all those who/that.”

**[flagrantly] crosses** — Literally, “leaps/jumps/bounds over” from דלג. **ט** interprets it in light of 1 Sam 5:5 as a Philistine ritual. 1 Sam 5:5 does not, however, say that people leaped over the threshold of a temple—only that they did not tread/walk/step on it (which does not require leaping). Such an interpretation also begs the question since there is no evidence of any such ritual or cultic practice. Ben Zvi calls the bluff of most interpreters: “What kind of evidence supports the basic proposition . . . that leaping over the threshold has a cultic/religious meaning? . . . There is no evidence whatsoever.” In BH, דלג is used to describe one’s ability to easily overcome the limitations constructed by opposing forces (Ps 18:30 and 2 Sam 22:30) as well as the carefree prancing of a deer (Isa 35:6 and Song 2:8). It must have the same connotations here, but with further social and ethical implications: through eagerness and/or defiance, they spring over the limit of what is right. Thus, we render it “to [flagrantly] cross the line.” Such an interpretation explains why **ס** rendered the verb in terms of social injustice instead of in terms of religious or cultic practice: “those who do violence and those who plunder” (Lamsa). Note also the poetic parallelism. As in verses 6 and 8, the second half of the verse expands on and defines what is meant by the first half. According to Ben Zvi, “the ‘leaping’ group is also characterized by the clause opening with הממלאים.” What is described in the second half is criminal activity, not religious or cultic action. Ebenezer Henderson noted this in 1868 (*The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets*): “The language . . . as the parallel hemistich shows, characterizes the eagerness with which the servants of the great rushed out of their palaces in order to seize upon the property of others.” Bullinger (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*) saw this as an instance of circumlocution. He wrote, “Those that leap on the threshold’: *i.e.*, the servants of the rulers and others who were sent to enter the houses of others and take away the good things that were therein. . . . It does not, as many suppose, refer to idolatrous worship, for the word דלג (*dalag*) is not so used.” **ט**’s rendering (*visibly/clearly* in the foregate) does not seem to represent this verb.

**the line** — Though most interpreters view מפתח as an architectural term, there is no reason it can’t have the more general meaning of “limit/boundary/line” in the same way that the English word “threshold” does. In six of its seven other occurrences in the HB, מפתח is in construct with another word that further defines it and confines it to a particular locality or structure (“the threshold of the house,” “the threshold of the gate,” and “Dagon’s threshold”), which would seem to indicate that, on its own, it probably has a more general sense.

**(on that day)** — The phrase “on that day” characteristically begins verses; it does not appear in the middle of them (see Zeph 3:11 and 3:16). Either this phrase has been secondarily inserted

or it originally stood at the start of the verse (as in **5**). In either case, it is clearly out of place. Therefore, we place it in parentheses. Instead of “on that day,” **ט** says “at that time.” **6** supports **א**<sup>L</sup>.

**their masters' home** — Literally, “the house of their masters.” It is possible that “masters” is the *pluralis majestatis* (the “plural of majesty” or “excellence”) and should be rendered as a singular. So **ט** (their master). It depends on whom or who one interprets the subject or subjects to be. One could interpret it as YHWH (and so interpret the house as the Temple). So **6** (the house of the Lord your God). **ו** follows **6**. As Ben Zvi rightly notes, however, if this phrase refers to God and his temple, “it would be a very strange and unattested way” to do so since “closely related expressions to **בֵּית אֲדֹנֵיהֶם** occur several times in the OT (Gen 39:2, 40:7, 44:8; 2 Sam 12:8; 2 Kgs 10:3; Isa 22:18, Zeph 1:9). In all of them, the master is a human being, and not God or a god.” Thus, the text extends condemnation to multiple classes. While v. 8 condemns authorities and people in positions of power for their injustice, v. 9 includes those who serve them. YHWH will “set right” both groups. Note the singular Hebrew noun “house,” which functions distributively. The KJV's plural rendering “houses” (probably copied from Geneva) changes the meaning of the text from anyone who serves in their master's house to only those who serve masters of *multiple houses*.

**coercively and fraudulently** — Literally, “violence and deception.” The particular language both here and in surrounding verses suggests something more specific. The only other place where “deception” is used with the verb “to fill” occurs in Jer 5:27, where it has to do with the acquisition of wealth. In Zeph 1:8, rulers are chastised for stealing others' garments. Contextually, therefore, “violence and deception” relate specifically to methods of unlawful procurement. A similar condemnation occurs in Amos 3:10. **5** understood this, which is why it renders the first word “extortion.” Ewald (*Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament. Vol. III.*) describes it this way: “The dishonest royal servants . . . pretend to render good service to their lord by forcibly exacting treasure for him from his subjects.” Some English translations understand this and render the second word “fraud” (ESV, NRSV, NJPST, etc.). NET's rendering (wealth taken by violence) is wordy, but not far from the meaning. Though both words are nouns, they function as adverbial accusatives to tell us the means by which their masters' homes are filled. If one were to leave them as nouns, a prepositional “by” would be necessary (as in NET). To use “with” instead (as do most translations) implies that violence and deception are *the things themselves* that fill the house, which would be a distortion of the text.

1:10 **When that day comes** — Even though the same phrase occurs many times in Zeph, numerous English translations drop the verb here and move it after “prophecy of YHWH.” We prefer to render the same phrase the same way throughout. This is a stock phrase that appears a plethora of times in the HB, and we see no compelling reason to treat it different in this one circumstance. The KJV (And it shall come to pass in that day) and LEB (And there shall be on that day), though both *absurdly* wordy, stay faithful to it. See notes on 1:8. **ט** has “time” instead of “day.”

**Listen!** — Though **קוֹל** usually refers to a “voice” or “sound,” it can also be an exclamative particle (JM §163e), which is how we interpret it here for three reasons: there is no verb for it

to serve as subject (most English translations rearrange the text so that the verb belonging to the previous phrase is inserted here), the list of sounds shows that this is an attempt to transport the hearers to the time and circumstance being described instead of mere description, and Zeph does the same thing again in vv. 14-16. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) agrees: “Because vs. 10a is an independent element קול should not be considered as subject and should not be linked to וְהָיָה (‘and there will be loud cries’), but taken as an interjection: ‘Listen.’” So Moffatt (Hark!). See section B4.

**the Fish Gate** — Literally, “the gate of the fish.” פ, however, says “from the gate of piercing/stabbing/skewering ones.” Such a rendering probably resulted from an accidental *dalet-res* interchange in which הַרְגִּים (the fish) was mistaken for הַרְגִּים (slayers/killers).

**Ululating** — Or “a howl/wail.” We use “ululate” for יִלְלָה (*yelalah*) not only because it mimics the onomatopoeic nature of the word, but because it resembles the actual sound of the Hebrew (see our use of “hush!” in 1:7). In this respect, we follow פ (*ululatus*). Literally, this line begins with a coordinating conjunction (and). We feel, however, that such coordination is represented quite clearly through line positioning. Therefore, we view the “and” as superfluous. The final “and” is included, however, since it is often used in English to finish the last item in a list.

**the Second [District]** — Or “Mishneh.” See 2 Kgs 22:14. The entire name may be preserved in Neh 11:9 (the Second City), though others think it refers there to the title of an officer. Instead of “Mishneh,” פ says “Ophel.” As Ho explains (*The Targum of Zephaniah: Manuscripts and Commentary*), the Targum’s use of Ophel instead of Mishneh “captures the intent of the text that the catastrophe will envelop the whole periphery of Jerusalem; while the Fish Gate is on the north side, the Ophel is on the south, the Hill is on the west, and Wadi Qidron on the east.” פ (followed by פ and ס) calls it the “second gate.” So Geneva and SET. Most scholars believe “Mishneh” refers to an area of the city that was expanded during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, which is why it is also translated something like “newer district” (NET), “New Quarter” (NAB, NJB, and NIV), or “Newtown” (Ewald).

**loud crash** — Literally, “great breaking/collapse.” Since this refers to sound, we render it “loud crash.” This phrase occurs only here and in Jeremiah (six times).

1:11 **they ululate** — הִילִילוּ is a Hiphil of ילל (to wail/howl). For our choice of “ululate,” see above. The form is either an imperative or a perfect. פ interpreted it as an imperative. We interpret it as a case of the so-called “prophetic perfect” in which a future situation is being described in present terms. We view it this way because it seems that this verse functions to explicate further on what is said in the previous verse about the sound of wailing. It does not stand apart from the previous verse as a call to wail, which is how the imperative often functions in other prophetic texts. NRSV, NJPST, and LEB also view it as a perfect. By giving it a future tense (will wail), REB also views it as a prophetic perfect.

**the mortar’s populace** — Literally, “the ones who inhabit the mortar.” The meaning of הַמִּכְתָּשׁ appears to be metaphorical: likening the city (or some part thereof) to a mortar in which the people are crushed, and thus providing us with an explication of what the sound of “crashing” (or perhaps “crushing”) refers to. It is a noun from the verb כָּתַשׁ (see Pro 27:22). פ says

“those who are beaten/pulverized,” possibly reflecting a D-stem of the related verb כָּתַת (to be beaten/pounded). **Ṣ** transliterates it as though it were a proper name (Maktesh) instead of a title. Several translations follow that interpretation (KJV, ASV, WEB, etc.) even though the definite article excludes the possibility. **ⲥ** renders this “the wadi of Kidron” for interpretive reasons (see notes above). The Three have similar renderings. **θ** says “in the depth,” while **α** and **σ** say “in the cavity/hollow.” Some translations follow them such as YLT (hollow place), Rotherham (lower city), REB (Lower Town), and HCSB (hollow).

**destroyed** — There are three variants of the root דָּמָה in the Niphal: (1) “to become like” (as in **Ⲅ** and **ⲥ**), (2) “to be dumb/silent” (as in **ⲧ**), and (3) “to be destroyed” (also in **ⲥ**—a double interpretation). The parallelism with “eradicated” points to (3), as does the use of the verb “to wail,” which is only used elsewhere to describe “the public reaction to extraordinary, large-scale destruction” (Berlin). Though a few translations (HCSB and NASB) prefer the interpretation taken by **ⲧ**, no translation follows **Ⲅ**.

**the whole tribe of Canaan** — Literally, “all the people of Canaan.” Instead of “Canaan,” **θ** says “traders/merchants” (μεταβολων). This is in line with a well-known use of “Canaanite” to mean “merchant/trader” (see, for instance, Isa 23:8; Job 40:30; Prov 31:24). Such an interpretation is followed by many English translations. Note, however, that in all those places, there is no reference to a *people*. The natural usage of the phrase עַם + region would seem to preclude “merchant/trader” even though it works well in parallel with “bearers of commerce.” Since the verb “to wail” is only used elsewhere to describe “the public reaction to extraordinary, large-scale destruction” (Berlin, AB), we feel that our interpretation fits the context far better than the loss of merchants. Both **ⲥ** and **Ⲅ** agree with our assessment as do several English translations (NASB, ASV, and SET).

**stacks of** — נִטְלִי is a plural noun in construct from נָטַל (to bear/load/weigh/set upon). The form does not represent a plural participle in construct (נוֹטְלִי) even though **Ⲅ** treats it as a passive one (those who are uplifted by silver). Strangely, most English translations veer away from its form and treat it as a participle. The verbal form appears in Lam 3:28-9 to describe the yoke that “weighs upon” a young man to such an extent that he sets his mouth in the dust. In Isa 40:15, it is parallel to “consider/deem,” which shows that it refers to the mental measure or weight of a thing. All other usages in the HB function as synonyms of נָשָׂא (to lift/carry/bear/raise). Thus, Ewald translates it “all carrying with them.” Nowhere does it mean “to weigh out” money. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) notes how strange this would sound since “the usual word for ‘to weigh out’ is שָׁקַל.” As a noun, therefore, the word refers to nothing other than “loads” or “bulks” of money and, perhaps by extension, to those who have them. So **ⲥ** (the rich [in] goods) and NJB (the money-bags).

1:12 **When that time comes** — See notes on 1:8.

**rightly set in siege** — See notes on 1:8.

**lamps** — Though **Ⲅ**, **Ṣ**, and **ⲥ** have the singular, MurXII supports the plural of נֵרִים. Note that this word refers to oil lamps and, by extension, their light, not “candles” (KJV). That is why **ⲥ** used נִבְרָשְׁתָּא (lamps) instead of the word for “candle” (שִׁרְגָּא).

**elites** — Literally, “the men.” However, **אֲנָשִׁים** is used here with its alternate semantic nuance: to describe those who are rich and powerful or who belong to the upper classes. They are those who have wealth and property (v. 13). Thus, Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) remarks, “Here, as elsewhere (see e.g., 1 Sam. 26:15; Ps. 49:3; . . . ) **אִישׁ** has the meaning: distinguished, prominent person.” Since, in English, “the men” does not include women, and there is no indication that the use of this word in Hebrew applied only to those of the male gender, the English rendering that would come closest to the Hebrew (if one did not go with something like “prominent/elite/upper class”) would be “people” (as in NRSV) or “those” (as in GW).

**those who congeal on their [wine] dregs** — **ע** gives an exegetical interpretation of the metaphoric phrase: “who remain calm upon their properties.” So does **פ**, which reads **מְשִׁמְרֵיהֶם** (their charges/obligations) instead of **שְׁמֵרֵיהֶם** (their lees/dregs). **פ** renders the phrase literally. Curiously, REB provides both a literal and exegetical rendering: “who are ruined by complacency, like wine left on its lees.”

**those who think to themselves** — Literally, “those who say in/with their mind.” An idiomatic expression meaning “to think to oneself.” As Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) notes, “The focus is not on the articulation of the thought but on the position of the speaker (one could translate: ‘those who proceed from the idea’).” Berlin (AB) agrees: “who think to themselves.” See also NET.

**brings** — Or “causes.” Both verbs in this phrase are Hiphil (causative-stem) verbs. Thus, Berlin (AB) translates this: “will not *make*.”

**benefit . . . detriment** — A merism meaning “YHWH does nothing at all.” It is a mockery of YHWH’s status and power. Second Isaiah uses the same terminology to deride the impotency of idols (41:23). See also Jer 10:5. The traditional rendering of the two verbs uses “good” and “evil.” As Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) notes, however, this idiomatic expression is “not ethical but material: to bring advantage or to do harm.” Thus our rendering “benefit . . . detriment.” Similar renderings occur in NET (“rewards” and “punishes”), Berlin (“better” and “worse”), Rotherham (“blessing” and “calamity”), and Fenton (“benefit” and “hurt”).

1:13 The entire second half of the verse is a quotation from Amos 5:11, which itself may have been inspired by Deut 28:30. Isa 65:21 proclaims the reversal (as does Jer 29:5). The word “residences,” which occurs at the end of the original verse and in the first part of the quotation, is used as a redactional catchword—the literary glue that enables the inserted quotation to be read together with the original oracle.

**Plunder will become of their stashes** — Literally, “Their property/wealth will become plunder.” **וְהָיָה** is an inverted perfect. The bonded *waw* is not a coordinating conjunction as in ASV (and) or NASB (moreover). Neither is it a marker of consequence as in KJV (therefore) or NJB (for this). The latter renderings are also redundant since the previous verse already indicated that YHWH would “set in siege” those who have such attitudes. The *waw* inverts the aspect or tense of the verb (it *will become*). See 1:3. The purpose of this verse is to explain what that entails. We use “stashes” instead of “property/wealth” in order to mimic the alliteration and rhyme created by the use of **לְמַשְׁכָּה** and **לְשִׁמְמָה** ([turned] to ashes). See next note.

**[turned to] ashes** — Or “become a waste/desolation.” The *lamed* carries over the sense of the previous verb, which we render by the phrase “[turned] to.” Instead of “waste” or “desolation,” we use “ashes.” That rendering arises out of a word-play with “Ashkelon” in 2:4. Since Zeph repeats this language several times, we do our best to reuse it.

**raise residences** — Literally, “build houses.” We attempt to recreate the alliteration of the phrase **וּבִנּוּ בָתִּים**. Note that **וּבִנּוּ** is an inverted perfect. The bonded *waw* is not an emphatic marker as in ASV (yea) or NASB (yes). It is not a coordinating conjunction as in KJV (also) or YLT, LEB, Leeser, and Rotherham (and). It inverts the aspect or tense of the verb, describing either an incomplete/future act (they *will*) or a modal act (*though* they). We prefer the second option since the building of residences is not being guaranteed. See 1:3.

**move in** — Contrary to virtually all English translations, there is no object in the Hebrew. Therefore, we have none here. It is **וְ** that adds an object (followed by **שָׁם**): “but not live *in them*.” Both MurXII and **וְ** support **וְ**.

**Though** — **וְנִטְעוּ** is an inverted perfect. The bonded *waw* is not a coordinating conjunction (and) as in KJV, NASB, LEB, etc. It inverts the aspect or tense of the verb, describing either an incomplete/future act (they *will*) or a modal act (*though* they). See 1:3. Like the previous inverted verb, we prefer the modal sense.

**they will not drink** — 4QpZeph expands the text with “not *be able* [to drink].” All other witnesses support **וְ**.

1:14 **Presently** — The thematic root **קָרַב** appears again (see sections A3 and C3). **וְ** begins the verse with **וְ** (because), which may represent a **כִּי** in its *Vorlage*. 8HevXII gr, however, supports **וְ**.

**the great day of YHWH** — Literally, “the day of YHWH—the great [one].” A typical instance of biblical apposition. The exact same phrase occurs (with one additional word) in Mic 3:23 and Joel 3:4. Using a sly exegetical move, **וְ** reinterpreted “the great” as a reference to YHWH. See section A3.

**Presently!** — Some think that this instance of **קָרַב** should function as a verbal noun (coming/nearing/approaching). So NET (approaching) and NJB (coming). That is possible. If, however, the *waw* functions emphatically (see below), that rendering is entirely unnecessary.

**Yes** — We think this *waw* is emphatic. It expands on the description “presently.”

**so very soon** — Whether one reads **מִהֵרָא** as an infinitive absolute functioning adverbially (clearly the case in Josh 2:5) or a Piel participle without the typical preformative *mem* (GKC §52s), there is no question that it means “quick/fast/hastily” throughout BH. Though **מִהֵרָא מְאֹד** literally means “very rapidly” (NET) or “most swiftly” (NJPST), we believe it is an idiomatic expression and should be translated as more than the sum of its parts. Thus, we render it “so very soon.”

**Listen!** — Though **קוֹל** usually refers to a “voice” or “sound,” it can also be an exclamative particle (JM §163e), which is how we interpret it here because the context indicates that one should be able to recognize the character of that sound (bitter/sharp). This is more than mere description. It is an attempt to transport the hearers of the oracle to the time and circumstance being described. For that reason, we reject the rendering “the sound of YHWH’s day [is].” See

v. 10. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) cites the “division of this vs. into brief exclamations” as further reason for understanding קול as an exclamative. Smith (ICC) and Smith (WBC) both prefer “Hark.” Others (like HCSB and NASB) prefer “Listen.” See section B4.

**One shouts sharp** — Literally, “bitter [is] one who shouts” or “bitter shouting.” Tastes, however, are bitter. Not sounds. Thus, we render מר as “sharp.” Note the disjunctive accent (*zakef katon*) between “YHWH's day” and “bitter.” To read “bitter” with the previous phrase (the sound of YHWH's day [is] bitter) is to read against the traditional textual division. We see no compelling reason to do so. The rendering of ט (in which there is trouble and outcry) supports that traditional division by showing a clear separation between “YHWH's day” and “bitter” (reinterpreted by ט to mean “trouble”). Note also the separation in syntax and accentuation between the participle “one who shouts” and “warrior/hero.” Clearly, “warrior/hero” does not function as the subject. This is supported by ש, which renders it “Sharp and harsh it is appointed. Great [is]...” (מר וקשה שים גבור). However, ש changes the noun “warrior/hero” to the adjective “great/fierce,” the participle (צרה) into an adverb (קשה), and the locational particle (שם) into a verb (שים). Though 8HevXII gr is fragmentary, what remains does not follow ש. It is also clear in ט that “warrior/hero” does not function as the subject of the participle because ט inserts a new verb for the noun: “there, warriors *are being killed*.” See also section B4.

**There!** — Though, on rare occasions, שם can have a temporal sense (then), its characteristic meaning is locative (there) and we believe it is self-evidently locative in this case. It actually describes what the person is shouting. See section B4.

**A warrior!** — As noted above, there is no verb for this to serve as subject. Instead, it stands alongside a string of other interjections. The result is a staccato series of statements in which the very description of what is “sharply” delivered is delivered “sharply.” See section B4. *BHS* suggests a radical emendation of the entire second half of the verse: קל יום יהוה מרץ וחש מגבור (Swifter is YHWH's day than a runner and quicker than a warrior). Smith (ICC) proposed this before (hastening faster than a warrior). REB follows that suggestion (“no runner is so swift” and “no warrior so fleet”) as does Moffatt (rushing on like a warrior). There is, however, no support for such emendation. It is entirely conjectural and totally unnecessary.

1:15 This verse stands out in Zeph for its extensive use of poetic and rhetorical devices, many of which are noted and/or detailed in sections C3 and C4.

**A day of fury [is] that day** — Note that the predicate has been moved to the front position of the clause in order to express emphasis (“A day of fury [is] that day,” not “That day [is] a day of fury”). This is an example of anastrophe (see section B4). Few translations attempt to capture the emphatic nature of the text (see, however, ESV, NASB, SET, etc.).

**stress . . . distress** — Our rendering attempts to mimic the poetic assonance of צרה and מצוקה. The same poetic expression occurs in Job 15:24 (though the first word is masculine instead of feminine). See also Ps 25:17.

**ruin . . . ruination** — Our rendering attempts to mimic the similarity of sound created by the root-play between **שאה** and **משואה**. Charles Briggs' translation in *Messianic Prophecy* attempts to do likewise: “A day of waste and wasteness.” The same poetic expression occurs in Job 30:3 and 38:27.

**blackest dark** — Literally, “dark/darkness and black/blackness.” An example of hendiadys. The only other place in scripture where this phrase occurs (other than Joel's quotation of it in 2:2) is in Exod 10:22 in the context of the ninth plague, which would suggest that the phrase refers to severe divine judgment. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as theophanic language (see Exod 20:21 and Deut 4:11). See also Isa 59:9. Since the emphatic combination of synonymous substantives is sometimes used to create a superlative sense (GKC §133l), we have rendered this as a superlative (blackest). Ben Zvi agrees with our assessment: “‘A day of extreme darkness’ instead of the common ‘a day of darkness and gloom.’”

**murkiest haze** — Literally, “cloud/cloudiness and murk/murkininess.” An example of hendiadys. This is probably theophanic language (see Deut 4:11; 5:22; Ps 97:2). The last two lines of this verse are quoted in Joel 2:2. Since the emphatic combination of synonymous substantives is sometimes used to create a superlative sense (GKC §133l), we have rendered this as a superlative (murkiest).

1:16 **horn-blast** — Literally, “shophar” (**שופר**), which is a ram's horn, and refers, by metonymy, to the sound it makes. See sections B1 and C4.

**battle-cry** — This word usually refers to a loud sound like a shout or cry of alarm made by a person, but may also refer to the “cry” of an instrument (Lev 25:9). We follow the more usual meaning. So **ש** (shouting). Some prefer to follow **צ** by using a more ambiguous word (alarm), which could refer either to the sound of a person or an instrument.

**against** — There is virtually universal agreement among English translators that this means “against” (not “over”). The similar use of this preposition in Isa 2:12-16 in the context of YHWH's day to mean “against” suggests the same nuance here.

**“grandiose corners”** — A play on words. See sections A3 and B4. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) seems to grasp the sense without realizing it: “Only human pride can think itself secure in human constructions on that Day.”

1:17 **I will lay siege** — **והצרת** is an inverted perfect in the Hiphil stem from **צרר** (to bind/restrict/compress/wrap). When used as a Qal with reference to one's inner emotions, it has a stative sense (stressed/distressed/anxious). In the Hiphil, however, it refers to someone “besieging/blockading/enclosing” a city, region, and/or people (Deut 28:52; 2 Chr 6:28; 28:20, 22, Jer 10:18-19). It is not simply a causative version of the Qal (to bring/cause distress). Thus, contrary to most English translations, the verbal stem indicates an outward circumstance forced upon “the people,” not a description of their inner state. Note, however, NAB (I will hem in) and SET (I will lay siege).

**against** — As the parallel phrase “against YHWH” (**לִיהוָה**) makes clear, the function of the *lamed* here is not to point out the accusative object of the verb, but to indicate the one “against” whom the action is taken. Most English translations realize this, but break the parallelism of the passage by rendering the preposition differently in the two phrases. Here, they usually



render it “on” or “upon” as though this were the preposition **עַל** instead. We see no need for such divergence. SET (against) agrees.

**the people** — Literally, “the man.” A collective singular referring to any “person” regardless of gender. So GW (humans), NJB (humanity), ISV and NRSV (people), and NET, REB, and NJPST (the people). See section D1.

**so they move** — Or “so they go/walk.” We understand the inverted perfect as resultative (so/in order that). Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) agrees: “The question is how **וַיֵּלְכוּ כְּעִוְרִים** is connected with **וַיִּצְרְתִּי לָאָדָם**. The most obvious construal is to view the first as a result of the second: on account of their dread they walk around like blind persons.”

**those without sight** — Literally, “the blind ones.” English translations typically treat it as a collective singular (the blind) instead of a plural or introduce gender associations that are not meant by the text (blind *men*). The whole colon (so they move like those without sight) appears to be an echo of the covenantal curse in Deut 28:29.

**sinned.** — The Masoretic pointing places a strong disjunctive accent here (*athnach*), which is the equivalent of an English period. This means the text should not be translated “Because, against YHWH, they sinned, their blood” (contrary to NRSV and ISV). The parallelism between “against the people” and “against YHWH” shows that this line belongs at the end of the first half of the verse and not at the beginning of the second.

**dumped will be** — Usually, this verb means “to pour out.” But “dust” is not “poured out.” To better understand its nuance, we turn to Lev 14:41, where the word “dust” is used with reference to “debris” and the same verb occurs, taking on the meaning “dumping/disPELLing/throwing out.” Therefore, we render this “dumped” (something that can also be done with a liquid). In “Linguistic And Textual Problems: Minor Prophets III,” Driver observes that “the picture is that of *casting aside* something of little value” (italics added). We would add, based on the usage of this verb in Lev 14:41 and this line’s parallelism with “feces,” that what is cast aside or dumped is probably also regarded as filthy garbage. Driver believes this verb functions the same as its cognate Assyrian verb *šapaku* (to pour/cast). Note, however, that when used with reference to “dust/dirt,” it has the meaning of “heaping/piling up” mounds of earth for construction or military purposes (CAD), not of dumping out refuse. The Masoretes pointed this verb as a passive (will be dumped) instead of an active (will dump). This is supported by **ט**, which uses an *ipe’el* here as it does for all passives (Ho). The verb in **ו**, however, has the active voice. Berlin (AB) attempts to get around the awkwardness of “pour out” by rendering it “splattered.” Unfortunately, “dust/debris” is not “splattered” either. The same problem exists with renderings like “spill” (SET and NJPST). **וַיִּשְׁפֹּךְ** is an inverted perfect. Contrary to many English translations (such as KJV, NASB, NAB, etc.), the bonded *waw* is not a coordinating conjunction; it inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. See 1:3.

**debris** — The Masoretic accent beneath the preposition indicates the presence of a definite article. Literally, therefore, this would mean “the dust.” The definite article distinguishes this as a specific category of thing, which does not need to be represented in English. It makes no sense, however, to pour out *dust*. To better understand the nuance of **עָפָר**, we turn to Lev

14:41, where עפר is used to mean the “debris” scraped off the walls of a house. The same verb occurs there as here, where it takes on the connotation of “dumping/dispelling/throwing out.” Therefore, we render this “debris” instead of “dust.”

**offspring** — What is לַחֵם? One could see it as identical to לַחֵם (*plene*). If so, that word occurs only here and in Job 20:23. Some scholars trace the word in Job to לַחֵם (to struggle/battle/fight), others to לַחֵם (to eat). The segholate noun לַחֵם means “food/bread.” If לַחֵם functions as a noun, it could be similar. Unfortunately, the Job passage is obscure. Driver states in “Hebrew Notes” (1944) that “The Massoretes seem in desperation to have taken לַחֵם as meaning ‘their eaten stuff’, i.e. the food in their intestines, which is very unlikely.” On the basis of Arabic *lahm* (flesh/meat), scholars often propose “flesh/meat.” This is supported by שׁ’s use of σαρκας (flesh). Many translations follow שׁ (KJV, NASB, NET, etc.). Metaphorically, that could also refer to a dead body. Thus, 8HevXII gr says πτωματα (corpse/carcass). ט, ס, and פ prefer that sense. So does the Bishops’ Bible (bodies). לַחֵם could, however, represent לַח due to accidental duplication of the pronominal suffix (or, perhaps, it is an instance of the enigmatic, enclitic *mem*, which tends to appear in poetic texts like Zeph). In other words, לַחֵם could go back to לַח (the noun לַח plus the masculine plural suffix). לַח occurs in Deut 34:7 with a meaning like “strength/vigor/vitality” or “fruit/offspring/issue.” The adjectival form (Gen 30:37; Num 6:3; Judg 16:7-8; Ezek 17:24; 21:3) means something like “lush,” “fecund,” “vernal,” or “fresh” (in other words, young, thriving, and full of life as opposed to things that have dried up or died and lost their vitality). In MH, the word came to mean “liquid/moisture/secretion/nectar/sap” (Jastrow). That later nuance is preferred by Smith (WBC) here in Zeph: “sap of life.” Such a rendering parallels “blood” well. The word “feces,” however (like “debris”), implies solids of some sort. The meaning “fruit/issue/offspring” would work well in Job 20:23. To escape the whole conundrum, some swap לַחֵם for רֵחַם and propose “innards/intestines/entrails,” which is possible since the phonetic distinction between *lamed* and *resh* can be blurred in pronunciation. Driver (“Hebrew Notes,” 1944), proposes that לַחֵם means “fleshy part(s)”, i.e. entrails or intestines, distinct from the bones and muscle by which they are enclosed.” That interpretation is followed by translations like REB (bowels), NAB (brains), LEB (entrails), and ISV (intestines). Ben Zvi, however, thinks it “preferable not to emend a comprehensible biblical text, which is supported by the ancient versions, in order to propose a certainly possible biblical text but one without any evidence supporting it.” We agree. Thus, we reject “organs/entrails.” Better is “flesh/body” or “fruit/offspring/issue.” Berlin’s comments (AB) are keen: “Whatever the exact nuance of the word, it would seem to refer to body tissue, parallel with the body fluid indicated by ‘blood.’” Thus, we interpret this tissue to be one’s “offspring,” which is in agreement with the versions that understand the word as indicative of a dead body and which expands the meaning of the text to indicate a scale of slaughter that reaches as far as the people’s progeny.

**feces** – גִּלְלִים is plural. Thus, we render it “feces” instead of “excrement,” “dung,” or “manure.” The Masoretic accent beneath the preposition indicates the presence of a definite article, which marks this as a specific category of thing and does not need to be represented in English.

1:18 The last part of this verse shares many things with Isa 10:23. Since, however, the text is so well integrated in both Isa and Zeph, it is impossible to tell whether one influenced the other.

**Their silver and their gold combined** — Literally, “both their silver and their gold.” The typical syntactic function of **וְ** + noun followed by **וְ** + noun is to introduce a collective (both X and Y), not to differentiate one thing from another (either X or Y). Note, for instance, the same syntactic structure in 2:14. For that reason, the text uses a singular verb (*it* will not possibly) as opposed to a plural (*they* will not possibly—that is, either silver or gold). Ezek 7:19, which quotes the first chunk this verse, is further verification of typical Hebrew syntax. Virtually no English translation renders the quotation in Ezek 7:19 “neither . . . nor,” which begs the question of that rendering here. In fact, as Ho rightly states, “The expression . . . is a merism to indicate totality.” Thankfully, some translations (LEB, HCSB, NJPST, etc.) are paying attention. The rendering of YLT and SET (even their silver, even their gold) not only treats the Hebrew in an unusual manner, but is nonsense in English.

**will not possibly** — Literally, “will not be able to.”

**the day of YHWH's fury** — Literally, “the day of the fury of YHWH.” The noun **עֶבְרָה** (fury) comes from **עָבַר**, which only appears reflexively in the Hithpael, and means “to be/become infuriated/furious” or “to be/become hot-headed/arrogant.”

**when** — Syntactically, the switch in subject and fronting of it before the verb indicates the presence of a circumstantial clause (as/when/while), which is then graphically represented by the *waw*. Some translations represent this (Fenton, NAB, and Moffatt). Others (Geneva, KJV, ASV, etc.) take the *waw* as adversative (but), which is perplexing. Even more perplexing is NASB's and LEB's coordinating conjunction (and). Many translations ignore the *waw* as though it was irrelevant, but the syntactic structure indicates otherwise. Note also that Zeph 3:8 reuses the Hebrew on this and the following line almost verbatim. In place of *waw*, it has **כִּי**, which can function temporally, but never functions as an adversative or coordinating conjunction. Unless 3:8 is using the same Hebrew in a completely different sense, both verses should be translated the same.

**by his fervid fire** — Literally, “by/through the fire of his fervor.” We interpret the *bet* as one of means/instrumentality. We interpret **קִנְאָה** as indicative of burning passion or “fervor.” Similar renderings are found in Vlaardingerbroek (ardour), NRSV (passion), and LEB (zeal). Note that Zeph 3:8 reuses the Hebrew on this and the following line almost verbatim. In place of “his,” however, it says “my” to match the first-person speech used throughout that verse.

**the whole land** — Literally, “all the inhabitants of the land.” **אֶרֶץ** can also mean “world.” Like most translations, however, we recognize the limited nature of this event (or circumstance). It is not universal even though it uses universal language for rhetorical effect. This is made explicit in the next chapter, but is implicit in the list of grievances in this chapter; not everyone in power is a thief of others' property (v. 8); not everyone brings wealth and property to their master through coercion and fraud (v. 9); not everyone has easy access to wine and thinks YHWH will not repay them for their doings (v. 12); not everyone is a “grandiose corner” (v. 16); not everyone has gold and silver to use as bribes to escape slaughter (v. 18). **וְ** adds to the text to make the limited nature more explicit (*the wicked of the land/world*).

**Yes** — We view this as an asseverative כִּי. So NET (Indeed). Most translations treat it as causal (for/because), which is supported by ט. Note the close ties between Isa 10:23 and this verse. In Isa 10:23, the כִּי also functions as an asseverative.

**consummation** — כָּלָה means either “completeness/end” or “destruction/annihilation.” We know this is a feminine noun and not a masculine singular verb because of the feminine participle that follows (see below). So ט (completion/end). The English word “consummation” works well here since it can also mean either “end” or “destruction.” By rendering the previous verb “consume,” we mimic the poetic word-play between תֹּאכַל and כָּלָה. For no ascertainable reason, many translations render the same word twice. HCSB and NASB, for instance, render it both “complete” and “end.” NRSV and RSV render it both “full” and “end.” The NAB simply repeats the word “end.” So does Smith (WBC), while at the same time noting that its second use of end “is not in the text.” We see no reason for such duplication. KJV’s “riddance” is simply an error.

**quite** — אֵל is a demonstrative adverb that has two primary functions: to add emphasis (yes/indeed/truly/surely/too/quite/just) or to introduce restriction (but/however/on the contrary/only). See IBHS §17.2b and §39.3.5d. Here, it has an emphatic function. Most translations interpret its emphasis as asseverative. Note, for example, HCSB (yes), RSV (yea), Moffatt (ay), NASB (indeed), and Rotherham (surely). Somewhat similar to Geneva and KJV (even), we see it as functioning to emphasize extent, extremity, or degree. Thus, we render it “quite.” Curiously, the adverb does not appear in Isa 10:23. ט has “and” instead, which probably represents an interpretive change.

**terrifying** — Literally, “a terrifying one.” Thus, Smith (ICC) renders it “a fearful one.” Alternatively, however, it could mean “a sudden/quick one.” This is a feminine Niphal participle of בָּהַל, which means “to be/become terrified/horrified” or “hasty/hurried.” Translations differ on which they prefer. For example, HCSB, NRSV, and NASB prefer “terrified/horrified,” while NAB, RSV, and KJV prefer “hasty/hurried.” ט prefers “hasty/hurried.” ו follows ט. The only other place where the exact same form of this word occurs is Ps 6:4, where it has the meaning “terrified/horrified.” Based on the clear meaning there, we render it here with the same sense. Curiously, this participle does not appear in Isa 10:23.

**execute** — Or “carry out/perform/do.” The advantage of using the term “execute” is that it continues the sense of כָּלָה above since “execute” can also mean “destroy/kill/put to an end.”

**on** — We interpret אֵת as a direct object marker with the sense of a prepositional *bet*. So ט (επι). Isa 10:23 actually has *bet* instead of אֵת. ט, however, interpreted it as the preposition “with/together with.” S interpreted it as the preposition “against” (Lamsa).

**the whole populace of the land** — Literally, “all the inhabitants of the land.” Even though אֶרֶץ can mean “world,” we recognize the limited nature of this event (or circumstance). See notes above on “the whole land.”

2:1 **Creep and crawl** — Or “bend and scrape.” Our rendering attempts to mimic the poetic assonance of התקוששו וקושו. Historically, this phrase has stumped translators. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) calls it “untranslatable.” The verbs take the form of a Hithpoel and Qal imperative.

The *dagesh* in the second verb indicates that the Masoretes took both from  $\sqrt{\text{קשש}}$ . In BH, the verb  $\text{קשש}$  means “to gather.” Thus,  $\text{𐤒}$ ,  $\text{𐤓}$ ,  $\text{𐤔}$ , and  $\text{𐤕}$  render it that way. Against that, however, is the fact that  $\text{קשש}$  does not appear anywhere else in the Hithpolel and is only used with reference to wood, sticks, or straw (Exod 5:7, 12; Num 15:32; 1 Kgs 17:10), never humans. This would, therefore, be both a unique use of the verb and a unique form of it. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars proposed a root for these verbs on the basis of similar-sounding words in Arabic (Arabian branch of Central Semitic) and Akkadian (East Semitic). By dropping the *dagesh* from the second verb, they proposed  $\sqrt{\text{קוש}}$  (to bend), from which  $\text{קשת}$  (bow) was thought to derive. Haupt (“*Qasš, Straw, and qäšš, Bow*”), for instance, wrote: “In Hebrew we have this stem *qûš* in the denominative *hitqôššû*, bow yourselves, Zeph. 2 1.” In other words, the people are being called to humble themselves. This makes a lot of sense of the context. Thus, Smith (ICC) says, “The thought of v. 2 presupposes in v. 1 either a call to flee from the wrath to come, or to repent,” while Orelli (*The Twelve Minor Prophets*) explains, “Let them crouch down, as the mighty judgment that descends on all would otherwise infallibly smite them.” Translations that prefer that sense include YLT (bend yourselves . . . bend ye), REB (humble yourself . . . be humble), and Moffatt (huddle and cower). Against that, however, is the fact that such a root is entirely conjectural, that graphic similarity does not guarantee semantic similarity, and that Arabic and Akkadian are completely different branches of Semitic. Better to stick to an attested verb in Northwest Semitic. In post-biblical Hebrew,  $\text{קשש}$  came to mean either “to correct/straighten” or “to be/grow old” (Jastrow). SET seems to follow the first (Improve yourselves and improve each other). The language of Zeph, however, is too *old* for the semantic nuances of MH to be *correct*. This phrase in Zeph is quoted numerous times in Rabbinic literature as part of a maxim associated with Resh Lakish. Most of the time, it appears to mean the “cutting down/clearing away” of trees or vegetation (*b. Bava Metzi'a* 107b, *Bava Batra* 60b). Through metaphoric extension, it was also used to mean “to cut down in judgment” (*b. Sanhedrin* 19a). It is impossible to know, however, whether that is a novel interpretation or even comes close to the ancient meaning of the BH verb. Taking the verb from  $\text{קש}$  (straw), NET understands the meaning as “to bunch like straw.” Berlin (AB) agrees: “Gather together, gather like straw.” Unfortunately, this stretches semantics to the breaking-point. Some propose reading  $\text{התקדשו וקדשו}$  (consecrate yourselves and be consecrated) or  $\text{התבוששו ובושו}$  (Be ashamed and feel shame). Gray (“A Metaphor from Building in Zephaniah II 1”) prefers “Stiffen yourselves and stand firm” on the assumption that  $\text{𐤒}$ 's use of  $\text{συνδεθῆτε}$  (Be bound/tied up!) for  $\text{קדשו}$  “opens the possibility that  $\text{קשש}$  might be used here in the sense 'be hard, stiff.'” There is almost no end to conjecture. Since  $\text{𐤒}$  is supported by 1QpZeph and MurXII, and all the versions support it, we stick with the form and root as we have it. Ugaritic provides evidence of the ancient Northwest Semitic verb  $\text{qtt}$ , meaning “to drag around/down/off” or “to creep/crawl” (DUL). The Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.2.iv:27'), for instance, says  $\text{yqt b'l w yšt ym}$  (Baal *drags off* and dismembers Yam). The R-stem occurs in *KTU* 1.114:5, which scholars believe says  $\text{km klb yqtqt}$  (like a dog, he *crawls*). In Hebrew, due to the merging of Northwest Semitic  $\text{t}$  [th] with  $\text{š}$  [sh], that verb would be vocalized and written  $\text{qšš}$ , which is what

we find here in Zeph. To drag oneself or to creep/crawl indicates a posture of submission, humility, and, perhaps, fear. Thus, the text tells those who are “deterred from YHWH's wake” to turn back to him by means of humbling and groveling. They are to be contrasted with those, in v. 3, who are already humble. Our interpretation not only fits well in context, but requires no change or emendation. The versions, composed many centuries later than Zeph, had no knowledge of this ancient Semitic verb and thus, like modern translators, turned to the only verb then known to them “to gather/collect wood.”

**you nation uneager** — Literally, “*the* nation.” The definite article signals the vocative, as does our use of “you.” The Niphal of כסף appears in Gen 31:30 and Ps 84:3, where it refers to the subject's attitude of “longing/yearning/desiring.” Thus, we render it that way here. With the negative particle, it means, “nation not longing.” SET (without desire) renders it well. The fact that the verb is not accompanied here by *lamed* as in other cases is explained by the fact that there is no object on which to attach it. The object has been elided, which is precisely why ט resupplies it: “a nation of a generation that *does not want to return to Torah*.” As seen in 1:6, what the nation is “uneager” to do is walk in YHWH's way, which ט interprets as the written Torah. To suppose that the lack of *lamed* changes the semantic nuance of the verb from active to passive is to overlook the basic makeup of the verse. Translations like HCSB, NET, and NKJV (undesirable) or KJV (not desired), which ascribe that longing to others, go against the verb's typical sense and seem to be based entirely on ו's *non amabilis* (not lovable). Other translations, based on the Arabic verb *kasapa* (to be pale), interpret this as “pale[-faced]” and, thus, “ashamed.” With the negative particle, that would mean “without shame” (NASB, NJPST, NAB, etc.), “shameless” (NRSV, ISV, ESV, etc.), having “no shame” (ASV, WEB, LEB, etc.), “shameful” (NIV), or, as awkwardly proposed by Ewald, “who never turned white.” Since the verb is meaningfully attested in Hebrew, we find no reason to search for new meanings in Arabic—especially since Arabic is a different branch of Semitic (Arabian) than Hebrew (Northwest). Typically, the lack of a definite article on the participle when it appears on the previous noun would indicate that the participle functions as a predicate of the noun and not as an attributive adjective. Yet even if we rendered it “is not eager” or “does not yearn,” we would still arrive at an adjectival meaning. We attempt to mimic the concise nature of the Hebrew phrase (only three words) by using a similarly concise rendering (three English words). ט says “foolish/undisciplined/stupid” as though reading לא נוסר (not disciplined).

2:2 The last half of the verse consists of two statements that are virtually identical. The only difference is that one says “fuming” (חרון) and the other says “day” (יום). It is possible that only one is original and the other is a result of either dittography or commentary. However, we think it more likely that both lines are original. Not only are both in MurXII and 1QpZeph, but the repetition is characteristic of Zephaniah's anaphora. Note also that the repetition of two almost identical couplets is one of the most common characteristics of ancient Semitic poetry as seen in Old Akkadian and Ugaritic. The Baal Cycle (KTU 1.3.v:33-34), for instance, says *klnyy qsh nbln klnyy nbl ksh* (All of us, yes, his pitcher will bring; all of us, yes, will bring his cup). See notes on the next verse for more reasons in favor of its authenticity.

**engendering** — לָדַר is a Qal infinitive construct of the verb יָלַד. That verb could be active (to birth/bring about) or passive (to be born/birthed). The question is how to understand it here. The passive Qal of יָלַד is quite ancient. Over time, it fell out of use and was replaced with or reimagined as other passive stems (Niphal, Pual, or Hophal). It is quite possible, therefore, that the infinitive here in Zeph reflects the passive sense. Modern translations tend to prefer it, as the following examples attest: NJPST (is born), NET (becomes reality), NKJV (is issued), ISV (is carried out), and NASB (takes effect). Older translations (Geneva, Bishops', KJV, etc.) tend to prefer the active sense. How one determines the sense ultimately depends on how one interprets the following noun. For reasons described in the note below, we believe it functions as a verbal noun of action. Therefore, we render it “engendering.”

**conviction** — Usually, חָק means “law/decreed/rule/statute.” Here, we think it functions poetically to refer to the passing of judgment or the laying down of law. Therefore, we render it “conviction” (alternatively, “sentence/verdict”). For a similar use of this noun, see Ps 2:7. Our interpretation is supported by ט, which says “before the decree of the law-court goes out against you.” Some interpreters think that חָק is in a genitive relationship with לָדַר. This would result in a translation like “the issuance of a conviction.” Daniel Ryou (*Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*), for example, prefers this interpretation: “before the birth of decree.” Translations that reflect it include YLT and LEB. We think, however, that the previous vocative (you) should be understood as the subject. In that respect, our interpretation is supported by ו, which says “before you become.” We also understand חָק as the object of the infinitive. Virtually the same construction—an infinitive followed by an object—occurs in Hag 2:15: מִטֶּרֶם שׁוּם־אֶבֶן (before setting a stone). And, as noted by Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT), “יָלַד is figuratively always used with an obj[ect].” Thus, we understand the text to be saying “before engendering conviction” (that is, before you engender conviction). The majority of translations, however, take חָק as the subject of the infinitive, which would result either in the active rendering “before conviction brings about” or the passive rendering “before a conviction is brought about.” Since the former makes no sense, translations usually interpret the infinitive as coming from the passive Qal. Note, for example, the awkwardness of the KJV: “before the decree bring forth.” Bring forth what? Who knows! To sidestep these issues, *BHS* suggests emending לָדַר חָק to לֹא תִרְחֲקוּ (you are not driven [away]). That is reflected in NRSV, REB, and NAB (driven away) as well as NJB (dispersed). The nice thing about that emendation is that it matches the use of the negative particle and imperfect that occur two more times in the verse in parallel places, and the shift from the one to the other is not difficult to imagine. There are, however, several problems. First, the verb רָחַק only occurs twice elsewhere (Joel 2:8 and Judg 2:18) and in neither place does it mean “drive [away].” Second, such an emendation is entirely conjectural. Driver (“Linguistic and Textual Problems: Minor Prophets III”) thought “the almost necessary correction” was to a Niphal form of רָחַק. That would result in לֹא תִרְחֲקוּ (you are not removed). While that avoids the first issue with רָחַק, it is still entirely hypothetical. Since מִטֶּרֶם is coherent, and both ט and ו support it, we stick with מִטֶּרֶם.

**chaff** — Instead of מִן (chaff), 𐤓 has “flower,” representing 𐤓 (defectiva). Since MurXII supports 𐤓<sup>L</sup> and 1QpZeph appears to do so as well, we follow 𐤓<sup>L</sup>. See also 𐤓 and 𐤓.

**[before] . . . time passes** — Or “[before] . . . day passes.” Note that this is not “*the* day.” There is no definite article. Nor does “day” exist in any construction that would make it definite. Thus, rendering it “the day” (like NASB, ESV, KJV, etc.) is unwarranted. As Smith (ICC) says, “The only possible rendering . . . is, ‘like chaff *a day*’” (italics added). “Day” is either a metaphoric reference to daytime or to time itself. We prefer the later. So does Ben Zvi, who thinks the sense of the verse is “time is quickly running out.” Thus, even though “day” occurs two more times in this verse, it is used in this instance with a different semantic nuance than in the other occurrences (antanaclasis). 𐤓 lacks “day.” Since, however, both MurXII and 1QpZeph support 𐤓<sup>L</sup>, we follow 𐤓<sup>L</sup>. Note that we interpret the verb as a participle (passes) even though the Masoretes marked it as a perfect (passed). We do so because of the marker of time (before). For a similar grammatical circumstance, see Isa 8:8. Such an interpretation is entirely possible, makes more sense than saying “like chaff, time passed” (all chaff passed away?), and has the support of 𐤓 (although 𐤓 treats it as an adverbial participle). The use of a perfect instead of an imperfect may be due to nothing more than grammatical alternation, which is common in Semitic poetry. Many translations take the entire line as an aside to the previous statement (even though few place it in parentheses or separate it with an em dash). Bewer (“Textual Suggestions on Isa. 2:6 66:3, Zeph 2:2.5”) suggested that this line continues the thought of the previous one and, therefore, is still dependent upon “before.” That is also quite common in Semitic poetry. And since the first half of the verse breaks with the structural parallelism of the second, we think that makes a lot of sense. Therefore, we render it “[before], like chaff.” Many translations do likewise (KJV, ISV, ESV, etc.). Some translations add “and” instead of “before” to note this continuance (NIV, HCSB, NET, etc.).

**so it may not** — The construction לֹא בְּטָרֵם, which occurs twice in this verse, is unique to Zeph. Most scholars call it pleonastic, but for what purpose? There are two options. It could intensify the language. In that case, one would render it something like “right before.” Thus, Ball (“The Rhetorical Shape of Zephaniah”) translates it “indeed before.” We believe it functions to create a conditional negative (so that not). Berlin (AB) agrees: “The syntax may be interpreted as ‘in order that . . . not.’ That is, in order that the wrath of God not overtake you.”

**YHWH's rage** — Literally, “the rage of YHWH.”

- 2:3 Many scholars believe that this verse is secondary to an oracle that was originally composed of vv. 1-2. There are, however, several reasons for accepting it as part of the oracle. First, the opening statement (הִתְקַשְׁשׁוּ וְקִוּשׁוּ) is a call to humility (see notes in 2:1). Likewise, the statement “Any [who are] humble [in] the land, whatever his demand, do!” is not, in our estimation, asking those who are already humble to follow YHWH's decree, but is, once again, a call to humility. It is like saying to a group of people after a speech has been delivered, “Anyone who agrees, follow me!” This is the language of challenge spoken to those who do not seem to have taken the right side yet. Thus, against Hadjiev (“Survival, Conversion and Restoration: Reflections on the Redaction History of the Book of Zephaniah”), who believes that everything except “Any [who are] humble [in] the land, whatever his demand, do” is original, we believe the whole fits



together perfectly. Second, the use of the hypothetical “perhaps” in this verse nicely parallels the use of the conditional negatives “so it may not” in the previous verse (see notes there). Both statements communicate the same message: there is hope for those who change their ways. Third, the recurrence of so many words the same number of times in such a short space points to the integrity of the oracular composition as a whole. So, for instance, **בָּטָרָם** repeats three times in v. 2, **בִּקְשׁוּ** repeats three times in v. 3, and between them both, **אֵף** and **יוֹם** repeat three times. Finally, there is larger structural parallelism between the parts: both the first and last sections begin with imperatives or verbs that operate imperatively (“Creep and crawl!” and “Seek!”, respectively) and end with the same phrase (the day of YHWH's rage). In our estimation, therefore, if any part of this oracle is secondary, there is no remaining evidence upon which to base the claim.

**Any [who are] humble** — Literally, “all the humble [ones].” Traditionally, this is interpreted as a vocative: “all [you] humble [ones].” It makes no sense, however, to tell those who are “humble” to “seek humility.” According to 1:6, it is those who are “deterred from YHWH's wake” who need to seek him. Such persons can't possibly be “humble,” nor does it make sense to tell those who “do his demand” to “seek justice” (isn't justice what he demands?). We believe translators have gotten it wrong. This verse is laying out, in plain and simple terms, what it means to be humble, and like v. 1, calling on people to do so. It is certainly a summons, but it is not calling to those who are already humble. Various emendations have been proposed to make sense of the text. Since, however, MurXII supports **מִלֵּל**, we follow **מִלֵּל**.

**[in] the land** — We interpret this phrase as a dative of place. Thus our rendering “in.” So REB and GW. Most translations interpret the phrase as a simple genitive (*of* the earth/land). **אֶרֶץ** can mean either “land” or “earth.” English translations are about equally split on which to use. It seems clear from the context, however, that this means “land.” The definite article also suggests that this is a specific place—not any place on earth. Ben Zvi draws the obvious conclusion from the rest of Zeph: “Since Zeph 3:11-13 informs the reader that ‘a poor humble people’ . . . will remain after the judgment, then it seems probable that in these communities, these ‘poor and humble people’ were identified with ‘all the humble of the land’ . . . , and accordingly with those who accepted the advice of v. 3b.” In other words, the “humble” in Zeph 3 are a specific people (the “remnant of Israel” according to 3:13) in a specific land (they are on God's “sacred mountain” according to 3:11). Thus, if those “humble” are the same as these “humble,” we should understand **אֶרֶץ** as *land*, not *earth*. Because MurXII lacks the definite article, the noun then takes on a more universal sense (earth).

**whatever his demand** — We render **מִשְׁפָּט** as “demand.” Alternatively, “charge.” We agree with Ryou's assessment: “The word **מִשְׁפָּט** can be best rendered ‘command, requirement, ordinance,’ in the general sense.” Most translations understand the relative pronoun as “who.” The syntax, however, does not support that interpretation. Berlin (AB) says, “The more usual syntax of a dependent relative clause in which the subject of the relative clause is the same as the main clause is *'sr + verb + object*. Here we find *'sr + object + verb*.” Berlin believes that shifts the emphasis from “the humble” to “his demand.” We agree. In fact, based on the syntax,

we think אֵשׁ is telling us something about “his demand,” not “the humble.” It also appears to us that the use of אֵשׁ parallels the use of כָּל. Therefore, we interpret the relative as “whatever” in parallel with “any.” Our interpretation appears to be supported by וְ, which begins a new main clause focused on “demand” instead of “the humble.” Note, however, that וְ only says “demand.” It is lacking the pronominal suffix “his.” MurXII agrees with מִן. If one is going to interpret אֵשׁ as “who,” in reference to “the humble,” the better way to interpret the Hebrew would be as a verbless statement: “All the humble [in] the land [are] they who do his demand.”

**do!** — Literally, “they do.” The same consonantal text can be read, however, as an imperative. In line with all the other imperatives throughout the verse, we think that reading more likely. Our interpretation is supported by וְ. If rendered according to the Masoretic vocalization, the same information would be conveyed: those who are humble are they who do what YHWH demands.

**[what is] right** — Or “justice.” Most translations render it “righteousness,” which we avoid since “righteousness” is a loaded theological term that may imply more than what our text states.

**YHWH's rage** — Literally, “the rage of YHWH.”

- 2:5 As a rule, THF sticks very closely to the order of the text as it has been preserved through time. In rare cases, however, if there is extremely good reason, we change the order. We do so here. We switch the positions of vv. 4 and 5 for multiple reasons. Verse 5 clearly begins a new literary section—an oracle of execration signaled by the use of הִנֵּי (Oh [no]!). Therefore, if the content of v. 4 really does come before it, that content must end the previous section. The problem with that, however, involves both the content of v. 4 and its opening particle. Verse 4 is about the cities of Philistia, which have nothing to do with what came before and everything to do with the next section, which is about the “territory of the Philistines.” Furthermore, v. 5 uses the phrase “without even an inhabitant,” which, in all its other occurrences in the HB, deal with cities becoming desolate, which is exactly what v. 4 describes (and with the same language). Then we have v. 4 opening with כִּי, which is either asseverative (yes/indeed) or causal (because/for). Most translations take it as causal, which would make the sense something like “YHWH's wrath will be so difficult to escape because the Philistines will not get away!” That can't possibly be correct. The other rendering (asseverative) would make the sense something like “YHWH's wrath will be so difficult to escape that not even the Philistines will get away!” Yet that can't be right either (the Philistines are *expected* to fall under YHWH's wrath). The only way to maintain the position of v. 4 would be to separate it from v. 3 and v. 5. In that case, however, we would have one verse standing alone and the use of כִּי would be much less meaningful. All the evidence, therefore, suggests that v. 4 comes after v. 5. Not only does the content naturally follow from v. 5 to v. 4, but the use of כִּי makes a lot of sense at the start of v. 4. In that position, כִּי takes on an asseverative nuance—it introduces a verse that expands and amplifies the previous statement. Many scholars agree that it has an asseverative sense—such as Smith (WBC), Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT), Ben Zvi, etc.—but view it as the beginning of the next textual unit (despite the start of the “woe” oracle). A few translations

reflect that as well (NJPST and NET). Roberts (OTL) positions the verse as we do. The canonical question then presents itself: if the original order was v. 5 followed by v. 4, why do we find v. 4 in its current position? The answer is scribal editing. The oracles of Zeph were written down at different times. Later, they were gathered and placed together on the same sheet of vellum or papyrus so that they formed a single text. The “woe oracle” was, at one time, a separate oracle. When it was joined to the end of the oracle here in Zeph, verse 4 was used as a kind of “glue” to hold the two sections together because it had a thematic link with what comes before (God's wrath) and a contextual link with what comes after (the annihilation of Philistia). So there was a purpose for placing the verse where we find it now even if, as the evidence suggests, that was not where it originally belonged. Ezek 25:16 has so many links in common with this and the following verses that it may be drawing directly from them (see below for more).

**Oh [no]!** — The fact that this interjection is independent of the rest of the text is shown by the disjunctive Masoretic mark (*rebia*) above it. See section A3.

**[You] populaces of the coastal league** — Like most translations, we interpret this as a vocative.

Based on the second half of the verse, a “you” must be intended here. The phrase **חבל הים** carries either a political or geographic meaning. If geographical, its meaning would be something like “the region/strip/border/line of the sea.” If political, it would mean something like “the band/union/group of the sea,” as in the phrase “band of prophets” (**חבל נביאים**) in 1 Sam 10:5, 10. Most translations choose the former. We choose the later since “seacoast” is actually a completely different phrase (**חוף הים**). See, for instance, Deut 1:7, Josh 9:1, Jer 47:7, and Ezek 25:16.

**the Cut-off-ones (Cretans)** — Literally, “Cretans” (people from Crete). “Cherethite” is another name for the Philistines (implied in 1 Sam 30:14). The name is usually transliterated “Cherethites” by English translators. Note, however, NAB (Cretan folk) and NET and GW (from Crete). We believe that there is a semantic play going on with the word, namely that hearers would have automatically associated the name “Cherethite” with the verb meaning “to cut off/destroy.” Such a word-play is arrived at semantically. In Ezek 25:16, the word-play is actually phonetic: “I will cut off the Cut-off-ones (Cretans).” Amos 1:8 is another prophetic text aimed against the Philistines. In it, the verbs “to cut off” and “to wipe out” are used synonymously, which shows how easily the verb “to cut off” would come to the mind of someone who heard or read a prophecy against the Philistines. Our interpretation is supported by most of the ancient versions. **℣**, for instance, renders it “the people who deserve to be cut off.” **℞** renders it “family of the destroyed.” The Three render it “the destroyed ones.” Genesis Rabbah records the opinion of Rabbi Huna with regard to this verse: “the nation of the Cherethites” (Zeph. II, 5), which means that they deserved to be annihilated” (*Genesis in Two Volumes*). **℣**, however, followed by **℞**, simply transliterates it **κρητων** (Cretans). For more on this word-play, see Zeph 2:6.

**this oracle** — Since “oracle” is in construct with a definite subject (YHWH), it has an implied definiteness that we communicate with “this.” See also NJB and REB.

**[is] against you:** — This must be the end of the introductory material, with “Canaan” starting the actual oracle, since this “you” is masculine plural (and, thus, refers back to the masculine plural “populaces,” which were described as having come from Crete), whereas the “you” that follows, referring to Canaan/the territory of Philistines, is feminine singular (the next verses are also feminine singular, but third instead of second-person). Thus, we read against the Masoretic accentuation and position the *athnach* under עליכם. The phrase “the word of YHWH against X” functions elsewhere to introduce the words of an oracle (see, for instance, Amos 3:1 and Zech 12:1). English translations that recognize the syntactic and functional distinction between the opening of the oracle and the oracle proper include KJV, Moffatt, REB, etc. Many commentators also notice the distinction. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) says that the Hebrew must be read “The word of YHWH against you is as follows.” Ben Zvi thinks that “the ‘prophet’ quotes the divine speech” after this phrase.

**Canaan** — Bewer suggests that instead of כנען (Canaan), we read כי נענה (for it will be afflicted/subdued). Although that makes sense, it is entirely hypothetical. Other suggestions—such as Driver’s נכנע (humble yourself) in “Linguistic And Textual Problems: Minor Prophets III” or אכנעך (I will subdue/afflict/crush you) as in NJB, REB, and NAB—are equally hypothetical. 𐤄, 𐤅, and 𐤆 support the Hebrew, which we follow.

**I will wipe you out** — This verb is *weqatalti*. The *waw* shifts the meaning from perfect (I did) to imperfect (I will do). In other words, it signals future action. *Weqatalti* also usually follows a finite verbal form and indicates succession. For that reason, some render the *waw* as “and” (NRSV, NASB, ESV, etc.), “even” (Geneva, KJV, and Leeser), or “therefore” (Rotherham). There is no previous verb, however, in this pronouncement. The form may indicate that the original oracle was longer than what is now preserved and that, instead, we have only the later part of it. Yet, “the *w-qatalti* form is so adapted to express the future that it is even used in a relative or absolute beginning” (JM §119c). In its present context, it does stand at the beginning. Therefore, we do not add something like “and” to indicate succession. Note that “you” is feminine singular. It refers back to the feminine singular “land/territory.”

**void of populace** — Or “without even an inhabitant.” The use of privative *mem* on the particle of negation acts to intensify the statement (it does not mean “from”). We show that intensification with the phrase “void of.” REB (bereft of inhabitants) and Moffatt (till not one inhabitant is left) also capture that intensification. See Zeph 3:6 for the same language. 𐤄 seems to be reading ממושב (without a dwelling-place) instead of מאין יושב (without even an inhabitant). MurXII supports 𐤌<sup>L</sup>.

2:4 For the reasons why we position v. 4 where we do, see the notes on v. 5 above.

**Yes** — We interpret this as an asseverative (yes/indeed). See the first note on v. 5 above.

**Gaza—a ghost-town** — Literally, “Gaza—abandoned.” By our use of “Gaza” and “ghost-town,” we attempt to capture something of the sound-play of the Hebrew phrase ‘Azzāh ‘azûbāh. Some attempt has been made in scholarly articles to do so as well. Ball renders it “Gaza shall be ghastful.” Unfortunately, that sacrifices much of the meaning. We prefer how Paul Raabe (“Translating for Sound”) deals with it because he mimics the sound without sacrificing its

meaning: “Gaza will become a ghost town.” See section C3. **ט** reads “spoiled” (בזוזה) instead of “abandoned” (עזובה). Since MurXII and the rest of the versions support the Hebrew, we do so as well.

**she will be** — Or “she will become.” Note that there is a shift from 2FS “you” in v. 5 to 3FS “she” in v. 4. Such alternation is common in ancient Semitic poetry. Yet, we can be sure that v. 4 is an extension of the oracle that began in v. 5 because it is still about a single feminine referent (the “territory”).

**while** — We interpret this conjunction as circumstantial. Alternatively, “and.”

**[is turned] to ashes** — Or “becomes a waste/desolation.” The *lamed* carries over the sense of the previous verb, which we render by the phrase “[is turned] to.” Instead of “waste” or “desolation,” we use “ashes” to recreate the assonance of the *shin* in both אשקלון and שוממה. See section C3.

**[As for]** — Since the second half of the verse carries on the emphatic nature of the כִּי that began it, we start this phrase with “as for.” So does LEB.

**Oustville (Ashdod)** — In this verse, we find phonetic word-plays for Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron, but for Ashdod, we find a *semantic* word-play (see section C3). When Zeph's audience heard “Ashdod” mentioned alongside the verb “to drive out,” they probably associated the name Ashdod with the verb שָׁדַד. Though שָׁדַד typically means “to destroy/devastate,” we think Thomas (“A Pun on the Name Ashdod in Zephaniah ii. 4”) is correct when he concludes that שָׁדַד can also mean “to drive out.” Note how the verb is used in Prov 19:26: מִשָּׁדַד־אֵב יִבְרִיחַ אִם. There, שָׁדַד can't possibly mean “to destroy/devastate”; and moreover it is directly parallel with a Hiphil of בָּרַח, which means “to cause to flee” or, more simply, “drive out.” Thomas also points to a cognate of שָׁדַד in Ethiopic that means “to expel” (*sadada*). We recreate the word-play by giving the semantic meaning of the name “Ashdod” as it was intended by the word-play, but provide the actual name in parentheses. For a similar situation, see “Bethlehem” in Ruth 1:1. At the same time, there may be a *double entendre* at work in the text (see next note).

**in half a day** — Or “by noon.” An ancient Semitic idiom meaning “quickly,” which one can see by its parallelism in Jer 15:8 to “suddenly.” The phrase appears in Moabite on the Mesha Inscription (KAI §181): אֲנִי מִשַׁע בֶּן כְּמֹשׁ[יַת] מֶלֶךְ מֹאָב . . . וַיֹּאמֶר לִי כְּמֹשׁ לֵךְ אַחֲזֵה אֶת גִּבְהַ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַחֲלֵךְ בַּלֵּלָה וְאַלְתַּחֲם בָּהּ מִבֶּקַע הַשְּׁחָרָת עַד הַצָּהָרִים (I [am] Mesha, son of Kemosh[iyat], King of Moab . . . Kemosh said to me, “Go seize Nebo from Israel.” So I marched at night and fought with it from the break of dawn until midday). Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) comments on the text like this: “The conquest and destruction went so quickly that at midday the conquerors could already begin to drive out the inhabitants.” Note that in Jer 15:8 (as well as Ps 91:6), the phrase “by noon” is used along with the verb שָׁדַד to mean “destroy quickly.” As Zalcman points out (“Ambiguity and Assonance at Zephaniah II 4”), it may be that by placing the name “Ashdod” next to “by noon,” the author meant to evoke the same idea in the minds of his/her hearers by appealing to a known expression. In this way, a *double entendre* was created (see note above).

**Ekron is excised** — Literally, “Ekron is uprooted/tore out.” We attempt to mimic the fantastic word-play intended by the Hebrew phrase *‘Eqrôn tē’āqēr*. See section C3. Some attempt has been made in scholarly articles to do so as well. Raabe renders it “Ekron will be excavated.” Unfortunately, that sacrifices much of the meaning. Better is how Ball deals with it: “Ekron will be extirpated.”

2:6 **She will become** — This verb is feminine singular, which means that, contrary to all English translations, the subject is not the masculine “coastal league” (note that the verb in the very next verse, which must have “league” as its subject, is masculine, not feminine). The start of the oracle in v. 5 shows that the subject is the feminine “territory.” And, as supported by the imagery of v. 4, this oracle is portraying its subject in the guise of a woman. Smith (ICC) agrees: “וְנִי can only be rendered ‘and it shall be’” (the “it” being the feminine subject that we render “she”). The translators of ❸ seem to have understood this, which would explain why they made the feminine name “Crete” the subject of the verb (either that or their *Vorlage* lacked “coastal league” entirely). Some translations try to get around the difficulty by changing the verb from a 3FS “she” to a 2MS “you” (NRSV, ESV, LEB, etc.). Since the most ancient witnesses (MurXII and ❸) support וְנִי<sup>L</sup>, and a feminine referent is required by the context, we follow וְנִי<sup>L</sup>. See section B3.

**(the coastal league)** — חֶבֶל הַיָּם means “the band/union/group of the sea,” not “seacoast,” which is חוֹף הַיָּם (see v. 5). We put this in parentheses because it has every appearance of a secondary addition—either an accidental duplication of the phrase from v. 5 or an editorial insertion to explain that the “she” is actually the masculine “coastal league.” ❸ does not have this phrase at all, which may be evidence that its *Vorlage* lacked it. Since, however, it is present in MurXII, we keep it in our translation.

**meadows** — Or “pastures.” נֹת is typically spelled נֹאֹת. The *aleph* could have fallen out as a scribe copied the text by ear. Though נֹת can also mean “residence/abode,” the pastoral imagery in this and the following verse favors “meadows/pastures.” Thus, for example, נֹת is linked with “shepherds” in Amos 1:2, and the singular form is linked with “shepherds” in Jer 33:12. In both places, it has the meaning “meadows/pastures.”

**cut . . . [carved]** — We interpret כָּרַת as a Qal infinitive construct that functions verbally and governs two nominative nouns. Such a construction yields “meadows cut” and “pens [carved].” Some believe that כָּרַת is the defective plural of כָּר (pasture). If so, the verse would read: “She will become (the coastal league) meadows—*pastures* [for] shepherds and pens [for] flocks” (following the Masoretic accentuation, which separates “meadows” from “pastures” with a disjunctive *tevir*) or, as the KJV preferred (against the accent): “meadows and pastures for shepherds, and pens for flocks.” Such an interpretation is favored by virtually all English translations if they don’t follow ❸. The problem, however, is that it destroys any word-play between “Cretans” (כִּרְתִּים) and “pastures” (כִּרְת). Given Zeph’s propensity for such word-plays—especially in this oracle—we find it unlikely that “pastures” would be intended. It would also be superfluous since “pastures” is a synonym of “meadows.” Why include two words that mean the same thing right next to each other? To that, most would answer: “It was added to

create a word-play” (because **כָּרַת** sounds similar to **נֹת**). If so, then our interpretation is better because not only do we have the assonance of **כָּרַת** and **נֹת**, but we have the play with **כָּרַת** and **כָּרְתִּים**. **ס** takes **כָּרַת** as the name “Crete.” The editor of *BHS* prefers this reading. So does Smith (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets*), Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT), and the translators of REB. We consider that reading improbable and only worthwhile in the absence of any other interpretation. Some read **כָּרַת** as a nominative from **כָּרַה** (to dig), meaning “a dugout,” and, therefore, render it something like “caves,” “cisterns,” or “wells” (HCSB, NIV, Rotherham, etc.). Such a word, however, is entirely hypothetical. The rendering “cottages” originated with Geneva and spread to the Bishops' Bible and KJV. It is a fabrication resulting from an inability to make sense of the text. In our opinion, however, the text makes perfect sense as it stands.

**[for] shepherds . . . [for] flocks** — We interpret both phrases as datives. Thus, we insert “for.” They are genitives in **ס**.

2:7 This verse appears to contain two explanatory glosses, which we indicate with parentheses. Quotes are placed around the parts that are not a gloss to show that they continue the voice of YHWH in the original oracle. See section B3.

**[The] league** — **חָבַל** probably means here “band/union/group,” though it may also mean “region/strip/border/line” (see notes on v. 5). Nowhere in the HB does it mean “coast,” “seacoast,” or “coastland.” And no English translation renders **חָבַל** as “coast,” “seacoast,” or “coastland” anywhere else. Though **ס** (followed by **ס**) includes “the sea” after this word, this appears to be nothing more than harmonization with previous phrases. **ט**, **י**, and MurXII support **חָבַל**. Translations like “coast,” “seacoast,” and “coastland” arise from an interpretation made in v. 5 that runs counter to the evidence. NJB (the league) agrees with our rendering. So does Smith (WBC), who renders it “the border.” NJPST renders it “portion,” which is similar, but has echos of covenantal language. That is preferred by SET, Berlin (AB), and Ryou.

**Judah's house** — Literally, “the house of Judah.” The word “house” is used here to refer to a national and/or ethnic people-group, which is a different use of the word than in the next part of the verse (see section B3).

**In place of them** — Or, “in their stead.” Although **עַל** often means “on” or “upon,” it is also used in many contexts to indicate some sort of contrary position (“over against” or “in spite of”). Because the previous verse states that the land on which the Philistines now reside will be taken over by others, we think the later meaning applies here (the “them” refers to the Philistine “populaces”) and we agree with the assessment of Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT): “In **עַל** then, as so often, there is a hostile element: *against them*, or possibly *in their place*.” See section C2.

**graze** — Or “feed.” If used for the “shepherds” instead of the “flocks,” it could also mean “tend/shepherd/herd.” Instead of **יִרְעֶון** from **רָעָה**, YLT (they have pleasure) appears to have read **יִרְצֶון** from **רָצָה** (to be pleased/accepted/find favor). No evidence, however, supports that reading. Note the appearance of the so-called paragodic or energetic *nun*—a form that still perplexes scholars. Garr (“The Paragodic *nun* in Rhetorical Perspective”) dispels common misconceptions and provides one of the best analyses to date. Basically, the *nun* is a remnant of

the ancient Semitic *yaqtulu* form—the original indicative as opposed to the jussive-preterite *yaqtul* or volitive *yaqtula* (as seen in Ugaritic and Amarnah Canaanite). It now exists as a marked expression of the non-jussive, non-volitive imperfect and may mark a verbal clause as subordinate to another. As pointed out by Rainey (“The Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation”), when the *nun* appears on imperfects with suffixes, it may also reflect a past-continuous action (“used to do,” “continually did,” “would do,” or “have been doing”) as in Exod 19:19 or 21:29.

**Ashkelon's edifices** — Literally, “the houses of Ashkelon.” The word “house” is used here to refer to buildings that have now been deserted by their former owners. Thus, we render it “edifices.” Smith (WBC) prefers “estates.” This is a different use of the word “house” than in the previous part of the verse. See section C2.

**by evening** — Most translations render the preposition “at” or “in.” We render it “by” since this phrase parallels the phrase “in half a day” in v. 4 and both phrases are idiomatic for a short passage of time. See section C2.

**repose** — Or “lay down.” Used more often of animals than humans. When used of humans, the purpose is to help create a metaphor relating those humans to animals. See section C2. Note the appearance of the so-called paragogic/energetic *nun*. This *nun* is a marked expression of the non-jussive, non-volitive imperfect (see the note on “graze” above). After this, 𐤎 adds “because of the presence of the Judahites.” The characteristic expression in 𐤎 is “because of the presence of the Israelites.” That expression is usually used in contexts related to Moab and Ammon, which makes its presence here a little strange (perhaps it was an editorial attempt to better link this oracle with the next one). MurXII and the other versions support 𐤎<sup>L</sup>.

**Because** — We interpret this 𐤁 as causal. It could also be interpreted as temporal (when). NJB includes both (for, when).

**their god YHWH** — Literally, “YHWH, their god.” Notice the shift in person at this point. In the previous verse, it was YHWH speaking. Now, it appears to be someone else speaking about YHWH. This may be evidence of a change in author (and, thus, of the original oracle being augmented). See section C2.

**set them right** — 𐤏𐤓𐤕 identifies *a change in the status of its object*. 𐤏𐤓𐤕𐤁 utilizes the Qal stem, meaning “to put in the proper place/order/position/status” or, more simply, “set right.” What that means is fleshed out by the next phrase. Since that phrase is positive, negative meanings like “punish” (NJB) must be rejected. See 1:8 and section A3.

**turn their tide** — See section A3.

2:8 **Moab's slur** — Literally, “the slur of Moab.” As the parallelism with “Ammonites” makes plain, this is a slur by the inhabitants Moab, who are referenced by use of their country's name. 𐤇𐤓𐤏𐤁 is a collective singular referring to any such slur. 𐤎 takes it as plural.

**the Ammonites' offense** — Literally, “the [remark of] offense of the Ammonites.” 𐤁𐤓𐤏𐤁 is a collective plural referring to any such remark (the masculine does not occur elsewhere in a singular form). The switch from a singular in the previous line to a plural in this line is a typical example of grammatical alternation in Semitic poetry. Note also the alternation from a place (as in the previous line) to a people (“Ammonites,” not “Ammon”). Such shifts have no semantic function. Note the wonderful poetic assonance crafted by the oral composer or scribal



artisan between **וגרופי** (from **גרפ**) and **ויגרילו** (from **גרל**) in just the same manner as **חרפת** (a slur) parallels **חרפו** (they slurred). Such words cause the statements to cohere and, thereby, create continuity, movement, and emphasis. We mimic that assonance with “offense” and “launch an offensive.” Instead of **גרופים**, **ו** says **κονδυλισμούς** (punches/battering), which appears to be an accidental *dalet-reshe* interchange: **גרופים** (from Aramaic, meaning “scratchers/scrapers”). The activity described in this verse is extremely similar to activity mentioned elsewhere with reference to the overthrow of Jerusalem by Babylon (see, for instance, Ezek 25:2-5), which may point to an exilic date for this oracle.

**how** — Or “that.” **אשר** functions as a complementizer of **שמע** to mean “X heard *how/that*.” In other words, it is a poetic alternative for **כי**. For another example of this grammatical construction, see Josh 2:10. Translations that recognize this include NRSV, ESV, REB, etc. It should not be treated as a relative particle (who/which). The interpretation of **אשר** as an instrumental dative (with which/by which/whereby) comes from **ו**.

**launched an offensive against** — Literally, “intensified against.” The verb functions here either as a military idiom or metaphor. The idea is one of attack and encroachment (perhaps also despoilment). So REB (encroached on). So Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT): “To-elevate-oneself-against-a-people practically means: to gain mastery over or to make raids into its territory.” Just such an event is described in 2 Kgs 24:1-2 and is said to be “according to the oracle of YHWH that was spoken by means of his servants, the prophets.” Could 2 Kgs 24:1-2 have this oracle in mind? If so, it lends support to the idea that parts of Zeph were composed during the time of Josiah's predecessors (Jehoiakim particularly). Yet 2 Kings has a very different view of things than Zeph (negative here; positive there). This particular verb (a Hiphil of **גרל**) was used instead of another to create poetic assonance with the noun **גרופים**. We represent that assonance with our renderings “offense” and “launch an offensive.” Note that the verb is not a reflexive Hithpael. Therefore, renderings like the Geneva and KJV (magnified themselves) should be rejected. **ויגרילו** an inverted imperfect (*wayyiqtol*). The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction. It inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. If one were to add something at the start of this line to explain the use of the inverted verb, it should be another complementizer: “*how* they launched an offensive against.” Translations that treat this verb as another form of speech (to “gloat” or “boast”) presume that this is a shortened form of the phrase **הגריל פה** (enlarged [the] mouth), even though there is no other place where it can be said that one boasts about one's border. Such an interpretation also overlooks the fact that in Hebrew, as well as in English, an invective or slur is not limited to speech—it can also be carried out in action (see, for instance, Num 15:30). Efros (“Textual Notes on the Hebrew Bible”) suggests emending the text from **ויגרילו** to **ויגרילו** (they cast lots). See, for instance, Obad 1:11. While an ingenious suggestion, no manuscript evidence supports it.

**their border** — Or “their boundary.” So REB (their frontiers). As the parallelism with “my people” makes clear, “their” refers to the border of the territory of YHWH's people. Pointing to Amos 1:13 and Jer 49:1, Smith (WBC) takes it to mean an expansion of territory (enlarged

their borders). So does SET (expanded [their territory] along their border) and Moffatt (their gains of land). As stated by Ryou (note 93), Amos 1:13 and Jer 49:1 actually prove the opposite since completely different verbs are used to express the territorial expansion of Moab and Ammon: רחב (to widen/broaden) and ירש (to take possession of). Thus, there is simply no reason to interpret “their” in terms of the Moabites or Ammonites (as in NJB, ISV, or GW). Instead of “their border,” ש says “my borders.” The use of “my” instead of “their” is probably a result of harmonization. ט, ש, and ו support מ<sup>L</sup>. Unfortunately, MurXII is missing the end of the word, but it is reasonable to assume that it supports מ<sup>L</sup> as well. Such alternation in person is a typical characteristic of ancient Semitic poetry.

2:9 **[by] my life** — Literally, “[by] the life of me.” A shorter version of the phrase “[by] the life of Personal-Name.” Whenever this phrase is used with reference to YHWH, the Masoretes point “life” as חַי instead of חַיִּי so that, phonetically, the last *yod* of “life” and the first *yod* of “YHWH” will each be preserved in pronunciation (in instances like this, where אֲנִי stands in for יְהוָה, the spelling is retained). The difference is one of phonetics, not semantics. This is the most common form of oath in the HB. It is a “speech act” (see Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*) consisting of two parts: a “force indicator,” which describes the kind of act being performed by the speech, and a “propositional indicator,” which gives the content of the oath (see Searle's *Speech Acts*). The phrase “[by] the life of Personal-Name” is a force indicator. It invokes the name of someone important to stand as a witness to the utterance. Since the Israelite deity has no one greater to invoke, YHWH always swears by himself. “As I live” is a less literal or more idiomatic rendering. Translations like “as surely as I live” (NIV and NET) or “as I'm alive and living” (ISV) change the statement from an oath, which calls on a person to stand as a witness, to a statement of fact, which affirms the certainty of something based on an undeniable reality.

**[Lord] of Legions** — The title is elided. For the full title, see, for example, 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Ps 89:9; Jer 5:14. Though traditionally translated “hosts,” צבאות refers to armies. Thus, we render it “legions.” Instead of “God of Legions,” however, we have chosen “Lord of Legions,” so that we don't use “God” in two titles next to each other. The rendering “Lord Almighty” (NIV) is based on the unique rendering of ש. Note the exceptional length of this particular prophetic marker. What purpose does it serve? The phrase “[Lord/God] of Legions” occurs only here and in v. 10.

**[I swear] that** — In an oath (signified by use of “by the life of X”), כִּי does a lot. As explained by Conklin in *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew*, כִּי not only functions as a complementizer for the verb נשבעתי (I swear), but it usually stands in for that elided performative (see Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*). Thus, this כִּי represents the mostly unexpressed phrase, “I swear that.” What follows is the content of the oath. To treat it as an asseverative (yes/surely) as in KJV, NIV, NASB, etc., is to miss the point. One translation that does not miss the point is SET ([I swear] that).

**Moab—X will she be** — The same construction occurs here as in v. 4. A feminine imperfect verb, which molds the country/people into the image of a woman, is positioned at the end of the line with its subject (Moab) fronted for emphasis. See section B4.

**the same as** — The particle of comparison (כ) can do more than indicate a simile (as/like). It can also express an agreement in kind (the same as).

**while** — We interpret this conjunction as circumstantial. Alternatively, “and.” See v. 4 for the same construction.

**[become]** — Typical of Semitic poetry, the second verb that would be parallel with the first is elided.

**a perpetual expanse** — Literally, “an expanse . . . perpetually.” Most translations treat ער-עולם as though it modified “waste/desolation.” Note, for example, HCSB (a perpetual wasteland), NRSV (a waste forever), and NJPST (a desolation evermore). According to the ancient reading tradition preserved by the Masoretic accents, however, “waste/desolation” is simply the last in a whole string of things modified by ער-עולם. We see no reason to break with that tradition. Therefore, we link “perpetual” with ממשק. Though ממשק looks like it comes from משק, it is probably related to משך (to extend/draw out), meaning an “extent” or “expanse.” The current spelling arose either through scribal error or represents an alternate phonetic form (*qof* is, after all, simply the emphatic version of *kaf*). Renderings like “overgrown” (HCSB) or “overrun” (NET) take the verb from שוך (to overflow), which appears in Joel 2:24 and 4:13 (in the Hiphil) and Ps 65:10 (in the Polel) with reference to liquid. Nothing here, however, involves a liquid. SET (a *rustling* thornbush) appears to take the word from שקק (to rush/charge/assault) and then interprets it in the sense of a noise. The rendering of KJV (breeding), which was copied from Geneva, may be loosely based on the same verb. Both “rustling” and “breeding,” however, stretch interpretation to the breaking point. Some suggest rendering ממשק as “heritage/possession” based off of משיח in Arabic instead of Hebrew. There may be support for this in Gen 15:2, which seems to call Eliezer of Damascus an “inheritor/possessor” (משק) of Abram's household. The problem, however, is that the meaning of משיח in Gen 15:2 is by no means certain. א renders ממשק as משמט, which refers to “fallow land” in MH (Jastrow). While that complies with the contextual idea of a place left desolate, it provides no help as to the meaning of this specific term in BH. ט says “and Damascus,” which might represent דמשק, but is far more likely an intentional alteration. If original, a verb would be missing, which is probably why ט changes the next word to a verb (see below). ו's *siccitas* (dryness) must be a contextual guess. Driver (“Hebrew Notes on Prophets and Proverbs”) suggested changing ממשק to מקמש, a shift based on the Arabic verb *qmš* (to gather), which would mean something like “a gathering/collection/mass.” Thus, he translated it “heap.” This is followed by REB (a mass) and Berlin (a clump). There is, however, no manuscript support for that reading.

**weed, salt-pit, and ashes** — Literally, “weed, and pit of salt, and waste/desolation.” Since the first conjunction (and) is unnecessary in English, we drop it. Based on Job 30:7 and Prov

24:31, חרול seems to refer to a kind of desert weed. Exactly what weed, however, is unknown. ט does not render it. פ rendered it *spinarum* (thorns), which is where English translations get “nettles/thistles/thorns.” ש represents the verb חרל (to leave alone). That is, most likely, an intentional alteration. Not only does it require the creation of a new subject (see note above), but it requires further alteration of the text, which is why ש adds “like/as” to the next noun. We render it simply “weed.” מכרה is also challenging. Most scholars understand it as a substantive from כרה (“to dig”), referring to some type of dugout (like a “hole/pit”). That makes sense of the word as it occurs in the Moabite stele. It appears right next to the verb “to dig” and seems to refer to something like ditches or trenches that channel water from a cistern to people's homes (KAI §181): ובר אן בקרב הקר בקרחה ואמר לכל העם עשו (Now, a cistern was missing from the center of the city of Qarhoh, so I said to all the people, “make yourselves a cistern, each [of you], in [each] one's house,” but I had the ditches of Qarhoh dug out by Israelite prisoners). Thus, מכרה-מלח would mean something like “a hole/pit/ditch of salt.” ט rendered it מלוחין, which comes from מלח (salt) and, therefore, means something like “salt-plant” (Jastrow) and/or represents the מלוח (mallow) in Job 30:4. ש says “like a heap,” which may represent כערמה, but is more likely an alteration. What remains in MurXII supports מלח's מכרה. Driver (“Hebrew Notes on Prophets and Proverbs”) suggests taking מכרה from Akkadian *karû*, meaning “a pile [of barley]” (CAD). Thus, he renders the phrase here “a pile of saltwort.” Although “pile” agrees with ש, it has several problems. First, it is a reading without any other attestation. Second, מכרה can't possibly mean “a pile” on the Moabite stele. Also, instead of “salt,” ש says “threshing-floor” (αλωνος). That is, most likely, an alteration. The Three both say “salt” (αλος) instead of “threshing-floor” (αλωνος), giving further support to מלח. For our rendering of “waste/desolation” as “ashes,” see v. 4. We treat all these words as one complete phrase in accordance with the ancient reading tradition preserved by the Masoretes. Contrary to virtually all English translations, we see no reason to break this phrase into three parts (an expanse of weed, and a pit of salt, and ashes forever) against the accentuation.

**(The remnant . . . become heirs.)** — It seems certain that, just like v. 7, this verse contains an editorial gloss, which we indicate with parentheses. The first indication of editorial expansion comes from the length of the verse. By the time we hear about Moab becoming “a perpetual expanse of weed, salt-pit, and ashes,” the typical length of poetic verse has already been reached. Then we hear, once again, about YHWH's “remnant.” At the time that these oracles would have been created, there was no “remnant” of Judah. The text is more meaningful if it applies to people who actually exist or who are known by the hearers and readers of the text. And, as Smith (ICC) notes, this term is “used in such a way as to presuppose the exile as an existing fact.” Thus, it makes a lot of sense to date this part to the exilic or, perhaps, post-exilic periods. As in v. 7, the gloss alters the picture from one about the desolation of a foreign nation to one about a desolate Judah. And, as in v. 7 again, the picture is shifted from one in which

the land is made empty to one in which the land is repopulated. If we are right that v. 7 was expanded by a later editor, then this is certainly part of his or her expansion as well. Hadjiev agrees: “This takes the oracles in a direction completely opposite to the intention of the initial composition where judgment on the nations is the context and guarantee for the judgment on Judah, not for her salvation.”

**will seize what is theirs** — Literally, “will plunder them” from  $\sqrt{\text{בזז}}$  (to spoil/plunder). Note, however, that by placing  $\text{יְבוֹזִים}$  at the end of this colon and  $\text{יִנְחָלוּם}$  at the end of the next colon, a rare end-rhyme has been created. In order to capture that end-rhyme, we render the two “will seize what is theirs” and “will they become heirs.”  $\text{ז}$  renders  $\text{יְבוֹזִים}$  as “will despise them” from  $\sqrt{\text{בוז}}$  (to despise). Since  $\text{ז}$  supports  $\text{ז}^L$ , we stick with  $\text{ז}^L$ .

**Yes** — We believe this *waw* has emphatic force. It expands on the description of YHWH's people plundering the Moabites and Ammonites to say that they will actually take over their land.

**remnant** — We are amused by Geneva's most infelicitous use of “residue” instead of something like “remnant,” “vestige,” or “survivors.” Unfortunately, that poor rendering was copied by the Bishops' Bible and KJV and so propagated into many modern-day translations.

**the rest of the nation** — That is, Ammon/Moab. Although one may be tempted to take this as another reference to the “remnant” of Judah, it is an example of contrasting (or antithetical) parallelism. The “remnant” of Judah will take over “what remains” of Ammon and Moab. The phrase “the rest of the nation” is used elsewhere only to describe gentile nations (Josh 23:12; Hab 2:8) and has strong, negative associations, which goes against taking this as identifying God's special people. Those that interpret this as a reference to the remnant of Judah may be influenced by the spelling of the *Qere*:  $\text{גִּרִּי}$  (my nation). Though such a phrase would nicely parallel “my people,”  $\text{גִּרִּי}$  occurs nowhere else in the HB, which makes it highly unlikely here.  $\text{גִּרִּי}$  appears in the *Ketiv* of both  $\text{ז}^A$  and  $\text{ז}^L$  and makes sense of the phrase as it appears elsewhere. Therefore, we follow  $\text{ז}^L$ . The decision to translate “my nation” could also come from  $\text{ז}$ , which says  $\epsilon\theta\nu\omicron\varsigma \mu\omicron\upsilon$  (*my nation*).  $\text{ז}$ , however, does not follow the text very closely and cannot be fully trusted. It rendered “rest” ( $\text{יִתֵּר}$ ) exactly as it did “remnant” ( $\text{שְׁאֵרִית}$ ). By contrast, MurXII rendered “rest” as  $\epsilon\pi\iota\lambda\omicron\upsilon\pi\omicron\iota$  and “remnant” as  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\omicron\upsilon\pi\omicron\iota$ .

**will they become heirs** — Literally, “they will inherit them.” In order to mimic the end-rhyme between  $\text{יְבוֹזִים}$  and  $\text{יִנְחָלוּם}$ , we translate the verb here as “will they become heirs” (see above).

2:10 **This [comes] to them** — Literally, “This belongs to them” or “This [is what] they have.” Some scholars suggest that we read  $\text{זֹאת}$  as the noun “shame” instead of the demonstrative “this/such.” Thus, Smith (WBC) translates it “shame to them.” Based on the context, we believe the normative meaning of  $\text{זֹאת}$  is operative here. This oracle is not about shaming Moab and Ammon, but wiping them out like Sodom and Gomorrah. It is the extension of several themes that run throughout Zephaniah: what is populated will be deserted, what is ordered and crafted will be disordered and undone, and civilized regions will be reclaimed by the wild.

**for** —  $\text{תַּחַת}$  has two primary nuances: “because of” and “instead of/in place of/in exchange for.” We feel that the precise nuance is ambiguous here and that  $\text{תַּחַת}$  could function both ways. For

that reason, we use “for,” which could mean “because” or represent the longer, elided expression “in exchange for.” Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) agrees: “תחת has the meaning ‘in place of’, though preserving the causative nuance.”

**slurred (launched an offensive against)** — Literally, “they slurred, they launched an offensive against.” The Hebrew features two verbs in immediate succession. The first is a perfect. The second is an inverted imperfect. There is no conjunction between them (they slurred *and* launched an offensive). The bonded *waw* of the inverted imperfect inverts its aspect or tense. It is possible that the inverted verb carries a consecutive sense, yet it does not seem to belong. The verb גרל was specifically chosen in 2:8 in order to produce assonance with גרופים. Here, however, there is no גרופים. If one drops the second verb, the phrase “since they slurred the people of YHWH, [God] of Legions” ends up following the previous phrase “they slurred my people” in a tight parallel structure. It seems to us, therefore, that “they launched an offensive against” is a secondary insertion (added in order to harmonize this verse with the parallel use of “slur” and “launch an offensive against” at the start of the oracle). For an explanation of our rendering “launch an offensive against,” see 2:8.

**the people of** — This phrase is not in 𐤅. Whether intentional or otherwise, the lack of that phrase causes the sin of Moab and Ammon to be directed against YHWH instead of his people. 8HevXII gr, however, has this phrase. So does 𐤆. Thus, we follow the Hebrew.

**[God] of Legions** — The title is elided. For the full title, see, for example, 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Ps 89:9; Jer 5:14. Though traditionally translated “hosts,” צבאות refers to armies. Thus, we render it “legions.” The rendering “Lord Almighty” (NIV) is based on the unique rendering of 𐤅. 𐤆 adds “against Israel” (certainly an explanatory gloss). 𐤅 and 𐤆 support 𐤍<sup>L</sup>.

2:11 At this point, the oracle against Moab and Ammon is over. We know this because that oracle both opened and closed virtually the same way—by stating the offenses of Moab and Ammon: they “slurred” and “launched an offensive” against God’s people (2:8 and 2:10). This forms a framework inside of which the oracle holds its content. Appended to that oracle, however, are a few prose statements that look something like commentary on the whole of the execrations against the nations. Hadjiev comes to the same conclusion: “We have in 2:11 a verse which is completely isolated from its context both formally and thematically.”

**Terrifying is YHWH** — נרא can be a 3MS Niphal perfect of נרא (to fear/revere) meaning “YHWH is feared/revered,” a masculine singular Niphal participle meaning “fearful/revered is YHWH,” or a substantive participle in apposition to the divine name: “The Feared/Revered One, YHWH” (or, more simply, “Fearsome/Awesome YHWH”). It can carry a positive or negative nuance. How one understands this verb influences how one understands the later preposition. 𐤆 prefers a positive substantive indicating the promise of deliverance. 𐤍<sup>L</sup> accents it as a participle. We think the participial form, which is often used to describe YHWH, works well in context and, therefore, see no reason to depart from the tradition preserved by the Masoretes. The inclusion of prepositional על would then support a negative nuance: “terrifying/dreadful.” 𐤅 renders the verb “he will show himself.” Its *Vorlage* may have had

נראה, from ראה (to see), which was then interpreted in a future sense. Unable to choose between, Leeson uses both: “Terrible will the Lord appear.” So does NJPST (The LORD will show himself terrible). ו's *horribilis* (horrible/fearful/terrible) supports מל. Note that, as a Niphal participle, this indicates a stative or gnomic sense (the way YHWH is). There is no indication of a future “will be” as in most translations.

**opposition to them!** — Literally, “against them.” Since we take נראה as a participle (see above), על takes on its typical negative sense in Zeph (against). If we interpreted the verb as a perfect, the preposition would indicate agency (YHWH is feared *by* them). Who is “them”? We think “them” encompasses all the nations referred to in the execrations of this chapter and that this verse was probably a commentary upon them. Now, however, either accidentally or purposefully, it appears at the end of the oracle against Moab and Ammon. Note that we divide the text differently than the Masoretes. We believe the first phrase stands on its own. The “isles of the nations” bowing down to YHWH makes the most sense as an effect of YHWH “thinning out” all their gods (they realize whose god is superior because their own gods have been overthrown). It makes less sense to connect the thinning out of the gods with how terrifying YHWH is. Therefore, we move the *athnach* under עליהם and begin a new sentence with כי.

**When** — We consider this a temporal כי, which works well in light of the *weyiqtol* (see below). So HCSB, NAB, and NIV. Other possibilities include the causal nuance (because) and asseverative (yes/indeed). Curiously, ו has a conjunction (and) instead.

**he has thinned out** — Or “diminished.” As pointed by the Masoretes, this is a 3MS Qal perfect of רזה (to be/grow thin). Though verbal forms of this root are rare, adjectival and nominal forms are common. As shown by the adjective in Num 13:20, רזה can function metaphorically to refer to the opposite of abundance/plenty—in that particular case, “barrenness” instead of lushness. Thus, the point is not that YHWH “thins” the gods (i.e., “starves/famishes” them as popularly translated), but that he “thins out” the gods—that is, minimizes their number, power, and/or influence by overthrowing their dominions (the nations). This is reflected by NKJV (reduce to nothing). Renderings like those in NRSV (shrivel), NAB (waste away), or Leeson (vanish) are similar, but less precise. The renderings of NET (weaken) and SET (enfeeble) are interpretative. NJB (scatter) alters רזה to זרה. ו's εἰσλεθρευσαι makes sense of כרת (to cut off), שרד (to devastate/destroy), or שמר (to exterminate), but not רזה. Perhaps it was an interpretative rendering. LEB (destroy) follows ו. ת renders it from מאך (to humble/abase), which is different from ו, but still interpretative. ו renders it *ad tenuabit* (to make thin/attenuate/reduce), which follows the Hebrew more closely. Both ת and ו treat it as an imperfect (he *will*). Just like with the participle at the start of the verse, however, there is no grammatical indication of a future “will be.” Ryou's assessment sums it up: “A past tense value is well suited to the context.” מל makes sense as it is. We see no reason to depart from it. Perhaps the best argument for the rendering “to famish/starve” was provided by Rudman (“A Note on Zephaniah”). He connected this verse with the practice in the ancient NE of providing

sacrificial meals to cult statues. Thus, he believed that this verse referred to “the withdrawal of the daily meals . . . resulting in the gods becoming ‘famished’ and powerless.” While such an argument can be commended for reading the text within an ancient cultic context (especially relevant if the prophet Zephaniah was a priest), we find his interpretation too narrow: it conceives of אלהים as limited to the beings who took residence in the cult statues of pagan temples. That is a fairly modern and anachronistic view that would not have been shared by ancient peoples, who perceived a fluidity between the human and the divine (human ancestors or people of prominence could become gods or take on a god's power and status). One example can be seen in 1 Samuel. When Saul went to a “mistress of the pit” to have her raise a man from the underworld, that man, identified explicitly as Samuel, was called an *’ēlōhîm*: “The king said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid! What, in fact, do you see?’ The woman said to Saul, ‘An [ancestral] spirit (אלהים), I saw, rising from the earth’” (1 Sam 28:13). Rudman's reading also requires reading the Qal as causative (to make thin)—a highly unusual and unlikely nuance for verbs of that stem. Our rendering takes the Qal as transitive—a highly usual and common nuance for verbs of that stem.

**all earthly majesties** — Literally, “all the gods of the earth.” It is possible that “gods of the earth” is a diminutive reference to idols or wanna-be gods, but it is more probable that “gods of the earth” is a metaphoric reference to the supreme powers and authorities of earth—whether human, divine, or something in-between—that are overturned by YHWH (see discussion in note above). That explains why **S** would represent אלהים thusly: “all the *kings* of the earth” (Lamsa). SET (all the *powers*) may provide the perfect rendering. **T** creates a word-play not present in the Hebrew: “The *Terrible One*, YHWH, . . . has abased all the *terrible ones* of the earth.” **G** says “all the gods of the nations of the earth,” which is an obvious expansion.

**then . . . all the regions of the nations will bow** — As pointed by the Masoretes, וישתחווי is *weyiqtol*—a conjunction followed by an imperfect verb. The conjunction could be coordinating (and), but we think it has a subordinating function (then). As shown in Ugaritic, the verb itself is a Hishtaphel of חוה meaning “to bow down/worship/do obeisance.” **T** says “pray” instead of “bow/worship,” but the Hebrew is original. There is no support for the HCSB's double expression “bow in worship.” The plural subject, thrown all the way to the end of the verse, is “the isles of the nations,” not some previously unmentioned “men” (as in KJV, ASV, Rotherham, etc.) or “people” (as in NKJV). The phrase “isles of the nations” also appears in Gen 10:5 with reference to the descendants of Japheth who, based on their separate languages and clans, spread out into their own “grounds/lands/territories.” In other words, “isles” doesn't actually refer to islands or even coast-lands, but is a metaphoric expression for “lands/countries/regions” as in RSV, ESV, and LEB (all the lands of the nations). A similar use of “island” occurs in English. In the phrase “no one is an island unto himself,” the point is not to say that a person is an island, but that a person is isolated and/or self-defined. Renderings like that in HCSB (distant coastlands) or NIV (distant nations) have nothing to do with this phrase in Gen 10:5. YLT's rendering (islanders) is ridiculous. Instead of “nations” or even “gentiles,” KJV has copied the derogatory rendering “heathen” from Geneva. There is no support for the NRSV's double expression “the coasts and islands of the nations.”



**wherever one may be** — See section D1. As noted by Smith (ICC), the preposition *min* has “the sense ‘from the stand-point of, in, at.’” And, as noted by Smith (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets*), it is possible that **מִקְוֶה** has “the sense which it has in a few other passages of the Old Testament, and in Arabic, of *sacred place*.” Thus, O'Connor (*Hebrew Verse Structure*) renders it “from his own temple.”

2:12 The original nature of this verse is difficult to understand. As it is, it seems to be the fragment of a longer execration oracle. Unlike the verses both before and after, it is announced in the voice of YHWH. It appears to have been used by the composer of the text to link the Moab-Ammon oracle with the Assyria oracle. Thus, it begins with a particle of continuance (see below), which connects it to what came before, and ends with a reference to the motion of God's “sword,” which is conceptually similar to the “swinging” of God's “hand” in the next oracle. Considering the opening particle and the way it transitions into the next verse by use of *weyiqtol*, we think this verse works well at the start of the next oracle instead of at the end of the previous one.

**Moreover** — This **וְ** has an additive and continuing force, which enables it to coherently introduce new oracular content. Thus, it makes sense to view this verse as the start of a new oracle that follows from a previous one.

**Nubians** — Or “Cushites.” See section A3.

**those run through [with] my sword** — Literally, “the pierced/stabbed [by] my sword.” The plural noun **חַלְלִי** is linked with “my sword” by a genitive of means or instrumentality (by/with). It is possible that “sword” is a personification of the violent force or power of a nation or its armies. The sword of Babel is mentioned numerous times in the biblical prophets. The clearest reference to Babylon wielding YHWH's sword comes from Ezek 30:24-25. Here, however, it probably refers to the Assyrian-Egyptian campaigns to rout and expel the Nubian rulers of Egypt.

**[are] they** — Resumptive pronouns at the end of phrases are common in Hebrew poetry. Grammatical alternation (such as the shift from second to third-person) is common as well. Therefore, one should not alter “my sword [are] they” (**חַרְבִּי הֵמָּה**) to “the sword of YHWH” (**חַרְבִּי יְהוָה**) as in REB or NAB. Note that our rendering is based on the assumption that the “sword” that “pierces” the “Nubians” is a reference to the Assyrian-Egyptian campaigns to rout and expel the Nubian rulers of Egypt. Since those events took place before Josiah and Zephaniah, we provide the verbless clause with a present tense referring to an already exiting reality ([are] they). The text could be interpreted, however, as anticipating a future event: “[will] they [be].” In that case, one would have to agree with the assessment of Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT): “It seems to me possible that the reference in this vs. is to Egypt, which in vain tried to support the Assyrians and maintain itself against the emerging power of Babel.” We are not aware, however, of any evidence that Egypt conscripted Nubians to fight Babylon with Assyria. Furthermore, it makes little sense to talk about the Nubians being the “pierced ones” if it is really Egypt and Assyria who are the power-players making a stand against Babylon.

2:13 This is probably the original start to the oracle of execration against Assyria (or a summary of it). Not only is it the first time Assyria is mentioned (the subject of this oracle), but this verse

begins with the motion of a hand and the oracle ends with the motion of a hand. This provides a framework inside of which the content of the oracle can be described. Note, however, that this verse is prose (as shown by extensive use of object markers and *weyiqtol*, verbosity instead of elision, and a lack of the poetic word-plays so common in Zeph), while the previous and following verses are poetry.

**Then let . . . swing** — Literally, the verb says “extend/stretch out,” which is part of an idiom for striking with one's hand (in punishment). See 1:4. As pointed out by many commentators, יָט is jussive. Since that form is highly regular for this verb—occurring *numerous* times throughout the HB with no apparent significance in meaning—we would not read it here with any particular nuance except that the other verbs in the verse are also jussives. It appears, therefore, that the verbal forms in this verse were intentionally chosen. For that reason, we render the sense of the jussive with “let.” Berlin (AB) agrees: “let him stretch.” So does Smith (ICC): “may he stretch.” English translations typically ignore the jussives here. Note, however, Rotherham: “may he stretch.” “Then” represents the conjunction attached to the verb to make it a *weyiqtol*. Because of the way that this verse picks up and continues the idea of God's punishment reflected in the previous verse (while also moving with it in a new direction), we view the conjunction with a subordinating sense (then) as opposed to a simple coordinating sense (and).

**against [the] north** — Literally, “against Zaphon.” In the HB, Mount Zaphon is often used as a marker for “the north.”

**and wipe out Ashur** — Another *weyiqtol*. The conjunction here is coordinating (and). The same verb appears in 2:5 in the oracle against the Philistines. There, the land itself was named: Canaan. Here, also, the land is named: Ashur. Thus, the oracles of execration open and close in a similar way. Though the final consonant of the verb was accidentally dropped in 4QXII<sup>b</sup>, it can still be seen in MurXII. Instead of “Ashur/Assyria,” ❸ says “the Assyrian.” So does ❹. MurXII supports ❸<sup>L</sup>.

**Yes, let him turn . . . to ashes** — Another *weyiqtol*. The conjunction here is emphatic (yes/indeed). The verbal form is jussive. Thus, we render it “let him.” An alternative would be “may he” (as in Rotherham). The verb itself means “to make.” If this were poetry, the verb “to make” would be elided just as it is in 1:13 and 2:4. For our rendering of שָׂמַמָּה as “ashes,” see 1:13.

**desiccation** — צִיָּה is a noun meaning “dryness/desiccation/drought.” Contrary to most English translations, it is not an adjective. It functions in the same manner as the noun “ashes,” which precedes it, and continues the sense of Ashur being turned “to” something. ❸ was the first to take this as an adjective (describing the “ashes/desolation”). It says “make Nineveh into a *waterless* desolation like a wilderness.” We follow the Hebrew.

**like the wilderness** — A definite article is presumed by the Masoretic accents, but ❸ read it without one: “like *a* wilderness.” Though the consonants could be read that way, we see no reason to abandon the ancient reading tradition preserved by the Masoretes.

2:14 **repose** — The use of this verb recalls the “reposing” of the animals in the execration against the land of the Philistines. Instead of “repose” (רָבַצַּ), ❸ says “graze” (from רָעָה). Since both

verbs appeared together previously, the translator of **ט** probably felt that such verbs could be used interchangeably without sacrificing meaning (or, perhaps, to enhance meaning).

**packs of every creature of the nation** — Typically, **עדרים** refers to groups of domesticated animals like cattle or sheep. Here, however, as made evident by use of the genitive phrase “of every creature of the nation” (the genitive relationship is plain in **ט**, which affixes the genitive particle **ל** to “every”) and the subsequent expansion of that phrase into various sorts of wild creatures, this simply refers to “packs” or “groups” of animals. It does not have its usual meaning of “herds” and/or “flocks.” YLT (droves) came to a similar conclusion. Instead of “nation,” **ט** says “land/earth.” Though the phrase “creatures of the land/earth” is certainly more common than “creatures of the nation,” MurXII supports **מל**. Therefore, we stick with “nation.” **ט** says “field” instead of “nation.” Again, however, we stick with “nation” in MurXII and **מל**. The *waw* on the end of **חיותו** is the preservation of the old Semitic case ending (the genitive). Old case endings usually only reappear on nouns in construct (or verbal forms acting as nouns in construct).

**scops owl** — The **קאת** appears in Deut 14:17 and Lev 11:18 among a list of unclean birds. The precise kind of bird is difficult to ascertain, but considering the contexts in which it is mentioned, it must be a desert scavenger. **α'** rendered it “pelican.” **θ'** rendered it “swans.” That is where KJV got “cormorant”—a seabird like the pelican or swan. The environment pictured here, however, and in other places where this bird is mentioned, makes such identifications improbable. Something like a “vulture” (RSV) or “jackdaw/crow” (NJPST) is more likely. **ט** says “chameleon,” which must be based on the animal mentioned next. We agree with Jacob Milgrom in *Leviticus 1-16* that this bird is probably the “scops owl.”

**lizard** — Because **קפר** comes from a root that means “to roll,” this word may refer to a creature that can curl or roll up in some way. The actual identification is unknown. Oftentimes, when faced with uncertain words like this, translators must rely on their intuition. The translators of the KJV, thinking it must be another seabird like “cormorant,” chose “bittern.” Our intuition tells us that “lizard” is more likely. Unlike other creatures, a lizard could scurry up pillar capitals and lodge in them for the night. The identification of **קפר** with a “hedgehog” or “porcupine” is based on **ט** (**εχιδνα**) and **פ** (**ericius**), but these are probably late definitions. “Scaly one” or “armored one” are probably the original meanings of both and both apply equally to the lizard. This may also explain **ט**'s use of “chameleon” instead of a bird for the previously mentioned animal.

**capitals** — There is little doubt that **כפתר** refers to the portion that crowns a pillar or column. KJV's “lintels” is an extension from the pillars or columns themselves to the joining piece above them. **ט** extends it even further with “ceilings.” YLT's “knobs” comes from the use of **כפתר** with the bulbous heads of the menorah branches as described in Exodus.

**Listen! One warbles** — The precise nuance of this phrase is uncertain. As in 1:10 and 1:14, **קול** functions here as an exclamative (see section B4). Some translations alter the word “sound/voice/listen” to “owl” (as in RSV, NJB, Moffatt, etc.) or even “birds” (as in NASB), but that has no manuscript support. It may be an influence from **ט**, which says “[wild] animals will cry

in the break-ins/breaches.” We stick with the Hebrew. יִשְׁוֹרֵר is a Polel. The Qal means “to sing.” The Polel, however, indicates something more intense and sustained. For this reason, Ryou says it means “to continually echo.” We render it “warble.” Exactly what “warbles,” however, is not defined by the text. For that reason, we render it “one warbles” instead of “it warbles.”

**Swelter [will pass]** — Normally, חָרַב refers to intense heat. Alternatively, however, it can mean “ruin” or “devastation.” For that meaning in particular, see Isa 61:4, which parallels חָרַב with שָׂמְמָה (what we render in Zeph as “ashes”). The alternative is represented by ESV (devastation), KJV (desolation), NET (rubble), and ISV (ruin). Either meaning is possible here. Because of the use of the word “dryness/desiccation” in the previous verse, however, we prefer “swelter.” Some change the Hebrew from “swelter/ruin” (חָרַב) to “raven” (עָרַב) as in NRSV, NJPST, and NJB. That is supported by Ϝ (κοραεξ) and ϣ (*corvus*), which have “raven.” It is difficult to know, however, whether that is based on any Hebrew manuscript or was an arbitrary choice of translation. The verb that is usually inserted into the verbless clause to make sense of “raven” is “croak.” Since MurXII supports מִלֵּ and there is no manuscript evidence for “raven,” we stick with “swelter” and use the verb “to pass.” S repoints חָרַב (swelter) as חָרַב (sword). Thus: “the sword shall be in her gates” (Lamsa). Such a reading is certainly possible. It is supported by α´ and θ´ (μαχαίρα). It would also fit well with v. 12, which referred to the destroyer as YHWH’s “sword.” This particular oracle, however, opens with a reference to the “hand” of YHWH, not a sword. And context indicates human desolation, not structural destruction. Thus, we feel the vocalization of the Masoretes is more likely original.

**entryway** — Though most translations render סָף as “threshold,” the use of this term indicates the place where one enters or exits a property. Thus, something like “entryway,” “doorway” (NIV), “doorstep” (NJB), or “gateway” is preferable. So ט (gate/entrance), S (gates), and Ϝ (forecourt/porch/gateway).

**because** — There are several different ways to understand this כִּי. We believe it functions in a causal sense, which enjoys majority opinion. ט ignores it.

**I am about to thin out her city** — As pointed by the Masoretes, אֶרְיֶה עֵצָה means “a cedar, he will strip [bare],” but that makes little sense. To compensate, English translations typically alter it to “cedar-work,” “cedar beams,” “woodwork,” or the like. But there is nothing in the text to suggest something other than a cedar tree. The straightforward meaning is captured by LEB: “the cedar is laid bare.” Ϝ supports מִלֵּ’s “cedar,” but says “a cedar is its prop/pedestal/post.” Unfortunately, it is difficult to tell if “prop/pedestal/post” represents עָרָה or arises through interpretative license. ט says “her ceilings they will destroy,” but it is difficult to tell if “ceilings” represents אֶרְיֶה or arises through interpretative license. S says “root” (עֵקֶרָה) instead of “cedar” (אֶרְיֶה), which doesn’t help explain our text. ϣ says “I will reduce/attenuate/thin out its strength” (אֶרְיֶה עֵצָה). Following ϣ, we read the consonants of the first word as a first-person imperfect of the verb רִיַּה (see **he has thinned out** in 2:11). Instead of reading

“her strength,” however, we keep עָרָה and read it as a defective form of “city” with a third-person feminine singular suffix. Thus: אֶרְיָהָ עָרָהּ (I will thin out her city). Our rendering “about to thin out” also (vaguely) captures the sound-play. Ewald captured the assonance (though not the meaning) in his original German translation: *zerhackt zerknackt*. There are numerous advantages that come from reading the text this way. First, the use of רִיחַ provides a strong connection between this oracle and the preceding one and, therefore, makes sense of their positions next to each other. Furthermore, if this verse ended with nothing more than a reference to “cedar” being “stripped [bare],” there would be no reason for a scribe to add the quotation from Isa 47:8 at the end of it (see next verse). For that reason alone, scholars since the late 1800s have thought it makes more sense to see this phrase as a case of accidental dittography that should be dropped from the text (and some translations do). It makes more sense, if the text ended with a reference to YHWH overthrowing the city, to then include a quotation about the pride of the city to help explain the reason for its overthrow. Our rendering, therefore, not only fits the text as we have it, works well in context, and requires no alteration of the meaning that the text can provide us, but explains the reason for adding the Isaiah quotation at the end. Efros agrees: “The translation ‘for he shall uncover their cedar’ has no meaning. We should read . . . ‘I shall destroy its city.’ This harmonizes very well with the next verse where the prophet in anticipation exclaims: ‘This is the rejoicing city . . . how is she become a desolation.’”

- 2:15 This verse begins with a quotation from Isa 47:8 (referring to Babylon). The difference is that Isa 47:8 says “So now, hear this, luxurious [one]” instead of “this [is] the championed city.” Since this quotation occurs at the end of the execration oracle, there is no doubt that it was appended to it and was used to expand upon and explain what came before (see note above). We view the use of this quote as part of a larger expression of disbelief and revulsion, which is why it ends with a question mark. The rhetorical purpose of the prophetic text is to place the hearer/listener within the perspective of one who has witnessed the desolation of Nineveh. In this way, the horror and surprise of the witness within the text is meant to pass into the perception of the one outside the text who hears the prophecy.

**championed** — The versions had difficulty with this word. **ⲡ** says *gloriosa* (glorious). **Ⲅ** says φαυλιστρια (contemptuous). Grammatically and syntactically, הַעֲלִיזָה is a feminine singular adjective from עָלִיז (to exult/triumph/cheer). Most translations render it “triumphant” or “exultant.” Based on the nominal form (see 3:11), we believe הַעֲלִיזָה has a passive sense: “the triumphed” or “the exalted.” Since, however, the nominal form is related to the word “warriors” or “heroes,” we render the nominal form “champion” and its adjectival form “championed.” **Ⲛ** has the same idea (strong/mighty). Another possible rendering would be “celebrated.”

**she whose settlement is secure** — Literally, “she who is dwelling in security.”

**she who thought to herself** — Literally, “she who says in her heart/mind.” To speak in one's heart/mind is an idiom meaning “to think to oneself.”

**“No one else but me!”** — Literally, “I and no one else.” Many translations take the *yod* at the end of אֲנִי as a first-person suffix. This creates a repetition of the “I/me” (as in NIV, KJV, NET,

etc.). It should be noted, however, that this is probably nothing more than the so-called *paragogic yod* (GKC §152s). Thus, Smith (ICC) says it is “best treated as analogous to מִנִּי and וּלְתִי . . . , with so-called paragogic י; for א elsewhere takes no sf., nor does it have the meaning ‘besides,’ which the addition of the sf. requires.” It should be treated, therefore, as nothing more than a syntactic construction. The full quote is: “No one else but me will never be a widow and will never experience bereavement.”

**How can it be that . . . ?** — We believe that אִיךָ functions here as both an exclamatory particle and an interrogative. There is no need to choose between one or the other. By asking the very question, the author is exclaiming about the unreal nature of the situation. Thus, we render it “how can it be that” and end the sentence with an interrobang.

**turned to** — Our typical rendering of the phrase הִיָּה plus *lamed* in Zeph.

**ruin** — שִׁמְמָה is almost identical to שִׁמְמָה (what we render “ashes”). Since, however, a different word was chosen in place of שִׁמְמָה, we render it “ruin.” Though most translations render it “waste” or “desolation,” some agree with our rendering (NET, NIV, ISV, etc.).

**[to] a reposal** — Or “[to] a place of repose.” The noun מְרִבֵּץ provides continuity with the verb רָבַצַּ in the previous verse and creates a fantastic root-play. We mimic the word-play by rendering the verb “repose” and the noun “reposal.” Note that this noun continues the sense of the *lamed* attached to “ruin.” Thus, we insert “to.” Because this is poetry, the *lamed* is not repeated. For a similar syntactic situation, see v. 13. שׁ says “grazing-land,” reading מְרִעָה in place of מְרִבֵּץ. Again (2:14), it is switching the words “graze” and “repose.”

**[wild] creatures** — Literally, “the [wild] creature.” The use of the definite article, however, defines a category, not a particular thing. Thus, we render it “[wild] creatures.” This continues the use of “creature” in v. 14 (every creature of the nation).

**Anyone who passes by her will hiss** — This is distinctive language occurring in 1 Kgs 9:8 as well as Jer 19:8, 49:17, and 50:13. The last two continue with the idea of becoming a ruin or waste, which occurs in this verse as well. It is uncertain whether Zephaniah is drawing directly from Jeremiah or Kings, but the language is unmistakable. We feel confident that Zephaniah is quoting from one of these texts because this occurs at the end of an oracle right after another text has been quoted directly. A later editor must have felt free to expand on the oracle beyond the Isaiah quotation. Note that our rendering does not follow the accentuation. We place the disjunctive *zaqef qaton* over “will hiss” instead of “by her.”

**will shake** — Contrary to most English translations, but more in line with Semitic poetry, there is no conjunction (and) here. Neither is a conjunction present in MurXII or 4QXII<sup>c</sup>. Thus, we do not include one. A few that also do not include one are Berlin (AB), YLT, and Rotherham.

**fist** — Literally, “hand.” But we render it “fist” to communicate the sense of revulsion or derision indicated by the gesture. שׁ takes it as a plural (hands), which is followed by others (NJB, NIV, WEB, etc.). We stick with מִלֵּ, which is supported by MurXII.

3:1-13 Interpreters are uncertain where to locate the boundaries of the textual units in 3:1-13. The breakdown we perceive is as follows: (1) vv. 1-5 open with a typical introductory exclamation, proceeds in the voice of the prophet to describe the injustice of various Jerusalemite people-

groups, and ends with a statement contrasting what YHWH demands of people with what they do; (2) vv. 6-8 shift to a first-person condemnation of Jerusalem in YHWH's voice, ending with a declaration of total destruction that mirrors the end of the final unit in ch. 1; (3) vv. 9-10 redirect the subject-matter from universal destruction and punishment to universal conversion; and this leads to (4) vv. 11-13, which open with a typical phrase of redactional insertion (on that day) and moves the text from a description about the change among the nations to a change among the people of Jerusalem.

3:1 **Oh [no]!** — See section A3. Curiously, the Masoretes did not place a disjunctive mark above **הוי** in this place—probably because of the way they separated the content of vv. 1-2 into two verses and, thus, limited what the content of this verse had to say, when **הוי** was meant to encompass a larger range of content. Because **הוי** probably functions as a lament for the dead, the translators of NET felt justified adding the phrases “is as good as dead” and “is finished” to the text.

**She is defiant** — A Qal feminine participle of **מָרָה**, meaning “to be rebellious/disobedient/defiant/stubborn.” Because the previous word is an independent interjection, we render this as a stand-alone statement (she is defiant) instead of taking it as a vocative ([you] defiant [one]). Note the addition of the *aleph* and the peculiar vowel usage. GKC (§75rr) refers to this as a case of a third-*heh* root being treated, in terms of both vowels and consonants, as a third-*aleph*. There are several practical reasons for this. First, it allows for greater similarity and, thus, alliteration between this word and the next. Second, it allows for the creation of a feminine participle without losing such alliteration. And third, as suggested by Henderson, “In **מָרָאָה**, *rebellious*, as here applied to Jerusalem, there is a play upon the name of **מֹרְיָה**, *Moriah*, on which the temple was built.” Thus, the hill of God is transformed, by means of its name, from “the fear of Yah” (if one interprets the name Moriah as the noun **מָרָא** with the name of God in the genitive) to “she who rebels” (and thus has no fear at all—as made explicit in 3:7). Furthermore, the mount on which Abraham's offspring was saved from becoming a sacrifice is turned into a mount on which he may not be saved from becoming a sacrifice. Translations that render **מָרָאָה** as “filthy” (KJV), “sullied” (NJPST), or “soiled” (NRSV) read it as a Hophal participle based on the post-Biblical noun **רֵעִי** (sometimes **רָאִי**) meaning “secretion/excrement,” from **רָוַה/רָוִי** meaning “to drip” (see Jastrow). Even though this meaning would work well next to the verb “defiled” (see below), the text should be read as it would have been understood when it was written, not in times long after. Thus, we reject that meaning. **ש** has *επιφανης*, which is used in Joel 2:11 and Hab 1:7 for **נֹרָא** (terrible/awesome). A smudge could turn **מ** into **נ**; or it was treating **מָרָאָה** as **מָרָא** (terror/fear). In either case, **ש** seems to support **מָרָא**. **θ** interprets **מָרָאָה** as though it came from **מָרַד**, which has the synonymous meaning “to rebel/defy/revolt.” Thus, it also supports **מָרָא**. So does **Ϝ** and what remains of MurXII. **Ϝ** says “she who hurries/is hasty” as if reading **מָהֲרָה**. The evidence, however, favors **מָרָא**. In order to mimic the alliteration in the phrase **מָרָאָה וְנִנְאָלָה**, we use two words that

begin quite similarly: “defiant” and “defiled.” Moffatt (so defiant, so defiled) did likewise. Even though it would radically conflict with the use of the particle of lament and the negative stance of the rest of the oracle, some have argued that this word could be read in a positive way as a Hophal participle of  $\sqrt{\text{א}}\text{א}$ , meaning “she who is feared/revered,” or a Hiphil participle of  $\sqrt{\text{א}}\text{א}$ , meaning “she who fears/reveres [God].” The problem, however, is that, in BH,  $\text{אא}$  does not occur in the Hiphil or Hophal stems. And the opposite is explicitly stated (3:7). Some people think that a positive reading is possible, however, since the next few words can also be read positively. We think that is improbable.

**defiled** — Does this word indicate a state of moral corruption, as made evident by the city's actions, or does it signify cultic impurity? The parallelism between this and “the oppressor” makes the first definition certain. However, it does not exclude an identification with the second (as seen, for instance, by the use of this word in Mal 1:7 or Lam 4:14). In fact, it is probably the case that both meanings are intended, just as the English word “dirty” refers to a spoiling of both the moral and physical states. Both moral and cultic sins are mentioned in the next few verses. Thus, the rendering “unclean” by Smith (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets*) or the definition provided by HALOT (to be/become impure) is certainly right. But more than impurity is implied. In order to mimic the poetic alliteration in the phrase  $\text{מִרְאָה וְנִגְאָלָה}$ , we use two words that begin quite similarly: “defiant” and “defiled.” Moffatt (so defiant, so defiled) did likewise.  $\sigma$  says “unprofitable,” which seems to reflect  $\text{יֵעַל}$  (to profit/benefit/avail) instead of  $\text{נָאֵל}$ . Even though it would radically conflict with the use of the particle of lament and the negative stance of the rest of the oracle, it is possible to read this word in a positive way as “redeemed” from the Niphal of  $\sqrt{\text{א}}\text{א}$  (to redeem/ransom/restore) instead of  $\sqrt{\text{א}}\text{א}$  (to be/become impure/defiled/tainted/stained). That is how  $\mathfrak{P}$  and  $\mathfrak{S}$  interpreted it. We agree with the assessment of Vlaardingebroek (HCOT): “ $\text{נָאֵל}$  conveys the meaning of ‘defiled, polluted,’ and it is contextually obvious that this is the sense in which the term  $\text{נִגְאָלָה}$  was used.”

**the oppressor** — Since this is a participle of  $\sqrt{\text{א}}\text{א}$  (to oppress), it could function either substantively (the oppressor) or attributively (the oppressing [one]). If the former, it stands in apposition with “the city.” If the later, the line should be translated “the oppressing city” (or more idiomatically, “the city that oppresses”). The disjunctive accent (*tifcha*), which separates  $\text{הָעִיר}$  from  $\text{הַיּוֹנָה}$ , shows that ancient Jewish tradition viewed it as the former, not as the latter. And since the use of a substantive in apposition makes sense to us, we follow the accentuation. The use of this verb could be seen as an indictment for breaking divine law. Lev 25:17 commands the people not to “oppress” one another. Exod 22:20 says not to “oppress” the foreign resident. Even though it would radically conflict with the use of the particle of lament and the negative stance of the rest of the oracle, it is possible to read this word in a positive way as “the dove”—a term of affection as seen in Song of Songs. Thus, this last line could be translated “the city of the dove.” That is how it was interpreted by  $\mathfrak{P}$  and  $\mathfrak{S}$ .  $\mathfrak{S}$  took it further and rendered it “city of Jonah,” interpreting this city not as Jerusalem, but as Nineveh!



3:2 The first half of this verse contains an accusation that is similar in content, but not in form, to one made in Jer 7:28 (This [is] the nation—they who do not listen to the voice of YHWH, it's god. Neither do they accept correction). It is possible that there is some influence here either from Zephaniah to Jeremiah or vice versa.

**listens not** — The nuance of the verb is not “hearing,” but “listening” or “heeding.” The previous verse used participles to indicate the state of the city. In this verse, the text moves to perfects. We believe, however, that they function as gnomic perfects and, thus, continue the sense of the city's character or state. For that reason, we render this verb in the present tense. They should not be regarded as indicating past tense or completed action as in KJV (obeyed not), NASB (heeded no), NKJV (has not obeyed), or NJB (has not listened). Berlin (AB) agrees: “My sense is that these perfectives signify a habitual state or recurrent condition.”

**[the] message** — קול typically refers to a “voice” or “sound” or may function as an exclamation. Here, however, קול represents a longer expression, the second part of which has been poetically elided. The full expression is “the message of the prophet.” That is why א renders it “the voice of his servants the prophets.” Note also SET: “the voice [of the prophets].” Its function is the same as in the phrase קל האת in Exod 4:8, which means “the message of the sign.” There is no “voice” or “sound” to the sign, but there is a meaning or message, which is meant to be communicated by means of the sign. Thus, this should not be treated as referring to “a voice” or to simply any voice; rather, it is the *prophetic* voice. And since the prophet is YHWH's mouthpiece, this creates a conceptual blend in which the “message” of the prophet becomes identified with the “voice” of YHWH. If one prefers to keep “voice,” one could also translate this “the Voice” to indicate that this is YHWH's voice. To render it something like “she hears no voice” (NAB), as if she were deaf, or “she listens to no voice” (ESV), as if she were not listening to anyone, misses the point. Better is NKJV (she has not obeyed His voice) and Moffatt (deaf to my voice) even though they add a pronoun that is not present in the text. The same idea is presented in prose in Zech 1:4. For more on conceptual blending, see Fauconnier and Turner's *The Way We Think*.

**receives not correction** — Or “does not receive/accept correction.” The verb is a gnomic perfect. It describes a continuing state or condition; thus, contrary to many English translations, it should not be rendered in the past tense (received/accepted). See notes above. מוסר can have many different nuances. Within wisdom literature, it has the sense of “teaching” or “instruction,” but that is not the point here (contrary to NASB and YLT). It can be used in the sense of a “warning” or “example/lesson” in a negative sense (see Ezek 5:15), which is how some perceive it here. However, in prophetic literature, מוסר + לקח is used in contexts that describe punishment or discipline meant to deter action (see, for instance, Jer 2:30 and 5:3). Thus, the meaning here must be something like “correction/discipline/chastisement/rebuke.”

**trusts not** — Or “does not trust.” A gnomic perfect. It describes a continuing state or condition. Thus, contrary to many English translations, it should not be rendered in the past tense (trusted not/has not trusted/did not trust). See notes above.

**is not present before** — An instance of the thematic root קרב. See sections A3 and C3. The phrase קרב plus אל, as noted by Ho, “is primarily a Priestly term associated with the proper cultic rites to ensure holiness (e.g., Exod 22:7, 40:32; Lev 9:7; Num 17:28, 18:3; Ezek 40:46).” Leviticus makes *extensive* use of the verb to describe offering a gift to YHWH in the holy sanctum. We communicate that cultic sense by rendering the verb “is not present” and the particle “before,” even though, in other contexts, the verb means simply “to draw near/approach” and the particle “to/toward.” ט did similarly: “to *the worship* of her god, she does not draw near.” The point of “drawing near,” however, is not to worship, but to seek an oracle. In Isa 48:16, for instance, YHWH commands his audience to “draw near to” him to hear his words (see also 1 Sam 14:36). Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) put it this way: “Jerusalem does not turn in trust to God to hear his word and to ask for his help.” Translations that reflect this include NET (she does not seek the advice of her God) and, to a lesser extent, Moffatt (she has never gone to her God). This verb is a gnomic perfect. It describes a continuing state or condition. Thus, contrary to many English translations, it should not be rendered in the past tense (has not drawn near/did not draw near/drew not near). See notes above.

3:3-4 These verses have been taken up and expanded by Ezek 22:25-29. Though many of the original elements remain in Ezekiel, new material was added and old material altered and/or rearranged. See the comments below for relevant details.

3:3 **Her princes [are] in her presence** — “Princes” could also be rendered “rulers/leaders/officials.” We use the same translation that we chose for 1:8. YLT’s “heads” is an unnecessarily convoluted expression of שרים. The thematic root קרב appears again. See sections A3 and C3. Here, it describes how the princes relate to the city. Emphasis is placed on their proximity to her. It is not that the princes are characteristically predatory animals or that being a “lion roaring” is bad, but that “within her,” they act that way. In other words, they act like lions roaring with regard to the very people to whom they should *not* act that way, which is what condemns them. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) puts it this way: “בְּקִרְבָּהּ is more than a place designation: it stresses Jerusalem’s guilt.” To mimic the word-play, we render בקרבה as “in her presence.” Note that the versions (Ⲫ, Ⲥ, Ⲯ, and Ⲛ) shift the text from metaphor to simile by adding “like” or “as.” We see no need for that. There is some question as to the position of the copula. Should it come before or after בקרבה? If one follows the Masoretic accents, it should come after (in her presence [are] lions roaring). The parallel line, however, places the copula after the animal it describes (her judges [are] wolves), which suggests placing the copula before בקרבה. Note the alliteration in the phrase שָׁרֵיהָ בְּקִרְבָּהּ. Our use of “princes” and “presence” mimics that alliteration. The phrase is reused, verbatim, in Ezek 22:27.

**lions roaring** — It is not clear whether the participle “roaring” works as an adjective or verb. Parallelism between this animal with its descriptive element and the next animal with לא גרמו would suggest that שאנים also functions as a verb. Since it can work both ways, we render it “lions roaring” to represent that ambiguity and leave it open for interpretation. For the reason why we do not place a copula before “lions roaring,” see note above. Ezek 22:25 has taken this phrase and reused it to speak about prophets. There, however, it is singular (a lion roaring).

**wolves of evening** — There is some connection between Hab and Zeph as revealed by the language here (see Hab 1:8) and in 1:7 (see Hab 2:20). One is tempted to alter the text from ערב (evening) to ערבה (Arabah/desert/steppe) based on the occurrence of that phrase in Jer 5:6 and the overarching theme of desolation and of the turning of the land into a habitation of wild animals throughout Zeph. So NET (desert), NJB (wastelands), NJPST (steppe), and REB (plain). However, the parallelism of “evening” with “morning” lends greater support to “evening.” So 𐤔, 𐤕, and 𐤌. 𐤌 took it as the place-name “Arabia.” Though that is a possible rendering, it does not work well in parallel. With a slight switch of consonants, ערב becomes רעב (hunger/famine), which produces a text that makes a lot of sense (wolves of hunger) and nicely parallels “lions roaring.” Despite that, however, we follow 𐤌<sup>L</sup>, which has ancient support in MurXII and, so it seems, 4QXII<sup>g</sup>. The parallelism between “evening” and “morning,” which is original to Zeph, is not reused in Ezek 22.

**[that] disperse not** — The meaning of 𐤒𐤓 is a well-known crux. It occurs two other times in the HB. In Ezek 23:34, one drinks, drains their cup, and then performs the action of this verb with or upon clay vessels. Structurally, the verb is paired with the action of “tearing at/lacerating” one’s breasts (just as “drinking” and “draining” are paired together). Some kind of destructive action is undertaken. Surely not “gnawing.” There is no indication that a mouth or teeth are involved in the second pair of verbs. 𐤒𐤓 also occurs in Num 24:8, where El is described as one who defends Israel like a wild ox. He will devour the nations at enmity with Israel and 𐤒𐤓 their bones. This is where translations get “gnaw.” They assume 𐤒𐤓 must be similar to “devour.” Since a wild ox would not eat bones, it must be gnawing on them. That interpretation, however, is highly tenuous. There are many things a wild ox could do with bones besides gnaw them. Furthermore, “bones” may not be the meaning of עצמות. The noun can describe the “being/essence/substance” of something (as in Exod 24:10). It can reference the human “body” or “self” (as in Isa 66:14). עצמות can also refer to “body-parts/limbs/members” (as in Jer 20:9). Thus, it is quite probable that something other than “gnawing” of “bones” is involved. In fact, Num 24:8 goes on to say that El will shatter the arrows of his enemy. It may be the case, therefore, that 𐤒𐤓 is more closely linked to “shatter” than “devour” (and “bones” with “arrows”). If there is no reason for “gnaw” in Ezek 23:34 and almost no reason for it in Num 24:8, it certainly doesn’t belong in Zeph 3:3. Putting it there also requires inserting a direct object where one doesn’t exist. We see this, for instance, in KJV (they gnaw not *the bones*). 𐤌 (followed by 𐤕) rendered it “to leave behind/lay aside.” This is the reading followed by most modern translations and suggested by many lexicons (like BDB). Thus, HCSB, NRSV, NASB, etc., all say “leave nothing.” Some combine that with “gnawing on bones” and come up with a mixture of the two (ISV, NJPST, NKJV, etc.). But is 𐤌 faithfully representing 𐤒𐤓? It may be reading עזב (to leave/forsake/abandon) or שאר (to leave behind) or taking interpretive license. 𐤔 (followed by 𐤌) rendered it “to wait/prolong” from ירך or ארך (CAL). Thus, even the versions struggled with it. One is tempted to emend the text. Efros suggests that, due to graphic similarity in the Aramaic script, 𐤒𐤓 (to crush) was mistaken for 𐤒𐤓. Unfortunately,

that produces a text just as incoherent as “gnaw.” A more coherent reading occurs if, due to graphic similarity in the early Hebrew script, גרש (in the Pual) was mistaken for גרם. Thus: “they are not *driven out* by the morning.” While this may work for our text, it can't explain גרם in Ezek or Num. Thus, we feel obligated to stick with גרם, which has the support of MurXII. Among those who try to make sense of the text as it stands, Ben Zvi provides one of the best arguments. He compares the nouns עצם (bone) and גרם (bone). Just as עצם can have the figurative meaning “strong” (Gen 49:14), so can גרם (Prov 25:15). If the noun forms share their meaning, the verbal forms probably do as well. עצם, in the Qal, means “to be strong/powerful” (Gen 26:16) and, in the Piel, “to break/crush.” Thus, the Piel of גרם in Num 24:8 probably means “to crush/break” and the Qal means “to be strong.” Zeph, which has גרם pointed as a Qal, would mean “they are no longer strong.” *Weak wolves*, however, is no parallel to *lions roaring*. Something more is expected by the nature of the imagery. The best solution is to investigate how this verse was understood in Ezek 22 and see if that works well elsewhere. Ezek 22:27 reformulates our text as “her princes [are] within her like wolves tearing apart [the] torn.” In place of גרם, we find טרף (to tear apart), which suggests that גרם means something similar (like “to break/cut off/separate/sunder”). As early as 1825, Gesenius (*A Hebrew Lexicon to the Books of the Old Testament*) had suggested it meant “to cut off” and noted Arabic and Syriac cognates as evidence. Thus, Smith (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets*) said that “גרם is a root common to the Semitic languages and seems to mean originally *to cut off*” (no italics added). If one translates the Piel of גרם in Num 24:8 as “their bones/limbs/members he will break/sever,” not only does this reflect the violent imagery of the passage and the emphatic nature of the Piel, but it nicely parallels “and its arrows, he will shatter.” If one translates the Piel in Ezek 23:34 as “its sherds you will break/sunder and your breasts you will tear/shred,” this also reflects the violent imagery and emphatic stem while nicely paralleling the next verb. If the transitive Piel means “to break (something),” the intransitive Qal would mean “to break up/separate/disperse.” Zeph 3:3 would read “her judges [are] wolves of evening—they do not break up by the morn.” In other words, they are like a pack of wolves that appear in the evening. Unlike the evening, however, which “separates/disperses/breaks up” by the coming of dawn (and unlike a pack of wolves that would naturally do so as well), the judges continue their deeds of the dark in broad daylight. Note that, with our rendering, this verse now participates in the “coming of morning” metaphor that appears in v. 5. Whereas the justice of God emanates like light every morning, the judges of Jerusalem, who are supposed to establish and maintain justice, behave like predators of the night even when morning comes. The deeds of the judges are thus sharply contrasted with the deeds of YHWH. Our rendering makes sense of all occurrences of the verb, requires no emendation or insertion of a missing direct object, imbues the word-pair “evening-morning” with strong contextual significance, and makes perfect sense of ש (if the wolves do not “break up” by morn, that means they do not “lay aside” or “leave behind” their dark acts like they should—in other words, ש is explaining the significance of the verb instead of giving a literal rendering).

- by the morn** — The Masoretes point לַבֹּקֶר as though it contains a definite article. It is possible, however, to read it without one: “by morn.” The *lamed* functions as a dative of time (by/until).
- 3:4 **Her prophets are shifty** — The phrase “her prophets” is reused in Ezek 22:25. There, it is combined with the imagery of “lions roaring” from Zeph 3:3. פָּחוּז describes a shift from the proper or expected course. Water is described this way in Gen 49:4 and so are men who turn against their people to help Abimelech gain power in Judg 9:5. Thus, פָּחוּז means “shifty/slippery/dishonest/disloyal.” Prophets are described by this term in Jer 23:32 in parallel with the word “deceptions/lies.” Here, פָּחוּז is a synonym of its parallel noun “treachery.” The prophets are disloyal to YHWH’s word by giving false oracles (as explained by the expansion in Ezek 22:28). פָּחוּז is not used by Ezek 22:25. Instead, it uses קִשְׁר, which has a similar semantic nuance: “conspiracy” (a plan devised for treacherous purposes). The versions differ wildly. ⚡ says πνευματοφόροι (spirit-borne), which is drawn from the description of the prophet in Hos 9:7: מְשֻׁנַּע אִישׁ הַרוּחַ (frenzied/ecstatic [is] the one [with] the Spirit). Either it is used here in a negative sense to mean that Jerusalem’s prophets are “airbags,” or it implies that they are “out of control.” ⚡ follows ⚡ with “rave/frenzy.” ⚡ says “Their prophets of deception within her [are] evil/repugnant.” It is clearly departing from a precise rendering of the Hebrew. α’ has θαμβευται (terrifying/astonishing), which is also a departure. The degree to which English translations differ shows that they are influenced more by the vagaries of the versions than the evidence of the Hebrew. Influenced by ⚡, some say “reckless” (NRSV), “thoughtless” (Leeser), “unstable” (YLT), “light” (KJV), or “fickle” (ESV). Those translations, however, do no justice to פָּחוּז. Abimelech’s followers are not reckless, thoughtless, or frivolous. Neither is water (though it is certainly unstable). And that rendering does not work in parallel with “deceptions/lies.” Influenced by ⚡, some describe excessive cruelty or lack of moral principle with words like “wanton” (RSV), “profligate” (Fenton), or “unprincipled” (NIV). Such renderings have no support in the Hebrew. Some use a term related to pride such as “insolent” (NKJV), “proud” (NET), “impetuous” (SET), “arrogant” (WEB), or “braggarts” (NJB). Again, however, such renderings have no support in the Hebrew.
- treachery** — פְּגִירוֹת is an abstract feminine singular noun. One might repoint it פְּגִירוֹת with the typical abstract ending (see GKC §86k), though singular nouns expressing abstract ideas are sometimes pointed like feminine plurals (like חֲכָמוֹת, “wisdom”).
- desecrate** — Or “profane.” Ezek 22:26 says the same, but uses an inverted imperfect (וַיַּחַלְלוּ) instead of a perfect (חָלְלוּ).
- [what is] holy** — Since there is no definite article, this probably doesn’t refer to a specific thing (“the holy place/sanctuary”) contrary to HCSB, NASB, KJV, etc. Our rendering is supported by Ezek 22:26’s understanding of it: “my holy [things].”
- violate** — Or “do violence to.” Ezek 22:26 says the same. Some translations say “rob” or “wrest,” by which they mean “forcefully deprive of what is due” (so Geneva, SET, Moffatt).
- YHWH’s directive** — The Masoretes end this verse with תִּנְחַל and begin the next with יְהוָה. We believe, however, that because this part of the oracle is directed against *the priests*, it could

not be any sort of directive, but one that comes from YHWH. The divine name, therefore, belongs at the end of the verse: תּוֹרַת יְהוָה (the directive of YHWH). NET (God's laws) agrees. Note that our translation requires emending תּוֹרַה from the absolute to the construct state. Because THF is dedicated to staying as faithful to the Hebrew text as possible, it typically avoids emendation. Where there is sufficient evidence and/or reason, however, we feel justified in doing so. This is such a case. Ezekiel 22:26, which quotes from and expands upon this verse, also has “directive” in construct with “YHWH,” though YHWH is referencing himself and not being referred to by someone else: תּוֹרָתִי (my directive). This suggests that Ezek 22 read the text as we have emended it. Furthermore, the position of the divine name at the start of the next verse has caused a lot of interpretative difficulty, which is eliminated if the verses are divided differently (see notes below). In terms of grammar, if the text is left as it is, we have no reason to think that a specific directive (or set of directives) is intended because there is no definite article and definiteness is not presumed as it would be by use of the construct. Translations attempt to get around that problem by inserting a definite article where there is none: “the law” (as in NASB, ESV, KJV, etc.). Literally, the text should be rendered “they do violence to law.” So far as the text is concerned, this could apply just as equally to cultic law as it does to civil or criminal law. In terms of poetic structure, “[what is] holy” nicely parallels “YHWH's directive” (since YHWH is holy), whereas something of the sanctity of the directive is lost if it is simply a directive. For those reasons, we presume a text that originally said “the directive of YHWH.” תּוֹרַה also means “law,” “instruction,” or “teaching.” We have avoided “law,” however, since the concept of “the Law” could be assumed and is highly anachronistic for this time period. We have also avoided “teaching” and “instruction” since both could be understood as traditional folk or wisdom education. What we mean by “directive” are *the sacred statutes of the priestly order*. Ezek 22:26 understands תּוֹרַה in a similar way: “between [what is] holy and common, they make no distinction—nor between [what is] pure and impure, do they divulge.”

- 3:5 This part of the oracle reuses language from 2:3, but there are differences as explained below.
- [What is] right** — Or “just.” Most translations render it “righteous,” which we avoid since “righteous” is a loaded theological term that may imply more than what our text states. The question is how צַדִּיק functions in this verse. It has an adjectival form. The way the Masoretes divided vv. 5 and 6, the divine name begins this verse. Since צַדִּיק follows, it could describe the Israelite deity: “Just/Upright YHWH” (HCSB, NET, KJV, etc.). This is preferred by 6. The phrase יְהוָה צַדִּיק could also function as two terms in apposition (as in Ps 129:4): “YHWH, the Just/Upright [One]” (SET, NJB, etc.). This is preferred by 7. Finally, one could take the divine name as a vocative. צַדִּיק would stand for anyone who is just: “Oh YHWH, the just one within her will not do wrong.” Contrary to many English translations (NASB, NKJV, LEB, etc.), it cannot mean “YHWH [is] just/upright” because that would have the opposite syntactic construction: צַדִּיק יְהוָה (see, for instance, Ps 11:7, 145:17; Dan 9:14; 2 Chr 12:6).

Contrary to others (NRSV, ESV, NIV, etc.), placing “within her” between “YHWH” and “is righteous” only exacerbates the disregard of syntax. If this oracle is reusing language from 2:3, then the way the language works there can help here. There, it functions as a noun to describe what the people of Jerusalem should be doing. Therefore, that is probably how it functions here. By making a slight change in verse division (see note above), the clouds of confusion part and the subject shifts from YHWH to his “directive.” In fact, by reusing the language of the oracle in 3:2, this oracle may be specifically referring back to the other. “What is right” is present to them because Zephaniah previously told them, “Whatever his demand, do!” That would place this oracle later than the one in 2:3.

**[is] present to her** — The thematic root קרב appears again. See sections A3 and C3. Here, it describes YHWH's relationship with the city (his demand is continually “present to her”).

**“One must not do wrong!”** — It is possible to take לא יעשה עולה in two ways: (1) referring to the fact that “one” must not “do” wrong or (2) referring to YHWH as “he” who does not “do” wrong. In consonance with 2:3, which clearly tells the people of Judah what to “do” (not what YHWH does), and 3:13, which uses *the exact same language* to speak of the Israelites (not YHWH) as those who will “not do wrong” (לא יעשו עולה), we have firm contextual reasons to view the subject of this verb as the typical Israelite (not YHWH). The literary structure also supports that interpretation. The phrase לא יעשה עולה is parallel with “[what is] right” and expanded by the statement “his demand emanates,” which suggests that this phrase is the kind of demand that is emanating from YHWH and that it describes the “right” thing that is “present to her.” Thus, the text moves from a declaration about how people should behave (2:3 and 3:5) to an affirmation that they will eventually behave that way (3:13). There is no indication here or in the surrounding context that people thought YHWH does what is wrong. Zeph 1:12 explicitly stated that the people do not think YHWH does either good or evil. Even though our interpretation is contrary to all other English translations, it is informed by the larger context, perfectly fits the literary structure, and does not depend on a perspective that is alien to the immediate context and to what was stated in 1:12. Note that Zeph 2:3 uses the more ancient verb פעל (to do/act/perform/behave), whereas this verse and 3:13 have the latter, more common synonym עשה. Differences like this suggest that the oracle in the second chapter and the two oracles in this one were composed at different times—the first one earlier and the other two later.

**morning by morning** — Literally, “in the morning in the morning.” An idiom for “every morning.”

**his demand** — We render משפט as “demand” (alternatively, “charge”) since it carries the same sense as משפט in Zeph 2:3, which we also rendered “demand.” We also view this as the subject of the next verb (see below).

**emanates as a light** — נתן can be used in many ways with many nuances. Here, it describes the light that comes at dawn. Thus, 1 used the verb נפך (to come/go out)—the equivalent of יצא

in Hebrew. To mimic the metaphor, we render it “emanate.” Some translations do the same. So RSV and ESV (shows forth) and NET (reveals). Virtually all English translations treat the masculine subject as “YHWH” (so 𐤁), but we believe the subject is “his demand.” Morning by morning, YHWH presents his demand. This is about prophecy—YHWH's word being given continually to the people as a shining beacon to guide them out of the darkness. Some interpreters point to Hos 6:3 to support reading YHWH as the subject. It is Hos 6:5 that they should be examining, which uses the exact same language as this verse: מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ אֹרֶךְ יָצָא (your pronouncements [are] an emanating light). Thus, as noted by Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT), there is a connection in this verse between light and prophetic revelation. The masculine subject (his demand) is fronted for emphasis. Our reading is supported by 𐤁: “his judgment goes out forever.” As for the preposition, 𐤋 + 𐤍 is used to describe a person or thing that becomes something else (see, for instance, Gen 17:6 and Jer 9:10). Berlin (AB) explains it this way: “The construction *ntn X l-* means 'to make/turn X into Y'.” Syntactically, therefore, the verb and preposition should not be split up. Thus, we render the phrase “emanate as.” Such a reading is supported by 𐤁, which also renders the *lamed* “as.” Some translations, however, separate the preposition from the verb in order to interpret the *lamed* temporally (at) or distributively (each/every). In this way, greater parallelism is created between בִּבְקֶרֶךְ and לְאֹרֶךְ. The problem, however, is that it makes no sense. The text would read “at the light/each light, his demand does not fail.” Yet, why would anyone think his demand would fail at the coming of light? Such a suggestion is patently absurd. It is better to read the verb and preposition together as indicated by the conjunctive accent (𐤍 𐤋 has a *mehuppak* beneath, which links it seamlessly to the *lamed*). KJV, ASV, and NASB did that with their rendering “bring to light” (probably meaning “reveal”). As pointed by the Masoretes, the text reads “*the* light.” Presumably, the light of the morning sun. Smith (WBC) represents this interpretation: “the sunrise.” So do HCSB, NRSV, and LEB (dawn) and Leeser (the light of day). The same consonants, however, can be read without a definite article, which is the way it is represented in 𐤁 (εἰς φῶς). Driver (“Linguistic And Textual Problems: Minor Prophets III”) prefers that reading: “If לְאֹרֶךְ is altered to אֹרֶךְ . . . , the meaning at once becomes clear.” We also prefer that reading since the light of the sun may be obscured, but the word of YHWH is constant and reliable.

**never-failing** — As with the previous verb (𐤍 𐤋), most translations view the subject of this verb as YHWH and render it “he does not fail.” Unfortunately, that interpretation is deceptive. It implies that YHWH does not fail *to do something*. But the verb is a Niphal. It is passive, not active. Thus, it is describing an absence in state or condition (see 1 Sam 30:19, 2 Sam 17:22, Isa 40:26, and Isa 59:15), not what someone or something fails *to do*. To apply this to YHWH would result in something like “he is never missing” or “he is never lacking”—neither of which make any sense. Instead, the subject of the verb is probably “light” as shown by 𐤁. Since the verbal phrase modifies the noun, this would result in “a light never missing/absent,” which we simplify to “a light never-failing.” Ewald gives the same rendering. Note that 𐤁 says “it cannot



be hidden,” reading (so it seems) נסתר instead of נעדר. Since MurXII and Ƨ support מ<sup>L</sup>, we stick with מ<sup>L</sup>.

**yet** — We read this as an adversative *waw*.

**[the] wrongdoer ignores reproach** — 6 continues to view YHWH as the subject. At this point, however, the text shifts to BH's typical V-S-O word-order: ידע (verb) עול (subject) בשת (object). So Ƨ and Ƨ—though some manuscripts of Ƨ read the plural of עול (infant) instead of עול. Because this shift is unexpected, some view it as a later addition. NJB puts it in parentheses as though it were scribal commentary. NAB simply ignores it. The noun עול means “transgressor/criminal/wrongdoer.” בשת means “shame/disgrace/reproach” (see v. 11 for fuller description). The verb ידע has many nuances. Translations typically render this phrase something like “the unjust knows no shame.” Berlin (AB) wisely discerns that such a translation “does not capture the correct nuance. . . . In this verse, the meaning is that while God's justice is ever-present, and according to this justice the wrongdoer is condemned, the wrongdoer nevertheless ignores the condemnation and continues to do wrong.” Thus, Berlin renders it “the wrongdoer ignores condemnation.” ידע plus לא has the nuance “to have no care for” or “to pay no attention to.” The use of this phrase at the oracle's end echoes a statement near its beginning (v. 2): “receives not correction.” For that reason, we regard it as authentic. The shift to a masculine “transgressor” is no different here than the shift from a feminine singular “she” in v. 2 to a plural “they” (princes, judges, prophets, and priests) in vv. 3-4.

3:6 This oracle is clearly later than the first two chapters of Zeph. It takes up the same language that was used to describe the future in previous oracles, but uses them to refer back to things that have now occurred. The point is to draw attention to what was previously stated as an explanation for or justification of the destructive events that, so it seems, are now inevitable. The time in which people might be spared (2:1-3) has now passed.

**eradicated** — This oracle reuses the language from 1:3, 4, and 11. Therefore, we render it the same here as there.

**nations** — We follow the Masoretic accents, which have the support of Ƨ. Contrary to Ƨ and some translations (like Geneva and KJV), a definite article should not be added (*the* nations) since that would introduce a contradiction with v. 8, in which nations are mustered against Jerusalem and, thus, could not have been eradicated. Some have proposed reading גוים (nations) as גוים (their nation). See, for instance, Roberts (OTL). In this way, the subject remains Judah, which provides greater continuity between this oracle and the previous one. As noted by Holladay (“Reading Zephaniah with a Concordance”), it would also bring the first colon into greater harmony with the other cola, which mention “their corners,” “their roads,” and “their cities.” All these things make such an interpretation quite tempting. In the rest of the oracle, however, Judah has not been destroyed by an outpouring of YHWH's rage, nor its inhabitants consumed by YHWH's “fervid fire.” Indeed, if Judah was left without inhabitants and its roads with no one traversing them, there would be no one to hear (let alone care about) this oracle. Therefore, the only interpretation that makes sense is “nations.” Instead of גוים, 6

reads גִּאֲוִים (proud/arrogant/exalted ones). Roberts states that such a rendering “is hardly correct, since the expression ‘the proud ones’ does not go well with ‘towers.’” He is only correct insofar as he has altered the Hebrew from “corners” to “towers.” We already saw in 1:16 that the term “high/exalted/lofty” also means “proud/arrogant” and is directly paired with “corners.” 6 has ingeniously woven the sense of 1:16 into 3:6. REB does similarly (this arrogant people). The question, however, is whether that sense was meant to be read in 3:6. Though Moab and Ammon are called proud in 2:10 and Assyria in 2:15, there is nothing in this oracle that suggests nations were destroyed because of pride. We feel, therefore, that such a rendering gives more to the text than the text itself gives to us.

**Reduced to ash** — Literally, “deserted/desolated/ruined” from שָׁמָם. Since we render the nominal form שָׁמָמָה as “ashes” (1:13; 2:4, 9, 13), we render the Niphal here as “they are reduced to ash.” 7 harmonizes this verb with the previous one (and the next) by changing it from a passive third-person to an active first-person “I turned to ash.” 6 and 8 support 7L.

**‘corners’** — This oracle reuses language from 1:16. Apart from THF, JPS is one of the only translations that renders this “corners.” As in 1:16, “corners” is a euphemism for people of prominence. Thus, we place it in quotes. See section A3. YLT is one of the only translations that recognizes the euphemism: “chief ones” (strange that it did not recognize the euphemism in 1:16).

**devastated** — From חָרַב, which can mean either “to dry up/desiccate” or “to devastate/ruin.”

We chose the former meaning for the noun in 2:14, but use the later meaning here where the verb is parallel with “eradicated.”

**Vacant** — Or “without/no more.” Berlin (AB) renders it “empty.”

**wayfarer** — Or “passer/traveler,” if taken substantively. If taken attributively: “one who passes by” or “one who walks through.”

**Destroyed** — The Masoretic accents identify this as a Niphal from צָרַה, meaning “to premeditate/intend (harm).” See Exod 21:13 and 1 Sam 24:12. Unfortunately, that makes no sense here. Some propose that this verb is linked with the Aramaic צָרִי, meaning “to lay waste/make desolate” (Jastrow). So 7. Such a verb, however, occurs nowhere else in the HB. 6 rendered it ἐξέλιπον, which could represent many verbs: חָדַל (to stop/cease/leave), תָּמַם (finish/complete/vanish), כָּלָה (finish/end/destroy), כָּסַף (end/stop), etc. None resemble our text. In the HB, the consonants נ-צ-ת are intimately tied to the expressions “vacant/void of wayfarer/populace” in Jer 2:15, 4:7, 9:9, 9:11, and 46:19. Thus, we prefer to read נִצְתוּ. Efros agrees. נִצְדוּ probably arose as a scribal or transmission error. In that case, the root is either נִצַּח or נִצַּח. The first means “to burn,” which doesn’t fit. So נִצַּח must be the root. But what does that mean? A survey of its usage shows that it is paired with the phrase “turn to ruin/lay waste/make desolate” (with the noun שָׁמָה) and “perish/exterminate/destroy” (with the verb אָבַד). English translations usually fall on one of those two sides. For guidance, we look to 8HevXII gr, which rendered it ἀπωλοντο. That verb means “to perish/exterminate/destroy.” Thus, נִצַּח is probably closer in meaning to אָבַד. The resulting translation (destroy) works well next to “eradicate” and “devastate.”

**person** — Zeph 3:6 and Isa 6:11 both contain the same pair of phrases: “vacant of person” and “void of populace.” The only difference between them is that Isaiah uses אָרֵם, whereas Zeph uses אִישׁ. By using אִישׁ or אָרֵם, neither means to say that only males are absent; the term includes every person regardless of gender. For that reason, contrary to many translations, it should not be rendered “man,” which has a clear gender association (see section D1). For other possible renderings, see NRSV, NIV, or Moffatt.

**void of populace** — This oracle reuses language from 2:5. The privative *mem* on the particle of negation intensifies the statement. We show that intensify with the phrase “void of.” See 2:5.

3:7 **I thought** — Literally, “I said.” What follows, however, is not what YHWH “said,” but what he “thought” (interior monologue). אָמַרְתִּי (I said) is the elided version of the longer expression אָמַרְתִּי בְלִבִּי (literally, “I said in my heart/mind,” which means “I said to myself”). See 2:15. To make the object of the thought clearer, NIV adds “Of Jerusalem” and GW adds “to my people.” Both, we think, are unnecessary.

**if . . . then** — In a conditional sentence, where *waw* begins the apodosis (then), אֲשֶׁר can function as a conjunction to open the protasis (if), which is how we believe it functions here. Ben Zvi concludes the same. Many translations go with the consecutive nature of the *waw* (then), but do not grasp its syntactic function with אֲשֶׁר, which leads them to treat אֲשֶׁר either as a particle of emphasis (surely/certainly) or as a restrictive adverb (only/however/but/at least). 𐤁 took it as the latter. A few view אֲשֶׁר as an elided form of לֹא אֲשֶׁר (if only). See, for instance, ISV, ASV, and YLT. In that case, one would render the *waw* as “so.”

**would fear . . . would receive** — 𐤁 turns these two singular imperfects into plural imperatives. Some prefer that reading. So Smith (WBC): “fear me, receive instruction.” What remains of the second verb in 8HevXII gr shows a singular imperative. 𐤁 and 𐤂 support 𐤍<sup>L</sup>. Thus, we stick with 𐤍<sup>L</sup>. The imperfects serve a modal function, which we interpret as “would.” The switch to imperative may come from reading “should” or “must” instead. YLT reads these two verbs in a positive light as present-continuous modes of behavior (ye do fear Me, ye do accept instruction), which is extremely perplexing since, only a few phrases later, the *opposite* is affirmed.

**receive correction** — This oracle reuses language from 3:2. Therefore, we render it the same here as we did there. See 3:2.

**her dwelling** — 𐤁 reads “cut off from her eyes/sight (מַעֲיִינָהּ)” instead of “eradicated her dwelling (מַעֲוִנָהּ).” So does 𐤂: “she will not fail to see” (Lamsa). 8HevXII gr seems to be reading “her fountain” (מִקְוֵהָ), which is probably short for “fountain of life.” It must be an attempt to merge the two meanings together. 𐤁's reading is preferred by *BHS* and adopted by translations like RSV (she will not lose sight), NAB (she would not fail to see), NJPST (would not be lost on her), and NRSV (it will not lose sight). We see no reason, however, to depart from the traditional reading preserved by 𐤍<sup>L</sup>, which has the support of 𐤁 and 𐤂. Referring to Jerusalem as “her dwelling,” which will be “eradicated,” makes perfect sense. It works with Zeph's use of personification. It works in context (YHWH hopes that “her dwelling” would not be “eradicated” like the “cities” that were “destroyed”). And to speak of Jerusalem as “her

dwelling” is not without precedent—especially in the context of Jerusalem's fall. Ezek 1:27, for instance, calls Jerusalem “her house” (literally, “the house belonging to her”) and describes it as being engulfed all around by the flames of destruction.

**eradicated** — This oracle continues to reuse language from 1:3, 4, and 11 (see previous verse).

Therefore, we render it the same here as we did there.

**[by] all whom I rightly set against her** — As evidenced by the wild diversity of translations, this is a notoriously difficult passage for interpreters—primarily due to פָּקַד. See section A3. פָּקַד identifies *a change in the status of its object*. The Qal means “to put object in the proper place/order/position/status” (or, more simply, “to rightly set object”). The question one must ask here is: “Whose status, place, or position is changing?” or “Who needs to be rightly set?” The answer is *the nations*. In the hypothetical scenario described by this verse, the people of Jerusalem would have learned to fear YHWH and receive correction. Their status/position would have already changed and been set right. Thus, the people of Jerusalem cannot be the object of פָּקַד. Instead, the object is כָּל־אֲשֶׁר—“all those” whom YHWH was planning to muster and gather “against her.” It is the nations who are undergoing the change in position—from being decimated by YHWH to being set up as Jerusalem's decimator. And rightly so (so far as the text is concerned) if Jerusalem had not changed her ways. Thus, we render כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־פָּקַדְתִּי עִלֶּיהָ as “[by] all whom I rightly set against her.” See 1:8.

**Nevertheless** — Or “instead/however.” אֲנִי introduces statements contrary to expectation. We agree with the assessment of Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT): “Now that the idea is to indicate the purpose of the admonition, one must not make a theological problem of the question whether God can have thoughts which later prove incorrect . . . One must neither draw all sorts of conclusions from it for divine omniscience.” ⚡ either misconstrued or reformulated אֲנִי as the Niphal imperative הִכֹּן (“get ready/prepare!”). 8HevXII gr treated it like אֵל־כֵּן (therefore).

**a continuation of contamination they made** — Literally, it means “they rose up early, they contaminated.” Since, however, the two verbs are in apposition, they should be translated together, in which case “they rose up early” modifies “they contaminated.” Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) noted that “this nuance can pass into that of ‘eagerly, over and over.’” Added to the use of the Hiphil, which indicates causation (to cause/make) as well as repetition or duration (to keep doing), this yields something like “they continually contaminated.” We choose the phrase “continuation of contamination” in order to closely mimic the poetic alliteration of the phrase הַשְׂכִּימוּ הַשְׁחִיתוּ. Similar to the first two verbs in the verse, ⚡ altered these from perfects to imperatives (so did 8HevXII gr), but ⚡ and ⚡ support מִלֵּל.

**affairs** — Or “deeds/actions/doings” (עֲלִילוֹת). ⚡ read it instead as “produce/gleanings/pickings” (עֲלָלוֹת), but 8HevXII gr seems to support מִלֵּל.

3:8 Just as Ezek 22 reused and expanded upon Zeph 3:3-4 (in vv. 25-29), so it reuses this verse (in v. 31). That reuse can help us understand this passage. See below.

**wait for me, all of you** — Despite previous statements (like the fact that they continually contaminated everything they did), some interpret this in a positive manner—probably because

to “wait for” YHWH is a very positive thing. So NET (wait patiently for me). The use of the term here, however, continues to reflect the subversive cultic elements of the first chapter. There, the “day of YHWH”—a day of celebration and joyful shout—was turned into a day of violence, destruction, and the cry of lament and of the warrior. The sacrifice of animals, which was a vital part of the Temple and its priestly service, as well as an integral part of the celebration, was turned into a “sacrifice” of the people themselves, whose blood would be dumped in the streets just as the blood of the animals was dumped beside the altar. Here, the traditional liturgical concept from the psalms that those who trust in YHWH should “wait” for him to “rise/stand” and bring deliverance (see, for instance, Ps 17:13, 27:13-14, and 33:20) is turned around into waiting for YHWH to destroy them. The switch to second-person masculine plural (all of you) follows the previous verse's shift, at the end, to a masculine plural (they) as the oracle reverts back to a direct discourse with its audience, as it does at the start of v. 7 (though it is feminine singular there). Such shifts in person and gender are characteristic elements of Hebrew poetry. **ט** seems to have understood “wait for me” to mean “watch for what I said to come about” since it renders **חַכֹּרְלִי** as “look forward to my Memra (Word).”

**for the day** — That is, “YHWH's day.” The theme of ch. 1 is reintroduced. The “for” carries on the sense of the previous verb. Thus, one could resupply it here as Moffatt did (wait till the day).

**I rise up** — This infinitive with pronominal suffix either acts like a finite verb “I rise up” or a gerund in the genitive “of my rising up.” **ט** understood it in the latter sense: “for the day of my rising up.” Briggs took it the same way. We think, however, that it acts more like a finite verb. Few English translations follow **ט** (see, however, YLT and LEB). In the psalms, this verb is often associated with YHWH bringing deliverance to his people. For that reason, many interpret this verse in a positive light. **י** actually took it in a Messianic sense: *expecta me, dicit Dominus, in die resurrectionis meum* (expect me, says the Lord, in the day of my resurrection). As noted above, however, Zeph is taking traditional language and subverting it. Here, YHWH “rises up” to bring destruction, not deliverance. Instead of “I rise up,” **ט** says “I reveal/show myself.” Its translators seem to think that the fulfillment of the prophetic word involves a theophany.

**for [the] catch** — **עַר**, as pointed by the Masoretes (**מ<sup>A</sup>**, **מ<sup>L</sup>**, and **מ<sup>P</sup>**), means “the catch” or “the prey/spoil.” Gen 49:27 uses it in parallel with **שָׁלַל** (plunder) to refer to the prey that the wolf, Benjamin, takes for himself. Isa 33:23 uses it in construct with **שָׁלַל** and parallel with the phrase “they despoil the spoil” to mean “the profuse catch (**עַר**) of loot.” See also Isa 9:5. Many translators understand it that way. Note, for example, NKJV (for plunder), NET (take plunder), KJV (to the prey), ESV (to seize the prey), and SET (to plunder [them]). Since Zeph is using traditional, liturgical language preserved in the psalms, some view **לְעַר** in its temporal sense as “continually/forever,” which is also part of the traditional, liturgical language in the psalms. Examples include **ס'** (forever), **י** (into the future), and Berlin (once and for all). To say, however, that people should wait for YHWH to stand/rise “forever” makes little sense. It

may have been a deliberate choice on the part of the prophet that a word one would expect to mean “forever” and to associate with praise is instead used to mean “for prey/spoil” in the context of condemnation. Instead of “catch” (עָרַב), 6 read “witness/testimony” (עֵד). So does 5: “when I rise up to give testimony” (Lamsa). 7 does as well: “to judge.” If that were correct, the Hebrew should be rendered “to stand/rise up as a witness.” Translations that follow that interpretation include NIV (to testify), NASB (as a witness), ISV (as a prosecutor), NJPST (as an accuser), and REB (to accuse you). Again, however, that makes little sense. YHWH has already “stood as a witness,” “accused,” or “testified” against the people by means of his prophet. Throughout ch. 1, he threatened them with destruction. Throughout ch. 2, he spoke of the annihilation of surrounding nations. In this chapter, he has testified again about what would happen if his people didn’t “draw near.” Now that the time for reverting such calamity has “passed like chaff,” it is pointless to wait for him to accuse them. If they didn’t care about his former accusations, they won’t care now. Ben Zvi further notes that “concerning the existence and main features of the ‘prophetic lawsuit’ genre, there is no doubt that Zeph 3:8 strongly differs from the main pieces have been assigned to this genre . . . . Moreover, there is no mention of specific judicial procedures in Zeph 3:8, except for this proposed reading.” For these reasons, we view “witness” or “testimony” as an extremely weak, if not pointless, interpretation. A few scholars suggest that עָרַב refers to a “throne” or some type of cultic installation as seen in Ugaritic (DUL). If that were correct, the Hebrew should be rendered “to stand/rise up from the throne.” While an interesting interpretation, it adds nothing to the text. It is also questionable whether עָרַב means “throne” in BH even though it has that meaning in Ugaritic.

**my intent [is]** — In Zeph 2:3 and 3:5, מִשְׁפָּט was used in the sense of “demand” or “charge.” That demand was given to his people to “do” what he says (that which is right). Here, however, things have changed. Since his people have no desire to listen to him or do what he says, he is now calling on pagans to respond. And what he demands from them, they will actually do: attack Jerusalem. In the first two verses of Zeph, the verb אָסַף (to gather) was used in order to create a sense of intent and bring emphasis to another verb. Here, that same sense is created by use of the noun מִשְׁפָּט and the verb previously used for emphasis (אָסַף) has now become primary. Note that מִשְׁפָּטִי is a noun, not a verb. This is a verbless clause. Thus, the copula (is) must be inserted.

**for a mustering of** — Or “for a gathering of.” The infinitive appears to function as a gerund in construct with the next noun. So 6. Note the use of anaphora, which we mimic by using the same kind of rendering in each instance (see section B4). By using the verb אָסַף, the text links itself back to the very first oracles in Zeph (1:2-3). There, this verb was used in the form of an infinitive absolute in order to provide emphasis for a verb of a different root (סָוַף). Here, the auxiliary verb becomes primary. By creating a parallel with the very beginning of Zeph, the text shows clear signs of coming to a conclusion in its overarching message.

**for a gathering of** — Here, as in the previous line, is an infinitive functioning as a gerund in construct with the next noun. What gives it away is the *yod* suffixed to the infinitive (לִקְבֹּצִי).

Usually, a *yod* is attached to an infinitive in order to act like a previous finite verb (as in “I rise up”). Some translations treat it that way (KJV, ASV, etc.). There is, however, no previous finite verb. The previous clause is verbless. The use of anaphora shows that this infinitive acts like the surrounding infinitives (as a noun). Thus, what we have is not a pronominal suffix (I/my), but the preservation of an old Semitic case ending (the genitive). See GKC §90. It should be rendered “a gathering *of*.” Unable to choose between a marker of the genitive and a pronominal suffix, NKJV rendered it as both (my assembly *of*). For another example of the old genitive construct ending on a noun, see חֵיתוֹ in 2:14. Though 𐤄 ignores the *yod* or does not seem to know about it, we follow the form preserved by the Masoretes in 𐤍<sup>A</sup>, 𐤍<sup>L</sup>, and 𐤍<sup>P</sup>.

**kingdoms** — מַמְלָכוֹת (singular מַמְלָכָה) is typical CBH vocabulary. If the oracle were LBH, it would most likely use מַלְכוּת (singular מַלְכוֹת). 𐤄 appears to be reading מַלְכִּים (kings) instead. 𐤅 and 𐤆 support 𐤍<sup>L</sup>.

**for pouring over them** — Though many interpret “them” as referring to the “nations,” we agree with Roberts (OTL): “The context gives good grounds for Yahweh pouring out his wrath on Jerusalem, but none at all for punishing the other nations.” Moreover, Ezek 22:31 reuses this phrase and clearly identifies “them” with the people of Jerusalem. The only difference is that the infinitive construct here (for pouring) is a first-person inverted verb there (I poured).

**my scourge** — 𐤄 was either missing זַעַם in its *Vorlage* or purposely ignored it. Since it appears in the quotation in Ezek 22:31, it is probably an authentic part of Zeph. Translators usually take it to mean something like “anger,” “indignation,” “fury,” or “rage.” That is because it parallels the expressions “anger” (אַף) or “burning anger” (חֲרוֹן אַף) in numerous places. The references to “anger,” however, are probably incidental. זַעַם is also used in parallel with אָרַר, meaning “to curse” (Num 23:7-8), or קָבַח, meaning “to imprecate” (Prov 24:24)—both of which one usually does *out of anger*. Thus, anger/indignation/fury/rage is probably the impetus for, *but not the meaning of*, זַעַם. Though זַעַם is associated with one's mouth or tongue (Prov 25:23; Isa 30:27; Hos 7:16), it is not limited to vocal expression. Ps 7:12 parallels it with the phrase “executes justice.” It must refer to the sentencing, condemning, or inflicting of punishment on the guilty. Thus, Isa 26:20-21 identifies the time of זַעַם as “YHWH going out from his place to set right the wrong.” The passive form is perfectly suited to describe what has happened to people because of their wickedness (Mic 6:10 and Mal 1:4). And it makes sense of זַעַם as a necessary or consequential response to sin (Ps 38:4) or God's enemies (Isa 66:14). No wonder that Isa 10:5 uses it with the sense of “punishment” or “affliction” and Ps 78:49 places it next to the noun צָרָה (distress/trouble/suffering/anguish). Our analysis is similar to that given by Pedersen (*Der Eid bei den Semiten*), who concludes that “זַעַם seems to have the general meaning of 'do someone harm,' whether through words (a curse) or action (possibly punishment).” Thus, Ewald renders it “my punishment.” To capture the sense either of a strong negative vocal expression meant to bring harm or an affliction meant to punish or bring destruction, we chose “scourge.”

**my fuming rage** — Literally, “the fuming of my anger.” Ezek 22:31 ignored this phrase.

**when, by my fervid fire, the whole land will be consumed** — This entire line is taken from 1:18. This verse already created a parallel with the very beginning of Zeph by the use of אֶסֶף. Now it draws upon the wording that was used as part of the conclusion to the first chapter—the oracle that, more than any other in Zeph, threatened Jerusalem's destruction. Thus, this verse helps create a framework within which all the oracles of condemnation, execration, and destruction are contained. And so we have good reason to think this is where Zeph's oracles (at one point) came to an end. The only differences between this verse and 1:18 are the shift from “his” to “my” and the use of כִּי instead of *waw*. The כִּי functions as a subordinating conjunction to introduce a temporal clause. It indicates that this situation (the consuming of the land) is simultaneous with that of the main clause (YHWH pouring his scourge and fuming rage over Jerusalem). Here, as in 1:18, הָאָרֶץ refers to “the land” (of Judah), not “the world.” See section B4. Ezek 22:31 took the phrase “by my fervid fire, it will be consumed” (בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי תֵאכַל) and changed it to “with the fire of my fury, I will finish them off” (בְּאֵשׁ עֲבֹרָתִי כִלְיָתִים)—primarily a swapping of synonyms.

3:9-20 At this point, Zeph changes from oracles of judgment to oracles of restoration. Westermann was one of the first to look at the oracles of restoration in the HB as a collection and provide a summary of their form and content. In “Oracles of Salvation,” he argued that such oracles were inserted into various texts in order to supplement prophecies of judgment (as we see here in Zeph). He claimed that most restoration oracles dated to the late exilic or early post-exilic periods, whereas judgment oracles occurred throughout Israelite history (which makes sense if restoration oracles came along to supplement preexisting judgment oracles). Restoration oracles could be addressed either to a community or individual. When given to a community, the time between proclamation and fulfillment is usually quite long, whereas the time between proclamation and fulfillment is usually quite short when addressed to individuals.

3:9 **Yet** — The fact that this is an adversative כִּי (but/yet) is signaled by the dramatic shift from oracles of execration to oracles of restoration. Thus, as noted by Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT), it gets its significance “as a result of the arrangement of the book.” In other words, this particle was probably not part of the original oracle, but was added here in order to link this oracle with the preceding one. The topic of this oracle is the conversion of the nations to Yahwism—something also seen in 2:11.

**endow to** — In the Qal stem, the verb הִפֵּךְ indicates a reversal in direction, status, time, or position. For that reason, it often has a meaning like “turn around,” “come around,” “topple/overturn,” or “change/transform.” The latter is most relevant here, where the text indicates that something which was formerly lacking will be bestowed. Thus, with the addition of the helping particle אֵל, we believe the sense is “give to” (NASB), “endow to,” “enable to” (NET), or “grant” (Moffatt). Smith (ICC) agrees: “bestow upon by way of exchange.” There is no semantic significance to the use of אֵל instead of עַל in MurXII. Qumran Hebrew often interchanges those prepositions. 1Q uses the verb שָׁפַךְ (to pour/spill) instead of הִפֵּךְ, which was probably done to harmonize this verse more with the previous one. 1Q's use of עַל instead



of **אֵל** is best explained in terms of the cohesion it has with the verb it selected (“to pour over” instead of “to endow to”).

**pagans** — Typically, **עַמִּים** means “peoples” (as in “non-Israelites” or “gentiles”). The sense in this oracle, however, is that such people-groups worship and serve gods other than YHWH, but will convert to Yahwism (from as far away as Nubia). Thus, we render it “pagans.” Note that there is no definite article in **אֵל**. Although **אֵל** agrees with **אֵל**, the lack of a definite article is, most likely, nothing more than a function of the poetry. Ancient people probably understood the text to mean “the pagans” anyway, which is why MurXII included the article (**הָעַמִּים**).

**a lip purified** — “Purified” is a Qal passive participle of **בָּרַר**, meaning “to purify/purge/be pure” or “polish/sharpen” (in LBH, “to choose/select”). Instead of “a lip purified” (**שִׁפְהָ בְּרוּרָה**), **אֵל** read “a tongue because of/for its generation” (**לְשׁוֹן בְּרוּרָה**). The use of “tongue” instead of “lip” may have been to harmonize this verse more with v. 13. Since they belong to different oracles, however, “lip” is preferable (it is also supported by MurXII, **S**, and the Three). The difference between “purified” and “because of/for its generation” is due to a *dalet-resh* interchange. **אֵל** rendered it “one chosen speech” (**מִמְלַל חָדָשׁ בְּחִירָה**). The addition of “one” creates a textual link with Gen 11:1. Thus, as Ho notes, **אֵל** interprets this verse as a return to the time before Babel when everyone spoke the same language. Moreover, “the language spoken then is assumed to be Hebrew, the chosen tongue.” All of that is clearly an interpretative shift. There is no shared language between Gen 11 and this verse. The use of a word that meant “chosen” instead of “purified” is due to **אֵל**’s familiarity with the late usage of **בָּרַר** (long after Zeph). That also explains the use of “chosen” by **S**, **α’**, and **θ’**. MurXII agrees with **אֵל**. So does **σ’**: *χειλος καθαρων* (a pure lip). See section C4. Though there are exceptions (like YLT, Rotherham, and Fenton), most translations render it in the plural.

**for collectively invoking** — Literally, “for calling, all of them, on.”

**YHWH’s name** — Literally, “the name of YHWH.”

**shoulder-to-shoulder** — Literally, “[with] one shoulder.” Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) says that this phrase “has to be an expression which means something like ‘with united powers.’” We agree. Thus, we render it “shoulder-to-shoulder.” See JM §126d. A similar phrase occurs in 1 Kgs 22:13, where Micaiah ben Imlah is told to parrot the other prophets whose words are “one mouth.” In other words, they all said the same thing or agreed with each other. Thus, one might render the phrase “with one consent” (KJV), “with a single purpose” (HCSB), “with one accord” (ESV), etc. **אֵל** rendered it “under one yoke,” interpreting this to be a farming metaphor. As summarized, however, by Vlaardingerbroek, “**שָׁכָם** is never used of animals but only of humans, and . . . in biblical usage humans never bear a yoke on their **שָׁכָם** but on their **צוּאָר**.” See, for instance, Jer 28:10.

3:10 **From across the rivers of Nubia** — A quotation from Isa 18:1. The *lamed* is one of specification. For **כּוֹשׁ** as “Nubia,” see section A3. Since **אֵל** interprets this verse as a reference to the return of the exiles from Babylon, it is no good to refer to them as coming from the far south-west. Better the extreme east. Since Nubia and India are paired together in Esther 1:1 and 8:9 as

examples of the far-off extremities of the Persian Empire, and it is exactly the far-off extremity of the Persian Empire from which Israelites would be returning, **ט** switched the text from one far-off extent of Persia to the other so that the text would align with its interpretation. The fact that **ט** had to make such a change to support its interpretation is evidence that the text, as it stands, does not speak of returning exiles.

**my supplicants [will come].** — **עֹתֵר** is a nominal form with suffix from  $\sqrt{\text{עֹתֵר}}$  (to supplicate/entreat/pray). Some prefer to reposit as a participle, which results in essentially the same meaning (those supplicating me). **ט** is missing this phrase, but a few late manuscripts have been edited to follow **מ**<sup>L</sup> more closely. Thus, some manuscripts of **ט**<sup>L</sup> say προσδεξομαι τους κατευοντας με (I will accept those supplicating me). **σ** says κατευοντα με (the one supplicating me). Since MurXII agrees with **מ**<sup>L</sup>, we see no need to depart from **מ**<sup>L</sup>. Pointing to Ezek 8:11, some have identified **עֹתֵר** with the meaning “fragrance” or “odor.” See, for instance, Smith (WBC). Similarly, Briggs renders it “incense.” Unfortunately, there is no basis for such a rendering of **עֹתֵר**. In Ezek 8:11, **עֹתֵר** is a nominal form of  $\sqrt{\text{עֹתֵר}}$  (to be abundant) and has the meaning “abundance” (see Jer 33:6 for the feminine form). Most translators follow the Masoretic accentuation and interpret **עֹתֵרִי** and **בֶּת-פִּוּצִי** in apposition to each other. Without such accents, however, there seems to be a natural parallel between the coming of supplicants from “Nubia” and the bringing of offerings from “Libya.” Thus, we move the *athnach* below **עֹתֵרִי** and interpret the first half as a verbless clause. Moffatt (my worshipers shall come) does likewise. Note also Ewald (though he reads **עֹתֵר** as “perfume” and moves the verb from the second half to the first): “from alongside the streams of Cush will men convey my perfumes.”

**Lady Libya** — We read **פֹּוֹט** (Put) instead of **פִּוּצִי** because the phrase “Daughter X” characteristically refers to a geographical place (see, for example, v. 14), the passive participle of **פִּוּץ** is not attested elsewhere in the Qal (which would make this a unique occurrence), Put is mentioned many times as a companion of Cush (e.g., Gen 10:6; Jer 46:9; Ezek 30:5; 38:5), and it fits the context well. Thus, Ewald states, “**פִּוּצִי** must have arisen by an ancient copyist’s error from **פֹּוֹט**.” Smith (ICC) agrees. The change is easily explained. A *yod* was inserted by dittography so that **פֹּוֹט** **יִבְלֹן** became **פֹּוֹטִי יִבְלֹן** and then [t] became [ts] through aspiration. **ט** is missing this phrase. Some translations follow it (NJB and NET). Three Greek codices, however (**ט**<sup>A</sup>, **ט**<sup>B</sup>, **ט**<sup>V</sup>), say προσδεξομαι εν διεσπαρμενοις μου (I will be pleased with my scattered ones). **σ** says τεκνα των διεσπαρμενων (child of my scattered ones), which is even closer to the Hebrew. Such phrases, however, represent very late readings. They can tell us nothing about the early Hebrew text. “Put” is probably the territory of Libya. Other than the instances where **ט** gives a phonetic representation (Gen 10:6 and 1 Chr 1:8), it renders **פֹּוֹט** as λιβυς (Libya). Gen 10:6 lists **פֹּוֹט** as the brother of Nubia (Cush), Egypt (Mitsrayim), and Palestine (Canaan), which makes the identification with “Libya” quite likely. Some translations, trying to keep with the characteristic use of “Daughter X,” transliterate the word. Note, for instance, NJPST (Fair Puzai) and Moffatt (Patras). MurXII agrees with **מ**<sup>L</sup>. Some suggest

taking **בַּת־פּוֹצִי** as **בַּת־פּוֹצִי**—a prepositional *bet* prefixed to a masculine plural of the noun **תְּפוצָה** (dispersion) plus a first-person pronominal suffix: “in my dispersions.” What, however, does that refer to? One cannot link this with the general dispersal of the nations in Genesis since this is only speaking about Nubia. And there is no indication that anyone was ever dispersed to Nubia. Identifying **פּוֹצִי** as “my dispersed ones” is the more typical rendering, but that is problematic for more reasons than the lack of any other Qal passive participle. First, it veers sharply away from context: the conversion of foreigners. In order to fix that problem, **℣** added “my people” to the text—another indication that the text, as it stands, does not speak of returning exiles. Second, since this verse is already quoting Isaiah, if it were wanting to speak of the “dispersed” of Israel, it could have used the same word in Isa 11:12, which speaks of the exact same scenario: **נִפְצוֹת יְהוּדָה** (the dispersed of Judah). It is curious that **נִפְצוֹת** is so similar to **פּוֹצִי**. Perhaps the text originally read **בַּת־נִפְצִי**. Unfortunately, we have no evidence of it. *BHS* suggests a more radical alteration to **עַד־יִרְכְּתִי צָפוֹן** (unto the far stretches of the north). This was followed by NAB (as far as the recesses of the North). Again, however, MurXII supports **נָזַל**. It is also a difficult and complicated process for the text to move from **עַד־יִרְכְּתִי צָפוֹן** to **עַתְרִי בַּת־פּוֹצִי**. What we suggest above (Lady Put) follows naturally along common lines of scribal and transmission error and has the benefit of continuing and expanding upon previous content. For more on the idiom “Daughter X,” see notes on 3:14.

**will convey my offering** — This line is a quotation from Isa 18:7. There are, however, several differences. First, instead of using “tribute/gift” (**שִׁי**), this introduces a more cultic sense by substituting the word “offering” (**מִנְחָה**). Some translations treat the text as if no difference were intended (such as NJB, NET, and SET). Second, the verb in Isa 18:7 is marked by the Masoretes as a Hophal (will be brought) in order to indicate that it is the *Israelites* who are the “gift” of the nations to YHWH. Here, however, the Masoretes marked the text as a Hiphil (will bring), which indicates that the traditional understanding of this verse differed from the idea in Isa 18:7. Since scribes would be more likely to change the text from a Hiphil to a Hophal in order to mimic the form in Isa 18:7 and to harmonize the content here with the content there, but much less likely to change a text that already agreed with the text they were quoting in both form and meaning, the Hiphil is probably original. To make this text speak of Israelites, one must introduce something that is not present, which is exactly what we find in **℣**. Instead of “will convey,” it says “will convey *them*.” That addition enables **℣** to keep the foreign supplicants as the subjects of the verb while maintaining the idea that the Israelites are the “offering” (**℣** inserted the Israelites into the text at an earlier point by adding the word “my people”). The assessment of Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) is spot on: “The idea that the peoples bring the Judeans who live scattered among them as an offering to YHWH lies outside the scope of the text.” More likely than not, the impetus to shift the text—both grammatically and textually—so that it speaks of Israelites being brought as an offering is influenced by Isa 66:20. **⚡** reads the plural “offerings” instead of the singular, which is a valid interpretation of the consonantal text. We follow the ancient reading tradition preserved by the Masoretes.

3:11 **On that day** — The phrase **ביום ההוא** (on that day), like “it will occur/when it comes” (והיה), introduces new oracular content within a text composed of many oracles. As redactional glue, it creates a sense of continuity between what came before and what comes next. See also 3:16. For a rare insertion in the middle of an oracle, see 1:9. Note that the “you” here is feminine. Thus, the same type of language from previous oracles is reused.

[**Lady,**] — We add “Lady” here (with the first consonant capitalized to indicate that we are speaking of a people in a particular geographic location—that is, Lady Zion) in order to capture something that is evident in Hebrew, but not English: that the “you” in the rest of this oracle is talking to a woman. This oracle takes up feminine verbal forms to describe the people of Jerusalem just as in earlier oracles. REB and NIV identify the addressee, but not the gender: “On that day, Jerusalem.” For more on the idiom “Daughter X,” see notes on 3:14.

**you will have no reproach from** — **לֹא תבושׁי** is usually rendered something like “you will not be ashamed.” In an honor and shame society like those of the ancient NE, however, “shame” is different than a feeling or emotion—it refers to a negative stigma or status conferred by a group or society. Here, it refers to Israel's standing in the eyes of YHWH. Previously, Israel “ignored reproach” (v. 5) and continually corrupted all her affairs (v. 7). In this oracle, however, there will be a change in behavior—a conversion to match that of the pagans. Israel's standing before YHWH will be different because she no longer acts the way she used to and those who approved of her ways will be “removed.” Since the same root that was used to describe what Israel ignores in v. 5 (**בושׁ**) is reused here (**בושׁ**), we use the same basic word in both instances —“reproach” for the noun and “you will have no reproach” for the verb. Few translations capture that sense. Many translations create the opposite idea to what was intended: that Israel should not be ashamed of her defiance of YHWH. Note, for example, the following:

“shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings wherein thou has transgressed” (KJV)

“you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled” (NASB)

“you need not be ashamed of all your deeds, your rebellious actions” (NAB)

“you will not be ashamed of all your rebelliousness” (NET)

But it is just and right that Israel should “feel shame” or “be ashamed” for her transgressions! That she did not (v. 5) meant that she was deserving of eradication (v. 7). Such translations not only miss the point, but introduce extraordinary contradiction and theological bewilderment. Rotherham (wilt thou not turn pale for all thy deeds, wherein thou hast transgressed?) avoids the error by turning the phrase into a question. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the text to indicate an interrogative. Berlin (AB) sums it up well: “The issue is not whether Israel feels shame, but whether it is put to shame.”

**the affairs** — Literally, “your affairs.” To flow better in English, we shift it from “your” to “the.” We feel justified making that shift since the second-person association is not lost by doing so. Note how this picks up and reuses the language from 3:7.

**defied me** — We view the *bet* as nothing more than a marker of the object (see notes below). It is possible, however, to view it with its own meaning (against) and render the phrase “rebelled *against* me.”

**because then** — This oracle uses the same turn of phrase found in the previous oracle (**כי־אז**).

**I will remove** — A good use of understatement. **ע** is more direct (I will exile).

**from your presence** — See sections A3 and C3.

**the champions of your infamy** — Or “the celebrants of your ignominy.” The phrase **עליזי גאווה** occurs only here and in Isa 13:3. The singular noun **גאווה**, when used of the Israelite deity by the devotee of YHWH, always has a positive sense like “majesty,” “exaltation,” “preeminence,” or “prestige.” That is certainly the case in Isa 13. When used of objects like the sea (Ps 46:4), **גאווה** refers to a state of swelling or surging—having pushed beyond natural and prescribed boundaries. When used of humans, **גאווה** always has the opposite sense to that of YHWH—false majesty, ill-gotten prestige, or having lifted oneself up beyond one’s actual status or station. That is precisely what we find in this verse. Thus, we render it “infamy.” YLT breaks with the characteristic meaning applied to humans and renders it “thine excellency.” **ע** renders it **עָלָה**, which means either an act of violation/outrage or arrogance/pride. English translators prefer the latter. Note, however, that most translations do not render **גאווה** as a singular noun. Some treat it as a plural adjective (proud/arrogant). Others treat it as an adverb (proudly). Yet **גאווה** exists at the end of a construct chain with **עליזי**. It cannot function as an adjective or adverb of **עליזי**, let alone a plural one (it is singular). Either translators prefer to read from the text what isn’t there or they have difficulty with **עליזי**, a construct plural *qatil* noun from **עלז** (to exult/triumph/cheer). *Qatil* nouns communicate either active or passive states. One example of an active *qatil* is **חציר** (harvest). Two examples of passive *qatil* nouns are **משיח** (anointed one) and **אסיר** (“bound/captured/imprisoned one” or simply “prisoner”). Thus, **עליזים** would mean either “exalted/triumphed/cheered ones” or “exalting/triumphing/cheering ones.” Which is it? Translators default to the active. Note, for instance, NASB (exulting ones), SET (those who exult), NET (those who boast), KJV (them that rejoice), and ISV (those who revel). Some treat it like an adjective. Note, for instance, ESV (exultant). If it were an adjective, however, it would have a different grammatical form and syntactic arrangement (see 2:15). The Isaiah passage provides the best avenue for understanding. It says “I summoned my warriors in my fury, [called upon] the **עליזי** of my majesty.” Since **עליזי גאוותי** is parallel to “my warriors/heroes,” it must refer to something similar. The passive *qatil* (“exalted/triumphed/cheered ones” or simply “champions”) works perfectly in parallel with “warriors/heroes.” Thus, that is the meaning we prefer. See also Isa 24:8. Such a meaning was understood by **ע** (the strong/powerful/mighty ones). NJB agrees with our rendering in Isa 13:3 (champions), but alters the meaning of the same expression when it occurs here (those who exult). Who are these “champions of infamy”? From earlier oracles, it seems certain that they are the rulers, leaders, and people with influence and/or affluence. It is for good reason that Berlin (AB) identifies them as “the opposite of the poor and humble folk, that is, the upper classes.”

**to have contempt any more** — Or “to be further contemptuous.” Many translations ignore the **עוד**, which we represent with “any more” (or “further”). Instead, they collapse the verb **יספ** (to continue/do again) and **עוד** into a singular expression. Note, however, YLT’s “no more,” Leiser’s “again,” and Rotherham’s “any more.” Our rendering not only sticks very close to the

Hebrew (לִגְבוּהָ עוֹד), but follows the textual divisions created by the Masoretic accents. Most translations represent גְבוּהָ with words like “haughty” or “arrogant.” We prefer a rendering like “contemptuous” or “contempt” since the problem is not that people are prideful, but that their pride results in a dismissal of that which is rightly eminent. ט renders it “to claim superiority” (CAL). ש renders the verb “boast.” The *heh* on the end of the infinitive is an alternate feminine form (see GKC §45d).

**for my sacred mount** — Literally, “for the mount of my sacredness.” There is parallelism in this verse between defying YHWH and having contempt for Mount Zion. The two statements are partially synonymous. Such parallelism is communicated not just by content, but syntactic arrangement. Each verb is followed by a prepositional *bet* attached to the object of the verb—in the first instance “me,” in the second “my sacred mount.” Thus, the *bet* acts as marker of the object, which we indicate in this place with “for.” For another instance, see notes on the next verse. Geneva also understood the *bet* as a marker of the object, but the way it formed its rendering is quite astounding: “thou shalt no more be proude of mine holy Mountaine”! It is possible to interpret the *bet* as having its own meaning (in/on) and render the phrase “*in/on* my sacred mount.” In that case, however, this last phrase would not be a necessary component of the text—it would only tell the location where the contempt is happening (which is a bit redundant since that location is already known). In the HB, the phrase “sacred mount” occurs only in the Prophets, Psalms, and Daniel.

3:12 **I will cause to remain** — וְהִשְׁאֲרֵתִי is an inverted perfect. The bonded *waw* is not a coordinating conjunction as in SET (and) or KJV (also). Neither is it an adversative conjunction (but) as in NASB, NJPST, ESV, etc. It inverts the aspect or tense of the verb (I *will*). See 1:3. We choose to translate it “cause to remain” not just because the verb is a Hiphil, which gives it a causative sense, but to mimic the root-play created by the words וְהִשְׁאֲרֵתִי (cause to remain) and שְׁאֲרִית (remnant).

**in your presence** — See sections A3 and C3.

**[the] people** — There is no definite article in the Hebrew, but we believe that definiteness was understood. This is not speaking about any people who are afflicted and powerless, but those of Israel (to whom it is speaking).

**afflicted and powerless** — עֲנִי is typically rendered “poor” or “humble” and דָּל either “lowly” or “poor.” Both, however, have other nuances. עֲנִי can mean “wretched/afflicted/miserable” and דָּל more properly means “powerless/weak/insignificant.” The question is how these words function here. As noted by Ben Zvi, “עֲנִי וְדָל . . . does not stand in opposition to ‘wealthy’ (עֲשִׂיר) *per se* but to ‘oppressor.’” Thus, it is not the “poor” who are mentioned here, but the powerless, those hunted by the lions (princes) and wolves (judges), led astray by treacherous prophets, whose implementation of YHWH’s directive is frustrated, who suffer under the oppressor (הַיּוֹנָה). They will remain, while the others are “removed.” For that reason, we choose “afflicted” and “powerless.” Note the difference between “humble” in 2:3 (עֲנִי) and “afflicted” (עֲנִי). If this oracle wanted to use the language of humbleness or humility, it could

have taken up and reused the same wording in 2:3 since it had no problem reusing previous language elsewhere. The fact that a different word was chosen indicates a difference in meaning.

**(They will seek the protection** — Literally, “They will seek refuge.” As noted by Ben Zvi, “The expression . . . means to rely on YHWH for protection.” Such language is common in the psalms (see, for instance, Ps 2:15, 5:12, 7:2, 11:1, 16:1, etc.). Since this also mentions YHWH's name, it is possible that it was influenced by Ps 5:12. Instead of representing **סָחָה**, **ט** says “trust” (representing **בָּטַח**). Many translations do as well (KJV, ISV, NIV, etc.). That reading, however, is only used to harmonize with the language in v. 2. It must be rejected as a departure from the Hebrew. MurXII supports **מִל**. **ס** says “revere” or “be in awe of,” which is also a departure. Note the shift in language from “people” to “they.” Such alternation is a common characteristic of ancient Hebrew poetry, which is why we have no problem accepting “They will not do wrong . . . a tongue of deceit” as an original part of the oracle. Here, however, we have reason to believe that something secondary has been inserted into the text. See below for more.

**of YHWH's nature**— — Literally, “of the name of YHWH.” In the ancient NE, one's name was equivalent with one's being, character, or existence. In other words, it is not in the pronunciation of a name that people “seek protection,” but in the character or nature of YHWH. As in v. 11 (twice), we believe the *bet* marks the object of the verb. It is possible, however, to interpret the *bet* as having its own meaning (in) and render the phrase “in YHWH's nature.” Note that we divide the text differently than the Masoretes. They place a *soph pasuq* after the divine name, which means that they identify the subject as the “people” previously mentioned. We believe, however, that the shift in speaker from YHWH to narrator is the most natural indicator of textual expansion. Thus, we view the verb **וַחֲסֹה** as the beginning of a new piece of text appended to the oracle. Who are “they”? Typical word-order in BH places the subject after the verb. Thus, “they” are “the remnant of Israel.” Our textual division has ancient attestation in **ס**. See next note for more.

3:13 **the remnant of Israel.**) — Note the root-play created by using **וְהִשְׁאֲרֵתִי** and **שְׂאֲרִית**, which we mimic by rendering the first “cause to remain” and the second “remnant.” According to the Masoretic textual division, this phrase begins the next verse. If one follows that division, one must explain the appearance of subject before verb as a purposed fronting of the subject for emphasis: it is not anyone who will not do wrong and speak not a lie, it is *Israel's remnant*. We feel that the kind of emphasis that would be intended by fronting the subject is lacking in that case. In fact, if “Israel's remnant” didn't exist in v. 13, one would still understand that it is speaking about those who remain after the others have been removed. Thus, this phrase contributes nothing to v. 13. If, however, the text is redivided so that this phrase concludes what was said in the previous verse, not only does the text follow typical verb-subject word-order, but there is a fascinating reverse parallelism:

(A<sup>1</sup>) Mention of subject “those who remain.”

(B<sup>1</sup>) Remark about current state (afflicted and without power).

(B<sup>2</sup>) Remark about upcoming state (protection from YHWH).

(A<sup>2</sup>) Reaffirmation of subject “the remaining ones.”

The choice is clear. “Israel's remnant” is the subject of וְחָסוּ (they will seek protection). Our textual division has ancient attestation in 6. Many translations agree with us (NRSV, NAB, ESV, etc.). So does Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT): “These words still belong to vs. 12.” The fact that the verb is plural but “remnant” is singular is either an instance of grammatical alternation or a result of understanding “remnant” as a collective. Note the use of parentheses, which indicate what appears to be an explanatory gloss originating from the same source as the glosses in ch. 2. Verses 7 and 9 of chapter two featured two short expansions. An interruption in the flow of the text was evident by a change in speaker from YHWH to someone else. The same happens in this verse. It goes from “I will cause” (YHWH speaking) to “they will seek the protection of YHWH's nature” (someone else speaking about YHWH). The same language that was used in those glosses appears here as well. In this particular instance, the repeated language is “remnant.” At the time that these oracles would have been created, there was no “remnant.” The text is more meaningful if it applies to people who actually exist or who are known by the hearers and readers of the text. Thus, it makes a lot of sense to date the parts that mention a “remnant” to the exilic or, perhaps, post-exilic periods. See notes below for more. Some see a difference of meaning in the use of “Israel” instead of “Judah.” It could be the case that “Israel” is meant to be more indicative of a socioreligious group than a geographic location, but the fact that different words are chosen each time to accompany “remnant” (“Judah,” “my people,” and “Israel”) seems to indicate that it is the word “remnant” that was most significant to the author and any synonym for YHWH's people could be used to accompany it since the audience (Israelites in Judah who believed themselves to be YHWH's people) would know quite well to whom it was speaking.

**“They will not do wrong** — We place quotes here because this part of the verse does not appear to be a gloss. It seems to continue in the voice of YHWH as in the original oracle. The biggest indicator of its link with the original oracle, however, is its content. Like v. 11 and the first part of v. 12, this draws language from previous oracles. The statement “they will not do wrong” (לֹא-יַעֲשׂוּ) comes directly from v. 5: “one must not do wrong” (לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה). The difference is that one is singular and the other plural. In both cases, however, the referent is the same: Israel.

**and will not speak a lie** — Note how this text mimics in content what was said in the previous oracle. Verse 9 states that pagans would receive a purified lip. This verse signals that there will also be a conversion with regard to the people of Judah. Thus, like other authentic oracles in this chapter, it is responding directly to what has already been said.

**since** — We believe this *waw* has a causal nuance (since/because/for). It explains the reason why the people will not speak a lie: *because* the nature of their mouth has changed. “Mouth,” of course, is a synecdoche for the whole being.

**tongue of deceit** — Translation literal. תַּרְמִית is a *qatil* noun with preformative ת from רָמָה/רָמָה (to deceive/mislead/betray). The final ת indicates a feminine noun functioning as an abstract concept. It is a synonym of מַרְמָה (preformative מ) and רַמְיָה. Curiously, virtually all “literal”



translations do not render it literally. They all say “deceitful tongue.” Rotherham is one of the only exceptions.

**(Yes —** Translations are all over the map with this כִּי. Some (like HCSB) take it as adversative (but). Some (like KJV) take it as causal (because/for). Some (like NRSV) take it as temporal (then). Some (like NJPST) take it as limiting (only). Some (like NIV) ignore it. We view it as asseverative. So do Berlin (AB), NET, and Rotherham. The purpose of the particle (like וְ in 2:12) is to introduce an additive and continuing force, which enables new content to be inserted. In this instance, that insertion is a gloss, which provides the same kind of commentary introduced by the glosses in chapter 2: that those who are being spoken of are the “remnant” of Israel and they will “graze and repose,” by which the commentator means “take possession” (2:7, 9).

**[it is] they —** The Hebrew uses a personal pronoun in addition to the verb to produce emphasis. We mimic that emphasis with our rendering “[it is] they.”

**graze and repose —** There is nothing anywhere in this oracle that has anything to do with or provides context for “grazing and reposing.” This oracle is about conversion, the removal of the bad apples, and reliance upon YHWH. Clearly, words have been taken from 2:7 and inserted into this oracle in order to add to the oracle something that was not originally present—the idea that the remnant will be at peace in the land. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) agrees: “These words do not accord very well with the original prophecy of Zephaniah, . . . they belong to the later prophecies of salvation, which the redactors of the book assembled around the authentically Zephaniah words of 3:11-13.” It is possible that the glosses in both this chapter and the previous one were influenced by Isa 57:13. If that is the case, then the glosses should be dated to the early post-exilic period; and their addition to Zeph may have occurred at the same time as the quotation in 2:15. Instead of יָרְעוּ from רָעָה/רָעָה, YLT (they have pleasure) appears to have changed the verb to יִרְצוּ from רָצָה/רָצָה (to be pleased/accepted/find favor).

**since —** We believe this *waw* has a causal nuance (since/because/for). It explains the reason why the people will be able to graze and repose: *because* the one who would threaten their well-being is gone. English translations typically ignore it.

**[the] intimidator has vanished —** Literally, “vanished/gone [is] one who causes trepidation.” אֵין is a particle of negation. It expresses absence (vanished/gone/nothing/no one/there is no). מַחְרִיד is a Hiphil masculine singular participle from חָרַד/חָרַד (to shudder/tremble in fear). Note that this verb is intransitive. There is no direct object. Contrary to virtually all English translations, the text does not say “vanished/gone [is] one who causes *them* trepidation.” וְ, however, does have a direct object. We follow the Hebrew. So does ISV (with no one to cause fear) and YLT (there is none troubling). More evidence that this is probably a later gloss can be seen by the fact that in all previous occurrences of the particle of negation, a *mem* was prefixed to it (2:5; 3:6). If the same author were using the same language to communicate the same thing, one would expect מֵאֵין.

3:14 **Exclaim . . . shout —** These verbs (the first from רָנַן/רָנַן, the second from רָוַע/רָוַע) are synonyms that basically mean “to shout/yell/cry aloud.” The nature of the cry is determined by context. It may

be mournful (lamentation), triumphant (a victory-cry), ferocious (a battle-cry), alarming, or joyful. The kind of outbursts described by these verbs are not always limited to the human voice. Here, however, they are vocal as well as festive. Though translations usually render **הריעו** more or less literally, some try to bring out the joyful aspect of **רני**. Thus, NJPST, NAB, NET, etc., render it “shout for joy.” REB has “cry out for joy.” We choose to give the literal rendering for both and let context provide further meaning. Furthermore, we mimic the short, brisk nature of the imperatives by using singular exclamations instead of longer descriptions. The KJV seems to have been the first translation to render **רני** as “sing,” although it has been followed by countless others. There is a verb meaning “to sing” (**שיר**), but it does not occur here. The shift from a feminine singular to masculine plural imperative is an example of gender and number alternation typical of Hebrew poetry. **ס** says “Rejoice greatly” instead of “Exclaim” and uses the singular form for the second imperative. Both shifts are a case of harmonization with Zech 9:9: **גילי מאד בת־ציון הריעי** (Rejoice greatly, Lady Zion! Shout!). The Geneva and Bishops' bibles follow **ס**. MurXII supports **מ**<sup>L</sup>. **ט** has “praise” in place of “exclaim,” which Ho describes as explaining “the nature of the rejoicing as a religious and cultic event.” In other words, this oracle was seen to serve a liturgical function. The nature of both this and the following oracles supports that assessment. Though not an enthronement psalm *per se*, it is certainly styled like one.

**Lady Zion** — Traditionally rendered “Daughter Zion.” However, “daughter” (like many uses of “son”) doesn't tell us anything about family relation or blood descent—it identifies a group or category. In this case, it identifies the city of Zion as belonging to the category of “woman.” In other words, Zion is personified as a feminine person. Therefore, we render it “Lady Zion.” Berlin (AB) and NJPST render it “Fair Zion.” While that may conjure up Shakespearean lyric, we feel that to use the word “fair” as the primary descriptor of feminine gender is outdated at best and sexist at worst. Moffatt chose “maiden Zion,” which is better, but says more than the text intends. This is about gender, not virginity or marital status. Many translations render it “daughter of Zion,” as if speaking to a woman in Zion or to all women collectively in Zion. Not only does that destroy the personification, but it runs counter to the use of this idiom as it occurs throughout scripture. Such an errant rendering seems to have originated with the KJV. It is astonishing that so many modern translations still perpetuate it. GW not only has the genitive “of Zion,” but says “people” instead of “daughter” as if to erase all indication of personified gender from the text. **ט** says “congregation of Zion” instead of “Daughter Zion.” Ho believes that shift “indicates a later time when synagogues replaced the Temple” and “also reflects the targumist's concern to adapt to the realities of the time.” See “Lady Jerusalem” below.

**[all] Israel** — Literally, “Israel.” The imperative, however, is plural, which means that “Israel” functions collectively. We add “all” to bring out that plurality and differentiate it from the singular “Lady Zion.” **ס** says “Lady Jerusalem” instead of “Israel,” which is a purposeful case of harmonization with Zech 9:9: **בת ירושלם**. MurXII supports **מ**<sup>L</sup>.

**Whoop and holler** — Hendiadys. Literally, “Rejoice and exult.” THF usually attempts to capture the more emphatic sense conveyed by hendiadys—in which case this would be

rendered “joyfully exult.” This is a rare instance, however, where an expression in hendiadys in English exactly matches an expression in hendiadys in Hebrew!

**whole-heartedly** — Literally, “with entirety of heart/mind.” Fenton (with full heart) renders it well. Even though virtually all English translations say “with all *your* heart,” there is no pronominal suffix. Some render it “with all *the* heart” (KJV, ASV, etc.), but there is also no definite article and no definiteness to the noun. Such renderings are based on **שׁ**: της καρδιας σου (*your* heart). MurXII supports **מ**<sup>L</sup>.

**Lady Jerusalem** — Traditionally rendered “Daughter Jerusalem.” To render this “daughter of Jerusalem” is to miss the point. For more on this idiom, see the notes on “Lady Zion” above. **ט** has “congregation” in place of “Daughter” just as it does for “Daughter Zion.” MurXII supports **מ**<sup>L</sup>.

3:15 **dismissed** — Even though we rendered the Hiphil form of this verb “remove” in 3:11, the judicial context of this verse favors something more like “dismissed.” Translations like NJPST and LEB (annulled), NJB (repealed), and ISV (acquitted) also attempt to convey a judicial context. Because **ט** speaks about “judges” in this verse instead of their “judgments” (see below), it renders this verb “exiled.” We stick with **מ**<sup>L</sup>, which is supported by **שׁ**.

**the verdicts [against] you** — Typically rendered “your judgments,” but more precisely rendered “your sentences” or “your convictions.” NJB (your sentence) and Fenton (your conviction) agree. Some extrapolate from that to “punishment(s)” as in HCSB and Leeser. It is not entirely clear why so many translations render this as a singular. It is clearly plural. NET explains its use of the singular as a match with the singular “enemy/foe” (see below). **שׁ** says “crimes/injustices/offenses,” which either represents an original **משעטיך** or is an interpretative alteration meant to match its verb (“ransomed”). NASB, which is supposed to be woodenly literal, inserts “his” into this: “has taken away *His* judgments against you.” We follow MurXII and **מ**<sup>L</sup>. Moffatt reads “foes” here—perhaps taking **משפטיך** as a Piel or Poel participle (with suffix) as in Job 9:15 (your condemners). That interpretation seems to be based on harmonization with “foe/enemy” in the next colon, which also explains the reading of **ט**: “judges of deceit.” With Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT), we see “no reason to translate **יהוה מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ** by anything other than: the Lord has canceled the judgments pronounced against you.” Perhaps Ben Zvi said it best: “There is no compelling reason for emending the MT.”

**cleared out** — This is marked by the Masoretes as a Piel, not a Qal. Thus, we use the meaning attested in the Piel (to clear out/clean up) like in Isa 40:3, Gen 24:31, and Ps 80:10, instead of the Qal (to turn away). The translation “cast out” (KJV, ASV, etc.) is a loose rendering, which seems to originate with Geneva. **שׁ** says “ransomed,” which is probably a misreading of the verb (**פָּדָה** instead of **פָּנָה**). MurXII supports **מ**<sup>L</sup>.

**foes** — **מ**<sup>L</sup>, **מ**<sup>A</sup>, and **מ**<sup>P</sup> have the singular **איבך** (your *foe*). A plural, however (**איביך**), is preserved in our oldest Hebrew and Greek witnesses (MurXII and **שׁ**, respectively) and has a lot of support among Masoretic manuscripts (see Kennicott). Thus, we prefer the plural. So do **ט**, **ט**, and **ס**. The singular may be an assimilation to the form of the recurring noun + suffix **קרבך**, which occurs a few words later. Note that **שׁ** says “from the hand of your foes,” representing **מִכַּף אִיבֶיךָ**, which is a harmonization with Mic 4:10.

**Israel's King, YHWH,** — Literally, “the king of Israel, YHWH.” The two phrases are in apposition—they do not speak about different people. By splitting apart this phrase, **ט** interprets “king of Israel” as the “enemy” that will be “cleared out.” Such a reading runs counter to Zeph since nowhere in the prophetic text is the human king of Israel mentioned, let alone accused of evil deeds. Furthermore, it runs counter to the ancient tradition of recitation preserved by the Masoretes. The conjunctive accent (*mehuppak*) beneath “Israel” links it with “YHWH.” **ט**<sup>A</sup> reads מֶלֶךְ (king) as מֶלֶךְ (he rules) and drops “Israel” from the verse: “YHWH rules in your presence.” So do **ט**<sup>L</sup> and **ט**<sup>W</sup>. This, like “from the hand of your foes,” is a case of harmonization with Micah 4 (v. 7). **ט**<sup>S</sup> and **ט**<sup>B</sup> agree with מֶלֶךְ and MurXII supports מֶלֶךְ. REB reinterprets מֶלֶךְ as כְּמֶלֶךְ and takes “Israel” as a vocative: “Israel, the LORD is among you as king.” We stick with מֶלֶךְ.

**in your presence** — The thematic root קָרַב appears again. See sections A3 and C3. If Israel is personified as a person and YHWH is “within her,” this could be taken as an indication that YHWH's spirit will come to dwell inside his people.

**fear** — For the reason why we take this from **רָאָה** (to fear/be afraid) instead of **רָאָה** (to see), see section B2. Note that the next oracle draws its language directly from this oracle. It mimics the phrase “Israel's King, YHWH, [is] in your presence” with “Your god, YHWH, [is] in your presence.” It reuses “Jerusalem” and “Zion.” It continues the idea of rejoicing aloud with synonymous of “shout” and “holler” and with nouns from **רָנָה** and **שָׂמְחָה**. It is highly likely, therefore, as shown by this consistency of borrowing, that “to fear,” which no one doubts belongs to the next oracle, would have been borrowed from this one also. Or, conversely, it is highly *unlikely* that the next oracle, having borrowed so thoroughly from this one, would choose “fear” over “see” if “see” were original in this oracle.

**[such] severity** — Traditionally rendered “evil.” In the perspective of Zeph, however, it was not “evil” that befell Israel—it was what was “rightly set against her” (righteous judgment). Translations that render **רָע** as “evil” (KJV, ASV, ESV, etc.) destroy the entire message. What befell Israel was harmful calamity or severe disaster. Thus, HCSB and NIV render **רָע** as “harm”; NRSV, NASB, and NKJV render it as “disaster”; NJPST and NAB render it as “misfortune”; Moffatt renders it as “trouble”; and we render it as “severity.” The addition of “such” creates a repetition of the sounds [s], [e], and [r], which mimics the poetic alliteration of the phrase **לֹא־תִירָאִי רָע**.

3:16 **it will be said** — Since the Masoretes marked **יֹאמֵר** as a Niphal, it should be rendered as a passive. **ט**, however, renders it active and includes κύριος as a subject, resulting in “the Lord will say.” MurXII, however, supports מֶלֶךְ. For “stylistic” reasons, NET prefers “they will say.” Some interpret this verb and the following exclamations as instances of naming and, thus, render the verb “to call.” Note, for example, the renderings of Briggs (Jerusalem will be called) and Ewald (On that day will Jerusalem be called). While it is true that the Niphal of **יֹאמֵר** is sometimes used to describe a new state of being and, thus, bleeds into the notion of having a new name (in the ancient NE, one's “name” was often associated with their character, role, or

state of being), that does not work well here. Previous portions of Zeph claimed that Jerusalem did not fear YHWH and that, despite witnessing surrounding nations fall to ruin, held fast to her corrupt ways. Thus, “Fearless” and “Hold Fast” are names more suitable to her state under judgment than to her state of conversion as she awaits deliverance. For examples of **אמר** in naming, see Hos 2:1 (Heb), Jer 7:32, Isa 61:6, and Isa 62:4.

**“Have no fear!”** — Literally, “do not fear” or “do not be afraid.” Our translation follows the Masoretic accentuation, which places a strong disjunctive accent (*athnach*), equivalent to a period, at the end of the verb. Thus, “Zion” is not part of this exclamation. The parallelism in the verse makes this structure evident (see next note).

**[to] Zion** — “Zion” has the same grammatical function here as does “Jerusalem” in the line above. Neither is vocative. Both are objects of the verb **אמר**. In fact, this is an example of the most common type of ancient Semitic parallelism—the ABC / BC couplet (see section C1). The elision of a verb's helping particle is quite common in Hebrew poetry and may also occur in prose. In 2:15, for instance, the verb **היה** is used with **ל** to mean “turn to” (or more simply “become”). When the verb is elided in the next line, so is the helping particle, yet the meaning remains the same: “turned to/became a reposal.” Zeph 2:13 elides the expression **ל + שים**. In that verse, parallelism and accentuation reveal the structure. “Zion” is parallel to “Jerusalem.” The exclamation “Have no fear!” is parallel to “Don't lose your grip!” The strong disjunctive accent (*athnach*) under the first exclamation provides the breaking-point between parallel lines. We insert “to” to make that more evident. So do Berlin (AB), Leeser, and Fenton. KJV and ISV add a conjunction as well (*and to Zion*). Most English translations ignore the parallelism and accentuation, resulting in a single long statement with a direct address to Zion. That also produces confusion about where the direct address ends, often turning the rest of the oracle into the future statement (which is why HCSB, NET, and NKJV end v. 17 with quotation marks). But the next verse is not describing what will be said. It is listing the reasons for what will be said. It is pointing to YHWH's character as rationale for believing in the present that “on that day” there will be no reason to fear, nor reason to lose their grip. One could insert “because” at the start of v. 17 and the meaning would not be changed. Some prefer to read the *lamed* as a vocative marker, in which case both “Jerusalem” and “Zion” should be treated as vocatives. Considering the well-attested usage of the phrase **אמר + ל** with the meaning “say to,” apart from any stronger argument in its favor, we believe such an interpretation is unnecessary at the least and question-begging at the most.

**“Don't lose your grip!”** — Literally, “your hands must not relax.” The phrase **ירפו ידיך** is a set expression (see 2 Sam 4:1; Neh 6:9; 2 Chron 15:7). The use of a masculine plural instead of a feminine plural is explained by the placement of the verb before the noun (JM §150c-d). The shift from imperative to imperfect is an example of grammatical alternation typical in Hebrew poetry. No change in meaning is intended even though some translations try to show the difference by using “let.” The word “hand” often functions as a metonym for “control,” “power,” or “fortitude”; thus, this is really an idiom about despairing. A similar “hand” idiom occurs in English. One might positively say that one needs to “get a grip” or negatively say that

one has “lost their grip.” Since Hebrew and English share a similar idiom, we use it here. ISV (don't lose courage), NAB (be not discouraged), Berlin (do not be disheartened), and SET (do not despair) render it similarly, but without reproducing the idiom. Traditional renderings like KJV (let not thy hands be slack), ESV (let not your hands grow weak), NASB (do not let your hands fall limp), and YLT (let not thy hands be feeble) ignore the poetic diction, resulting in gibberish.

3:17 **[will be]** — In this oracle, such events are future (on that day). Thus, the copula should be future (“will be,” not “is”). At the time during which this oracle was given, YHWH had not yet become in their presence “a victorious warrior.” This is not a continuation of the statements given in the previous verse, but the reason for the listeners of the oracle to believe that those statements will be true.

**in your presence** — The thematic root קרב appears again. The meaning here is quite different than in v. 15. There, Israel was personified as a woman with YHWH “within her.” The point was that Israel would be close to her god in a way that she was not before. Here, however, it is the kind of presence that is important, not the mere fact of it. YHWH will be a *victorious warrior* in her presence—one who rejoices in her, cheers for her, and schemes against her foes.

**a delivering warrior** — Literally, “a warrior, one [who] delivers/is victorious.” The verb functions adjectivally with the noun “warrior/mighty one/hero.” Thus, גבור יושיע means “a delivering warrior/hero” or “a warrior/hero victorious.” Ben Zvi notes several similar syntactic examples: זאב יטרף in Gen 49:27, ‘a ravenous wolf,’ and מאנוש ימות in Isa 51:12, ‘of a mortal person.’ Thus, Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) and NASB render it “a victorious warrior.” Many translations render ישע as “to save,” which we avoid since that is a loaded theological term that could imply more than what our text states.

**who delightfully rejoices over you** — Literally, “one [who] rejoices over you with joy/gladness.” Since “joy/gladness” functions as an adverbial accusative, we render it “delightfully.” ט says “bring” instead of “rejoice,” but MurXII supports ט<sup>L</sup>.

**who lovingly schemes** — Literally, “one [who] schemes in/with his love.” Since “love” functions as an adverbial accusative, we render it “lovingly.” As noted by Loewenstamm (“The Hebrew root חרש in the light of the Ugaritic texts”), what appears in Hebrew as חרש<sup>√</sup> really comes from two different proto-Semitic roots: *hrt* and *hrs*. We take יחדיש as a Hiphil from what was originally *hrt* and means “to cut/engrave/plow” and also, figuratively, “devise/plot/scheme” (*hrt* became *hrs* in Hebrew due to the collapse of *t* into *š*). For an example of the Hiphil of this root with the same meaning, see 1 Sam 23:9. YLT (he doth work) takes it from an original *hrs*, which refers to working at a craft professionally and/or skillfully. The noun חרש means “craftsman/artisan/maker/builder” not only in Hebrew, but also in Ugaritic (DUL). A few try to tease out of this the idea of “composing” a song and, thus, “singing.” So Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT): “in love He sings you a song (?).” Unfortunately, חרש does not have that meaning anywhere else. Therefore, it must be rejected. Most take this verb from a different חרש<sup>√</sup> (to be silent). Examples include Geneva (he will quiet himself), NASB (he will be quiet), Leeser (he will be silent), and ESV (he will quiet you). Unfortunately, such wording is fundamentally

problematic (how could one who is silent cheer and rejoice loudly?). Thus, that interpretation must also be rejected. Some interpreters try to get around the difficulty by explaining the silence as a withholding of judgment—a nuance that the verb does sometimes contain. Ben Zvi explains it this way: “God will refrain from executing the judgment because of love for the people.” Rashi understood it that way (see below). NIV follows that interpretation (he will no longer rebuke you). The problem with those interpretations, however, is that, in the context of this oracle, “refraining from judgment” doesn’t make sense either. Whatever might cause Israel to “fear” and “lose her grip” is no longer a result of YHWH’s judgment, which is clearly directed against others. Now, he is actively pursuing Israel’s “deliverance.” In the wider context of the restoration oracles, it is also clear that Israel’s “judgments” have been “dismissed” (v. 14). Thus, to say he is refraining from judging Israel misses the point entirely. **ס** (followed by **ס**) believed **יְחַרֵּשׁ** was a corruption of **יְחַדִּישׁ** (he will renew/restore)—resulting from an accidental *dalet-resch* interchange. Many English translations follow **ס** (NRSV, NAB, NET, etc.). There are, however, numerous problems with that emendation. First, there is no other instance of **חַרֵּשׁ** in the Hiphil. Second, the construction **חַרֵּשׁ + ב** does not occur elsewhere. It does seem probable, however, that *bet* was used for structural reasons (to mimic **בְּשִׁמְחָה** and **בְּרִנָּה**). Third, the verb “renew/restore” makes as much sense as “is silent” (not much at all). For that reason, English translations persuaded by **ס** usually alter their rendering so that it makes more sense. Examples include Ewald (grow young again), HCSB (he will bring you quietness), NJPST (he will soothe), and KJV (he will rest). Unfortunately, **חַרֵּשׁ** doesn’t have those meanings elsewhere, which begs the question. The biggest problem is that there is no Hebrew manuscript evidence for **חַרֵּשׁ**. Since **חַרַּשׁ** has ancient attestation in MurXII and is also supported by **ח**, we stick with **חַרַּשׁ**. One could argue that the verb “to devise/plot/scheme” does not work well either because it is usually paired with **רָע** (evil/bad/harm/disaster). In this situation, however, that is the reason why it works so well. This oracle (and those around it) are overturning a previous state of affairs in which YHWH was devising their downfall. In the new state of affairs, he will be devising their glorification. By using terminology that anticipates “harm,” but actually subverts it to speak of “love,” the text takes on powerful rhetorical force: to the extent that he previously intended to utterly end, he will in that day defend. Ben Zvi notes that **חַרַּשׁ** meaning ‘devising’ in both *qal* and *hiphil* forms always has an explicit direct object.” Since there is no direct object here, he rejects our interpretation. It seems to us, however, that **עַלֶיךָ** is explicitly assumed by means of the structure and, thus, is not actually necessary. The phrase **יְחַרֵּשׁ בְּאֵהָבָתוֹ** is surrounded on both sides by lines that are syntactically identical and the only thing that differentiates this line from the others is **עַלֶיךָ**. Thus, its absence is best understood as poetic elision. In fact, the presence of **עַל** and a second-person direct object seem to be presumed by **יִכְבֹּשׁ עַל חֹבְךָ** (he will tread *upon your* debt). Rashi presumes both as well: **יִכְסֶה עַל פְּשָׁעֶיךָ** (he will cover *over your* transgressions). Some have proposed that two of the consonants were switched by metathesis (and then a *yod* added to give the

Hiphil form) so that, originally, the text would have read ירחש. The verb רחש occurs but once in BH (Ps 45:2). It comes from Aramaic, where it means “to creep/crawl/move about/teem.” Its cognates are Akkadian *rahasu* (be astir) and Arabic *rahasa* (flutter). Thus, it is not mere motion to which the verb refers, but an animated “stirring up,” which is exactly what happens to the contents of a מרחשת. In this scenario, the text would read “he will be astir in/with his love.” Contextually, that is quite attractive. It captures the frenetic qualities of the surrounding lines and carries on the merriment of the context. It is, however, entirely conjectural. There is no evidence to support the emendation. In the end, the only interpretation that is based on a word actually attested in ancient Hebrew manuscripts, which also has a clearly attested meaning, and which fits the context of both this and previous oracles, is ours.

**loudly** — Literally, “with a shout.” See notes on 3:14. Since “shout” functions as an adverbial accusative, we render it “loudly.” And since the joyful aspect of the noun is already captured by the verb, it need not be repeated in the translation of רנה. Nevertheless, some translations do so: Geneva (joy), NJPST (jubilation). Many translations render רנה as “singing” or “song.” There is a noun for “singing/song” (שיר), but it does not occur here. Translations like HCSB, NASB, and GW (shouts of joy) or Rotherham (shouts of triumph) are preferable.

- 3:18 **Sufferers, [at] the appointed time** — נוני<sup>L</sup> reads ממועד—a notoriously difficult phrase. Even the Rabbis argue about the meaning (*b. Berachot* 28a). נוני is a masculine plural Niphal participle from ינה (to mourn/grieve/be tormented/be afflicted) in construct with the noun מועד (appointed time/sacred festival/place of assembly), which has a prepositional מן prefixed to it. The root of נוני is easy enough to pinpoint. It even occurs in noun form in Ugaritic (*KTU* 1.169): *tg htk* (the *pain/torment/suffering* of your scepter). The basic meaning is supported by Rabbi Eleazar (they who mourn) and Rabbi Nahman b. Isaac (they who are afflicted). Some interpreters, however, have a problem with that meaning. Smith (WBC) points to 2 Sam 20:13 as an example of this verb in the Hiphil, followed by prepositional מן, with the meaning “carry off.” If it had the same meaning in the Niphal, it would then mean “the carried off ones.” That interpretation seems to lie behind HCSB (those who have been driven). Rotherham (the sad exiles) includes both meanings (“to be carried off” and “to mourn”). In 2 Sam 20:13, however, the root is הנה, not ינה; the verb is a Qal, not a Hiphil; and the meaning is “to remove/separate/depel,” not “carry off” (for another instance of the verb, see Isa 27:8). Thus, there is no connection with 2 Sam 20:13. One might change the verb into the Niphal participle ננפים, from נפ, meaning “they who are stricken/beaten,” which would flow well with the idea that the broken people of YHWH will be restored. There is, however, no manuscript evidence to support that. ט represents נוני with the verb עכב, meaning “to delay/hold back/detain” (CAL). Clearly, that is not a straight translation, but an exegetical maneuver, which better represents other verbs like מדה. Pointing to the Akkadian verb *nagû*, which means “to sing joyously/rejoice” (CAD), Tsevat (“Some Biblical Notes”) proposes that נוני has the root נני (to rejoice/be glad). In Hebrew, however, that root became ננה (to shine), which does not occur here.



Therefore, it must be rejected. Tsevat also proposed an alternate Akkadian verb for the root: *nigûtu*, meaning “to be joyful/make music/celebrate” (CAD). This is followed by NAB (as one sings) and Moffatt (a festal song). Despite how well that would fit in this context, the proposal is far too hypothetical in light of the clear meaning of  $\sqrt{\text{נה}}$  in BH. The same holds for the argument that  $\text{נוני}$  comes from the verb *ng*, which, in Ugaritic, means “to go away/depart” (DUL). If this were an instance of that verb, it would be the only one. The preposition poses another challenge. Some read it as a privative *mem*: “they who are afflicted/suffering from lack of festival.” Examples of that reading include Ben Zvi (because they are *deprived*), NET (because they *cannot attend*), and NIV (all who mourn over *the loss*). As indicated by those renderings, however, further modification is required for that interpretation to make any sense. Some take it as indicating distance. Note, for instance, JPS (I will gather them that *are far from* the appointed season) and Leeser (those that mourn *far away from* the festive assembly). When the preposition is used in that way, however, it is always attached to another word to indicate direction, orientation, or distance as in  $\text{מרחוק}$  (far away). More typically, translations treat the *mem* as though it were  $\text{כ}$  or  $\text{ל}$  (because of/for) or  $\text{על}$  (concerning/about/over)—an obvious sign of the difficulty translators have with a preposition that should simply mean “from” as in Berlin (from the festival) or ISV (from the solemn assembly). The reason for the difficulty is that the preposition breaks into the middle of the construct phrase, disrupting the association between nouns that the construct state is meant to create—a situation that, when involving  $\text{מן}$ , is also incredibly rare. To get around that, some read the *yod* on the end as a first-person pronominal suffix. One example is YLT (mine afflicted). The easier solution, however, is to redivide the text so that the preposition functions as the final *mem* on the absolute-state participle  $\text{נונים}$  (mourners/grievors/tormented ones/afflicted ones) instead of as a prefixed preposition (for an example of the feminine plural, see Lam 1:4). The broken construct is thus avoided. Yet one must still interpret the relation of  $\text{נונים}$  to the rest of the verse. Virtually all translations treat it attributively and as the object of the verb “to gather/remove.” Note, for instance, KJV (I will gather them that are sorrowful), ESV (I will gather those of you who mourn), and NASB (I will gather those who grieve). A few treat it as a substantive (Briggs, ISV, and Geneva). We side with the later, though it seems to us that the function of the substantive participle is vocative and it is not the object of the verb at all. Where before it was simply two little statements that would be said to Israel without any indication of the speaker, now we have YHWH addressing her directly. Thus, the editorial arrangement of the oracles (3:18-20 after 3:16-17) makes sense in terms of a final, climatic amplification of the message. Yet it is not everyone in Israel who is addressed. This oracle takes up and reiterates what was said in a previous one (3:11-13): that YHWH was going to “remove” from the midst of the people “afflicted and powerless” those who were “champions of her infamy.” Now, however, it is more intimate: “Sufferers/afflicted ones, I will remove from you the ones who marked you out for reproach.” Thus, our rendering not only fits the text as we have it without emendation, but works well in concert with the surrounding oracles in terms of arrangement and context. Instead of  $\text{נוני ממועד}$ ,  $\text{נ}$  represents  $\text{כיום מועד}$  (as in the day of festival). That is, most likely,

an interpretative shift. Yet it is followed by some translations (NRSV and NJB). MurXII supports מ<sup>L</sup>. So does נ (nugas), which is basically a transliteration of מ<sup>L</sup> (though it also happens to mean “nonsensical [ones]”). As for מועד, the context, which is strewn with references to a coming “time” (עת), seems to indicate an “appointed time” as opposed to a “place of assembly” or “sacred festival.” That would explain why ש altered the text to “the day of.” Contrary to most English translations, this oracle is not talking about solemn festivals. It is talking about a coming period in which Israel's current, deplorable circumstances are reversed. Translations that reflect that include JPS (the appointed season) and SET (the appointed time). We add “at” since מועד functions as a dative.

**I will remove from you** — Typically, אסף means “to gather/collect/assemble.” The majority of English translations render it that way here. When combined with מן, however, it means “to remove/take away” (see, for example, Jer 16:5). Note that the “you” is feminine singular. Thus, it follows well from the previous oracle, which spoke of the feminine singular “you.” Note also that the verb is perfect. In most cases, we would render it in the past tense. In this situation, however, a future situation is being described as fully known and accomplished. Thus, we render it with “will.” Since Hebrew verbs indicate aspect more than tense, such a rendering is entirely justified. Most translations do likewise. NET (I took them away), JB (I have taken away), and YLT (I have gathered) are a few examples to the contrary. ש reads מכים (those struck) instead of ממך (from you). MurXII, however, supports מ<sup>L</sup>.

**they who were** — Our translation is literal. So is ISV (who were), KJV (who are), NET (they became), LEB (they were), and YLT (they have been). HCSB takes it as future (they will be) in harmony with the meaning of the previous verb. The masculine plural subject of this verb (further described by the rest of this verse) is also the object of אסף. Instead of הוי, ש reads הוי (alas/woe/oh no!). So do α' and ט. This is followed by some translations: NRSV (I will remove *disaster*), NJPST (I will take away from you *the woe*), REB (I shall take away your *cries of woe*), and NJB (I have taken away your *misfortune*). MurXII, however, supports מ<sup>L</sup>. NASB and SET render הוי as “they came.” The verb הוי, however, does not mean “to come,” but “to come about/happen/become.” The difference is slight, but significant.

**a mark** — Or “sign.” There are basically two different ways to interpret משאת: as a noun with preformative מ or as a verb. The noun occurs in several places with different semantic nuances: “portion” (as in Gen 43:34), “signal/sign” (as in Judg 20:39 or Jer 6:1), “payment/tax” (as in 2 Chr 24:6 or Jer 40:5), and “elevation” (as in Ps 141:2). Note that, contrary to NASB, ASV, KJV, etc., there is no instance of משאת meaning “burden” (that is משא). Of the attested meanings, “signal/sign” makes the most sense. YHWH is not going to remove their “portion,” yet “tax/payment” and “elevation” make no sense. Since this “sign” or “signal” is negative, we render it “mark,” which fits well with “disgrace.” Ben Zvi agrees with our choice: “a sign on her.” Others prefer to read it as a verb. In that case, however, they are faced with many challenges. If one takes this as a participle, as noted by Smith (ICC), “The Hiph. prtc. here proposed is not elsewhere found.” One might then read it as an infinitive construct with

prefixed prepositional *mem* (I will remove from you they who were *from raising* against you), but that is a baffling interpretation. Roberts (OTL) tries to make better sense of it (from the raising of you), but hardly succeeds. Typically, translations that take that route ignore the preposition as with Smith (WBC): “heaping.” A nominal reading is clearly superior. **5** departs freely from the text, yet is still followed by NAB (recount). **6** makes a similarly drastic change with “who has received?” Since MurXII supports **מל**, we follow the text as we have it.

**of disgrace** — Our translation is literal.

3:19 Many parts of this verse are extremely similar to portions of Mic 4:6-7. Since those similar parts make sense and fit wonderfully into their respective contexts, it is difficult to say whether Micah is borrowing from Zeph, Zeph from Micah, or both are making use of expressions that preceded both of them.

**(Watch [what] I do to all your violators!)** — Or “See me dealing with all your violators!” **עשה** is a participle. The first-person subject comes from the pronominal suffix on **הנני**. **6** reinterprets **את-כל-מעניך** (to all your violators) as **אתך למענך** (with you on your behalf). Smith (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets*) follows that rendering: “I am about to do all for thy sake.” What remains of 4QXII<sup>b</sup>, however, supports **מל**. So does MurXII. Note that **מעניך** comes from **ענה** (to violate/subjugate/overpower), not **ינה** (to oppress) as in 3:1. The difference in word-choice should be reflected by English translations, yet some render the two words by the same root in both places (NRSV, NASB, NIV, etc.). As punctuated by the Masoretes, this whole line belongs with the rest of v. 19. Context and parallelism, however, indicate that it belongs at the end of the previous verse. “Violators” is parallel to “they who were a mark on her of disgrace” and “what I do” is parallel to “I will remove.” Furthermore, the next expression (at that time) characteristically begins a statement; it does not end it (see next note). In place of “[what] I do/me dealing,” **7** says “I will bring destruction” (using **נמירא** for **כלה**). **7**’s *interficiam* (I will kill/destroy) supports it. Thus, some believe that **כלה** (“end/completion” or “consummation” as we render it in 1:18) fell out of the text due to haplography with **כל**. This is suggested by *BHS* and followed by *NJPST* (I will make *an end*). That must be the reason for KJV’s “I will undo,” which would make no sense otherwise. NKJV wisely corrects it (I will deal with). Geneva’s “I will bruise” is baffling. MurXII supports **מל**. Ben Zvi points to Ezek 22:14 and 23:25 as examples of the expression **עשה את-X**, which has the meaning “to take action against X.” Thus, the text makes sense as it stands and requires no alteration.

**At that time** — Mic 4:6 says “on that day” (**ביום ההוא**) instead of “at that time” (**בעת ההוא**).

It also includes the expression “prophecy of **YHWH**,” which would fit perfectly here and occurs throughout Zeph (five times in three chapters), though it is rare in Micah (twice in seven). The Masoretes divided the text like this: “with all your violators at that time.” There are very good reasons, however, to divide the text as we have (placing the *athnach* under “your violators”). First, whether the phrase is “at that time” or “on that day,” both expressions characteristically introduce statements, not end them. Thus, in Micah 4:6, the parallel expression occurs at the beginning, not the end. Also, the expression “at that time” begins two

other expressions here in v. 20. Numerous English translations understand this, which is why they often move “at that time” to the beginning of the verse (HCSB, NET, KJV, etc.). But such rearrangement should not be necessary. If the previous verse ended with **הנני עשה את-כל־** **מעניך**, then “at that time” would naturally begin what comes next. It is the Masoretic verse division that creates the conundrum. ISV, so far as we can tell, is the only other English translation that doesn't place it at the end of a statement, yet also does not rearrange the phrase: “Watch how I deal with everyone who oppresses you! At that time...” **ו** adds “says the Lord” after this phrase. Either that is a case of dittography with the end of v. 20 or the translators of **ו** were harmonizing this phrase with the extended statement in Mic 4:6 (**נאם־יהוה**).

**I will deliver** — Both this and the preceding oracles make use of a verb from **ישע**. It therefore becomes a “linking word” that enables a person to read from one oracle to the other as though one continuous expression. Mic 4:6 says “I hereby will gather,” not “I will deliver.” The former is a cohortative from **אסף**. The latter is an inverted perfect from **ישע**. As in v. 17, we avoid rendering **ישע** as “to save,” since that is a loaded theological term that could imply more than what our text states. Note that the bonded *waw* in **והושעת־י** is not a coordinating conjunction as in many English translations (NRSV, ESV, KJV, etc.). It inverts the aspect or tense of the verb (I *will* deliver). See 1:3.

**the crippled [city]** — Literally, “the (feminine) crippled one.” So SET (the cripple). A substantive participle from **צלע** (to stumble/limp/be lame/crippled). This is talking, of course, about the city Zion, which is personified as a woman. Though we do not communicate the gender, we make the personification clearer by adding “city.” Berlin (AB) and others perceive in this verse a description of YHWH as a shepherd who tends to his sheep. So NET (I will rescue the lame sheep and gather together the scattered sheep) and NJPST (I will rescue the lame sheep and gather the strayed). Nowhere else, however, is **צלע** used to describe sheep. There is no indication in this oracle that the people are envisioned as animals. That interpretation seems to rest upon the editorial comment in 3:13, which likens the people to animals that “graze and repose.” It does not seem to us, however, that the metaphor has been extended from that oracle into this one. Neither **ע** (the exiled ones) nor **ו** (she who is oppressed) betray such an interpretation. If the idea is applicable here, it arises not from this text, but from a wider ideology in which the true king (the previous two oracles are concerned with YHWH's kingship) was also described as a shepherd (see below for more). The object marker that appears here (**את־הצלעה**) is not present in Mic 4:6 (**הצלעה**). To use the word “crippled” to describe the city is a likely indicator of the time at which this part of the oracle was composed—either during or after the exile (see below for more).

**Yes** — We believe this *waw* has emphatic force; it is not a simple conjunction. YHWH is not delivering the city *and* rallying those who were scattered. Rather, the means by which YHWH delivers the city from its crippled state is by rallying those who were scattered.

**she [who] was scattered** — Literally, “the (feminine) scattered/dispersed one.” A substantive participle from **נדה** (to be scattered/dispersed). This is talking, of course, about the city

Zion, which is personified as a woman. The use of the word “scattered” probably locates this part of the oracle during or after the exile. So NIV (I will gather the exiles). Note that there is nothing in this verse that likens Israel or her people to “stray” animals. The fact that this verb is used to describe animals elsewhere (Ezek34:16) says nothing about the context here. Contrary to some translations (NJB and NJPST), if there is a verb **הלל** meaning “to stray,” it does not occur here. That interpretation comes from Mic 4:7, which is probably corrupt.

**will I rally** — Or “gather/assemble/collect.” Because of the military implication of 3:8, we rendered the verb there as “muster.” Here, however, there is no military implication; therefore, we render it “rally.” See the next verse. In Mic 4:6, the verb is a cohortative (**אקבצה**) instead of a simple imperfect (**אקביץ**). The concept of “gathering/collecting” the “scattered/dispersed” appears in declarations of kingship in the ancient NE. The prologue to the Code of Hammurabi, for instance, contains the following boast about the king: “the divine protector of the land; who collected the scattered people of Nisin” (Harper's *The Code of Hammurabi*). Thus, this oracle participates in the celebration of YHWH's kingship, which was first announced in 3:15 and further celebrated in his description as a delivering warrior. Compare the content of these oracles to enthronement psalms like Ps 47, which not only declare YHWH king, call for joy and celebration, and describe him as a warrior who delivers his people from their enemies, but may also mention how he “gathers” people (47:10).

**I will give them acclaim and fame** — More literally, “I will set them up for acclaim and for a name.” Mic 4:7 says, “I will give she [who] is crippled a remnant.” The verb **שים** is used in both places, but with different forms (**ושמתים** in Zeph and **ושמתי** in Micah).

**whose disgrace [was] throughout the earth** — Literally, “[who] in all the earth [was] their disgrace.” This whole line functions as a headless relative clause to further describe what is meant by “them” in **ושמתים**. Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT) agrees: “Grammatically the most simple interpretation of this verse segment is to take **בכל-הארץ בשתם** as an asyndetic relative clause with the pronom. suffix of **ושמתים**.” The question is how to relate **בשתם** to **בכל-הארץ**. Those who view the whole thing as an extended construct phrase point to the anomalous definite article in **כל-הארץ** and prefer to drop it. This results in the rendering “in every land of their disgrace.” So YLT, KJV, ISV, etc. That reading is supported by **כ**. As noted by Ben Zvi, however, the use of a definite article in the expression **בכל-הארץ** is quite common in the HB. It is also supported by MurXII. Thus, we stick with the text as we have it (throughout *the* land/earth). Another question is how to understand the particular nuance of **ארץ**. In other places (1:18; 2:3), universal language was used, but **ארץ** meant “land.” Here, the description of Zion as “crippled” and “scattered” implies a wider distribution. Thus, we prefer “earth.” THF is one of a handful of translations that read this line as verbless. Others include ASV, JPS, and the renderings of Smith (WBC) and Vlaardingerbroek (HCOT). Most treat **בשתם** as the object of the verb **ושמתים** (taking the *mem* as enclitic): “I will make their disgrace.” Such a reading is, however, contrary to normal syntactic word-order. Believing **בשתם** to be a corruption of **בשובי שבותם**, some prefer to replace the former with the later

as in NAB (when I bring about their restoration) and NJB (when I restore their fortunes). REB drops **בשתם** completely. Again, however, MurXII supports **ו**<sup>L</sup>. **ו** divides the text so that **בשתם** begins the next verse and turns it from a noun to a verb (they will be disgraced). See note below.

3:20 **At that time** — This phrase characteristically introduces statements. Thus, one should read with the Masoretic verse division against **ו** by leaving **בשתם** connected with the previous verse.

**bring you [all] in** — Or “cause you [all] to enter.” The implication is that they have left. Such a statement best applies to a time during or after the exile. We represent the plurality of the “you” in this verse by inserting “all.” NIV creates more parallelism between this verb and “rally” by changing the verb from **בוא** to **אסף**. **ו** reads “I will treat well” (**אטיב**) instead of “I will bring in” (**אביא**). MurXII, however, supports **ו**<sup>L</sup>. So do **ט**, **ס**, and **ע**.

**and at that time** — Literally, “and at the time.” Though the expression is different here (**בעת**) than at the start (**בעת ההיא**), it is nothing more than poetic elision. The definite sense formerly indicated by “that” is carried on by “the.” Some repoint the *bet* and, thus, eliminate the definite article, which is certainly possible. In either case, structural parallelism and repetition indicate that **בעת** duplicates the sense of **בעת ההיא**. Note, for example, how **ע** renders it: “At that time (**בעדנא ההוא**) . . . and at that time (**ובעדנא ההוא**).”

**rally** — Or “gather/assemble.” See note in v. 19.

**I will, in fact, grant you [all] fame and acclaim** — There are quite a few differences between this statement and the one in v. 19. First, this begins with asseverative **כי** (yes/indeed/in fact). Second, **נתן** is used instead of **שם**. Third, the suffix is masculine plural instead of feminine singular (hence our use of “all”). Finally, the word-order for “fame” and “acclaim” is opposite to that of the previous verse (acclaim and fame).

**the earthly tribes** — Literally, “the peoples of the earth.”

**when** — In 2:7, the notion of “turning the tide” began with **כי**. We interpreted it in that place as causal (because). Here, the notion is introduced by means of prepositional *bet* prefixed to an infinitive construct. That gives it a different semantic nuance (when).

**turn your tide** — See section A3. The form of **שבותיכם** is explained by JM §94j: “The suffixes of plural nouns, longer and more resonant, have sometimes been introduced in singular nouns, especially in nouns in **ית**.” Thus, one should not render this as a plural.

**your eyes** — A few translations prefer “their eyes” (NJPST). We follow the text.

**YHWH has spoken** — Or “said YHWH.” We feel that our rendering provides a more climatic finality to the whole (certainly the rhetorical intent) than a simple assertion of divine utterance. So REB (It is the LORD who speaks). Compare with Amos 9:15.

## Bibliography

- Austin, John L. *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. Ed. J. O. Urmson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Ball, Ivan J. Jr. "The Rhetorical Shape of Zephaniah." Pages 155-65 in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen's Sixtieth Birthday, July 28, 1985*. Eds. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1987.
- Barton, John. "Ethics in Isaiah of Jerusalem." *Journal of Theological Studies* 32.1 (1981): 1-18.
- . "History and Rhetoric in the Prophets." Pages 51-64 in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*. Ed. Martin Warner. Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature. London: Routledge, 1990.
- . *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984.
- Ben Zvi, Ehud. *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Vol. 198. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991.
- Berlin, Adele. *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*. Revised and Expanded Edition. The Biblical Resource Series. Grand Rapids, Mich: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008.
- . *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 25A. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Bewer, Julius A. "Textual Suggestions on Isa. 2:6 66:3, Zeph 2:2.5." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 27.2 (1908): 163-6.
- Briggs, Charles A. *Messianic Prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfilment [sic] of Redemption Through the Messiah. A Critical Study of the Messianic Passages of the Old Testament in the Order of Their Development*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886.
- Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, James Strong, and Wilhelm Gesenius. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996.
- Bullinger, Ethelbert W. *Figures of Speech used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated*. New York: E. & J. B. Young & Co., 1898.
- Casanowicz, Immanuel M. "Paronomasia in the Old Testament." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 12.2 (1893): 105-67.
- Cathcart, Kevin J., and Robert P. Gordon. *The Targum of the Minor Prophets: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*. The Aramaic Bible, Vol. 14. Wilmington, Del: Michael Glazier, 1989.
- Conklin, Blane. *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew*. Eds. Michael P. O'Connor and Cynthia L. Miller. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic, Vol. 5. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- Creason, Stuart. "PQD Revisited." Pages 27-42 in *Studies in Semitic and Afroasiatic Linguistics Presented to Gene B. Gragg*. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, Vol. 60. Ed. Cynthia L. Miller. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007.
- Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften. Vol. I: Texte*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966.

- Driver, Godfrey R. "Hebrew Notes." *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1944): 165-71.
- . "Hebrew Notes on Prophets and Proverbs." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 41.162 (1940): 162-75.
- . "Linguistic And Textual Problems: Minor Prophets III." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 39.156 (1938): 395-405.
- Efros, Israel. "Textual Notes on the Hebrew Bible." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 45 (1925): 152-4.
- Epstein, I., Harry Freedman, and Maurice Simon. *Midrash Rabbah: Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices. Vol 1: Genesis in Two Volumes*. London: Soncino Press, 1961.
- Ewald, Georg Heinrich August von. *Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament. Vol. III. Commentary on the Books of Nahûm, Ssephanya, Habaqqûq, "Zakharya" XII.-XIV., Yéremyá with Translation*. Translated by J. Frederick Smith. London: Williams and Norgate, 1878.
- Fauconnier, Gilles and Mark Turner. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Garr, W. Randall. "The Paragoric *nun* in Rhetorical Perspective." Pages 65-74 in *Biblical Hebrew in its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*. Eds. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm, A. E. Cowley, and Emil F. Kautzsch. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. 28<sup>th</sup> Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm. *A Hebrew Lexicon to the Books of the Old Testament: Including the Geographical Names and Chaldaic Words in Daniel, Ezra, &c.* 2 Volumes. Cambridge: University Press, 1825-28.
- . *Hebräisches und Chaldäisches Handwörterbuch: über das Alte Testament*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Eds. Ferdinand Mühlau and Wilhelm Volck. Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1883.
- Gray, John. "A Metaphor from Building in Zephaniah II 1." *Vetus Testamentum* 3.4 (1953): 404-07.
- Hadjiev, Tchavdar S. "Survival, Conversion and Restoration: Reflections on the Redaction History of the Book of Zephaniah." *Vetus Testamentum* 61.4 (2011): 570-81.
- Harper, Robert Francis. *The Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon, about 2250 B.C.: Autographed Text, Transliteration, Translation, Glossary, Index of Subjects, Lists of Proper Names, Signs, Numerals, Corrections, and Erasures, with Map, Frontispiece and Photograph of Text*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904.
- Haupt, Paul. "*Qaš*, Straw, and *qäšt*, Bow." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 39.3 (1920): 161-3.
- Hayes, John H. and Carl R. Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Henderson, Ebenezer, and E. P. Barrows. *The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets, Translated from the Original Hebrew. With a Commentary, Critical, Philological, and Exegetical. With a Biographical Sketch of the Author*. Boston: W. H. Halliday and Company, 1868.
- Ho, Ahuva. *The Targum of Zephaniah: Manuscripts and Commentary*. Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture, Vol. 7. Boston: Brill, 2009.
- Holladay, William L. "Reading Zephaniah with a Concordance: Suggestions for a Redaction History." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120.4 (2001): 671-84.



- House, Paul R. *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, Vol. 69. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988.
- Jastrow, Marcus. *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*. New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004.
- Joüon, Paul, and Tamitsu Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. 2 Volumes. Reprint of 1<sup>st</sup> Edition with Corrections. Subsidia Biblica, Vol. 14. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993.
- Keefer, Arthur. "Phonological Patterns in the Hebrew Bible: A Century of Studies in Sound." *Currents in Biblical Research* 15.1 (2016): 41-64.
- Kelly, Page H., Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford. *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- King, Leonard W. *The Seven Tablets of Creation, or the Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind*. Luzac's Semitic Text and Translation Series, Vol. 12. 2 Volumes. London: Luzac and Co., 1902.
- Kselman, John S. "A Note on Jer 49,20 and Ze 2,6-7." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32.4 (1970): 579-81.
- Loewenstamm, Samuel E. "The Hebrew Root  $\text{חֲרַשׁ}$  in the Light of the Ugaritic Texts." *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 10.1-2 (1959): 63-5.
- Luckenbill, Daniel David. *The Annals of Sennacherib*. The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, Vol. 2. Ed. James Henry Breasted. Chicago: University Press, 1924.
- Marks, Herbert. "The Twelve Prophets." Pages 207-33 in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible, Vol. 3. New York: Doubleday, 1991.
- O'Connor, Michael P. *Hebrew Verse Structure*. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1980.
- Orelli, Conrad von. *The Twelve Minor Prophets. Expounded by Dr. C. von Orelli*. Trans. John S. Banks. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893.
- Pedersen, Johannes. *Der Eid bei den Semiten, in seinem Verhältnis zu verwandten Erscheinungen sowie die Stellung des Eides im Islam. Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients*, Vol. 3. Strassburg: Trübner, 1914.
- Raabe, Paul R. "Translating for Sound." *The Bible Translator* 51.2 (2000): 201-7.
- Rainey, Anson F. "The Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation in the Light of Amarnah Canaanite." *Hebrew Studies* 27.1 (1986): 4-19.
- Roberts, J. J. M. *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991.
- Rudman, Dominic. "A Note on Zephaniah." *Biblica* 80.1 (1999): 109-12.
- Ryou, Daniel H. *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations: A Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Zephaniah 2:1-3:8*. Biblical Interpretation Series, Vol. 13. New York: Brill, 1995.
- Searle, John R. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: University Press, 1970.
- Smith, George A. *The Book of the Twelve Prophets, Commonly Called the Minor. In Two Volumes with Historical and Critical Introductions*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1898.

- Smith, John Merlin Powis, William Hayes Ward, and Julius August Beyer. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*. International Critical Commentary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911.
- Smith, Ralph L. *Micah-Malachi*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 32. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1984.
- Thomas, David W. "A Pun on the Name Ashdod in Zephaniah ii. 4." *The Expository Times* 74.2 (1962): 63.
- Timmer, Daniel C. "The Non-Israelite Nations in Zephaniah: Conceptual Coherence and the Relationship of the Parts to the Whole." Pages 245-63 in *The Book of the Twelve & The New Form Criticism*. Ancient Near East Monographs, Vol. 10. Eds. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015.
- Trible, Phyllis. *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah*. Guides to Biblical Scholarship. Old Testament Series. Ed. Gene M. Tucker. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Tsevat, Matitiah. "Some Biblical Notes." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 24 (1952-53): 107-14.
- Vlaardingerbroek, Johannes. *Zephaniah*. Historical Commentary on the Old Testament. Leuven: Peeters, 1999.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael P. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Watson, Wilfred G. E. *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, Vol. 26. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986.
- Westermann, Claus. "Oracles of Salvation." Pages 98-104 in *"The Place Is Too Small For Us": The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, Vol. 5. Ed. Robert P. Gordon. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1995.
- Wilt, Timothy L. "'Oracle of Yahweh': Translating A Highly Marked Expression" *The Bible Translator* 50.3 (1999): 301-4.
- Zalcman, Lawrence. "Ambiguity and Assonance at Zephaniah II 4." *Vetus Testamentum* 36.3 (1986): 365-71.



### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

David Colo is a Biblical Hebrew language enthusiast with five years of graduate-level study at the Claremont School of Theology and University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research areas include Prophets and Prophecy of the Ancient Near East and Ancient Semitic Poetry. His life's ambition is to create a radically new translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) that unveils its oral and scribal craftsmanship.

THF

