

Zephaniah 2 Commentary

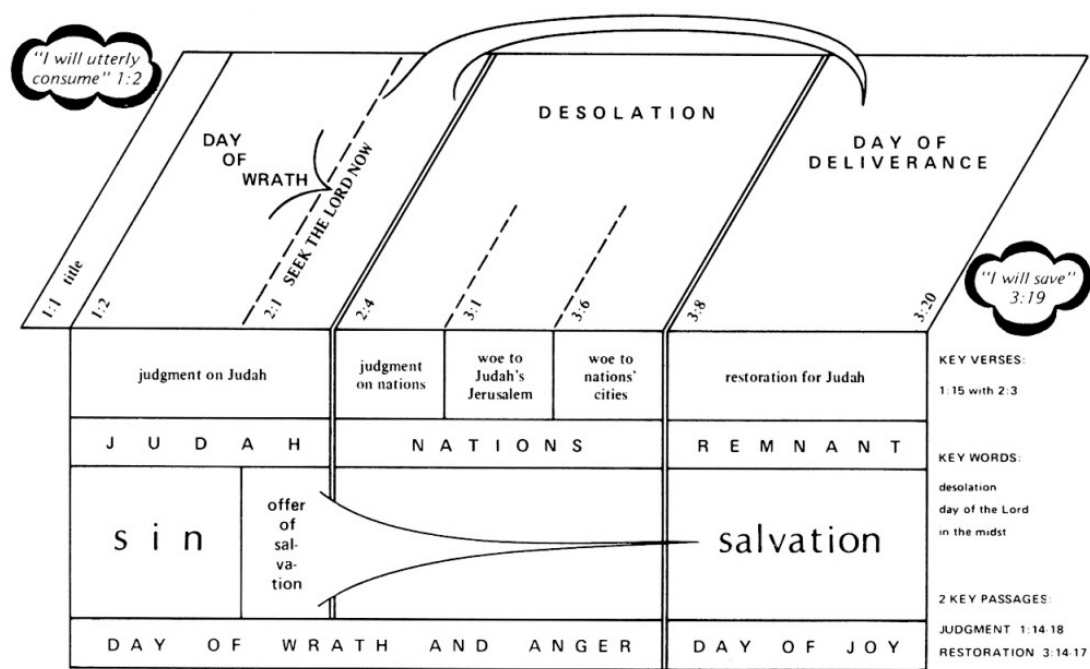
Zephaniah 1

Zephaniah 3

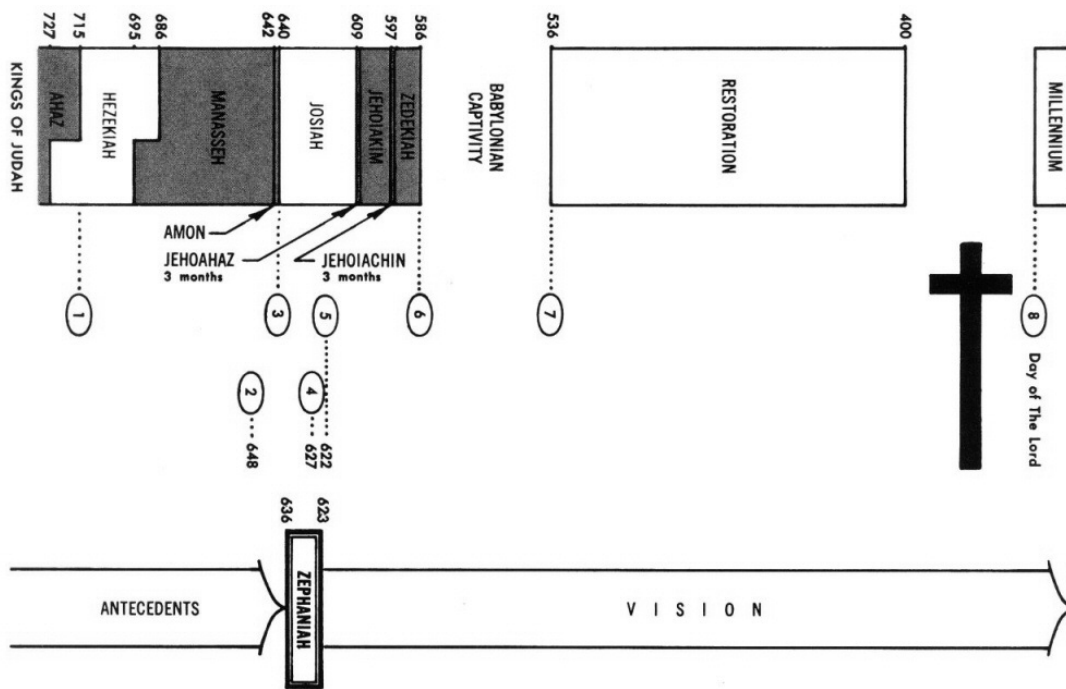
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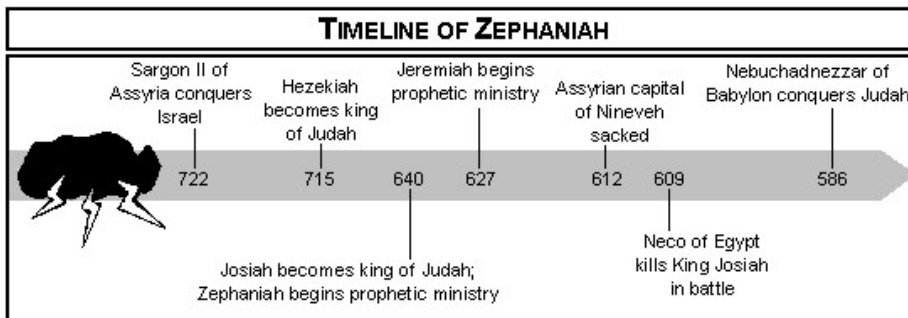
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Click chart to enlarge
Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[Zephaniah Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll
[Another Zephaniah Chart](#)



SETTING OF ZEPHANIAH
Click chart to enlarge



Source: Ryrie Study Bible



Circa 620 B.C. (Source: [ESV.org](https://www.esv.org))

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, when Egypt, Judah, and Babylonia were eroding the power of Assyria. Shortly after this time the Babylonians would replace the Assyrians as the dominant power in the Near East. (Source: [ESV.org](https://www.esv.org))

Below is a summary chart of the Zephaniah portion of the discussion of the Day of the Lord part 2

[Youtube discussion - What the Bible Teaches About the Day of the Lord - Part 1](#)

[Youtube discussion - What the Bible Teaches About the Day of the Lord - Part 2](#)

Zephaniah 2:1 **Gather yourselves together, yes, **gather**, O nation without shame,**

NET Bunch yourselves together like straw, you undesirable nation,

CSB Gather yourselves together; gather together, undesirable nation,

ESV Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation,

NIV Gather together, gather together, O shameful nation,

NLT Gather together-- yes, gather together, you shameless nation.

NRS Gather together, gather, O shameless nation,

NJB Gather together, gather together, nations without shame,

- **gather:** 2Ch 20:4 Ne 8:1 9:1 Es 4:16 Joe 1:14 2:12-18 Mt 18:20
- **O nation:** Isa 1:4-6,10-15 Jer 12:7-9 Zec 11:8
- **without shame** Isa 26:8,9
- Online conservative resource - [KJV Commentary](#)
- Outline by Walter Kaiser -(See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))
 - A. An Exhortation to Seek the Lord - Zephaniah 2:1–3
 - B. The Lord's Purpose in Punishing the Nations - Zephaniah 2:4–15
 - C. The Lord's Purpose in Punishing Judah - Zephaniah 3:1–8
 - D. The Lord's Purpose in Restoration - Zephaniah 3:9–20
 1. The Conversion of the Nations - Zephaniah 3:9–10
 2. The Preservation of the Remnant - Zephaniah 3:11–13
 3. A Psalm of Joy - Zephaniah 3:14–17
 4. The Regathering of Israel - Zephaniah 3:18–20

Related Passages:

Joel 2:15+ Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, 16**Gather** the people, sanctify the congregation, **Assemble** the elders, **Gather** the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her bridal chamber.

Jeremiah 6:15 "**Were they ashamed** because of the abomination they have done? **They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush.** Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD.

Below is a timeline summarizing some of the features of the Day of the LORD which are described in Zephaniah 1 and Zephaniah 2. The truths in Zephaniah 1 are highlighted in yellow (see under "Great Tribulation") and the truths in Zephaniah 2 are highlighted in blue. Note that these latter truths include those which will occur in the Millennial aspect of the Day of the LORD.

GATHER ROUND ALL YOU PEOPLE FOR A WORD FROM YAHWEH

Gather yourselves together, yes, gather - NET picks up the sense of the following context ("like the chaff") and so paraphrases this as "Bunch yourselves together **like straw**." Zephaniah is urging the people to pause, reflect, and repent together as a nation before God's decree of judgment takes effect (Zeph 2:2). This idea of gathering for repentance appears elsewhere in Scripture when God's people face impending judgment. Joel 2:16 "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants." The call therefore is a summons to spiritual reflection and repentance before it is too late.

Yes, gather - The repetition intensifies the urgency. It is as if the prophet is saying "Come together now and do not delay but assemble and seek the LORD before judgment falls. The double command (both uses of **gather** are commands) reflects the

seriousness of the moment because the Day of the LORD is approaching rapidly (Zeph 1:14).

O nation ([goy, plural "goyim", "haggoyim"](#)) **without shame** ([see note](#)) - **ESV, NLT, NRSV** - "O shameless nation" **NIV** = "O shameful nation." **Without shame** shows that they had become calloused to the evil in their society. When a society loses the ability to feel shame over sin, it reveals a deeply hardened heart. Continual sinning will do that to our soul, progressively hardening one's heart to the convicting ministry of the Spirit. Paul writes to Timothy describing those who are "seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." (1Ti 4:2+) We've seen that in our own society.

In summoning the **nation**, Zephaniah startled the people by addressing them as "**O nation**." The Hebrew word used for "**nation**" ([goy, plural "goyim", "haggoyim"](#)) is most often applied to Gentile or pagan nations, those who do not know the LORD nor follow His ways. By using this term for Judah, the prophet implies that God's people had become so sinful that they were indistinguishable from the surrounding pagan nations (**ED: CHURCH ARE YOU LISTENING?**) In effect, their behavior had made them unworthy of the covenant identity of God's chosen people. By addressing them with this disparaging term, Zephaniah sought to pierce their conscience and shock them into recognizing the seriousness of their spiritual condition.

Zephaniah intensifies his rebuke by describing them as **without shame**, a "shameless" or "shameful" nation. The expression portrays a people who had lost the capacity to feel moral shame over their sin. Although their behavior was disgraceful and marked by corruption, idolatry, and covenant unfaithfulness (spiritual adultery), they showed no remorse, no repentance, and no sense of guilt. Their heart and conscience had become hardened, and behavior that should have produced humiliation before the Holy God no longer troubled them. This is a national illustration of the heart hardening, deceiving power of sin (Heb 3:13+). And keep in mind that they were sinning against the light (they had the Temple and the Torah, etc). Judah was not only shameful in its conduct but shameless in its attitude and therefore guilty of great sin even though they were indifferent to it. Zephaniah's words were intended to awaken them to the seriousness of their condition and to expose how far they had drifted from the humility and repentance that God desired.

THOUGHT - Beloved, have you been seduced, ensnared and deceived by some sin? If so, you are in grave danger of drifting into the powerful current of the "River Sin," a current that can carry you toward a painful, dangerous and potentially even deadly, waterfall, so to speak! TODAY! RIGHT NOW! Stop! Confess! Repent! See related resources: (1) [Are You Drifting Spiritually?](#) (2) [The Danger of Drifting Away](#) - Wayne Barber (3) [Beware of Slowly Drifting From Your First Love of Jesus](#)

Jeremiah saw this shamelessness in Judah, the very ones to whom Zephaniah is now sounding the alarm...

"Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? **They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush.** Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD. (Jeremiah 6:15)

THOUGHT - Beware of playing with sin, for what begins as small compromises can slowly entangle the heart (cf [Are You Entangled?](#)) until a person no longer even recognizes it as sin. This is a very dangerous condition for the soul, because repeated indulgence dulls the conscience and hardens the heart. What once troubled you begins to feel normal, and the voice of conviction grows faint. If you sense that you are being drawn by the seductive calls of this godless and immoral world (these siren seductions can ensnare any of us beloved! cf 1Co 10:12+), do not delay—cry out to God, confess your sin, and receive His gracious gift of repentance while your heart is still sensitive to the prompting of His Spirit. Scripture warns that sin is deceptive (Hebrews 3:13+), promising pleasure but delivering bondage and sorrow. Many have toyed with sin expecting satisfaction, only to discover that its fleeting pleasures are far outweighed by the lasting pain it brings. The wise course is to turn quickly to the Lord, for repentance restores fellowship and keeps the heart tender before Him. Many a man has played with sin and found it's pleasure was far outweighed by the pain it brings (as in Jer 6:15)!

Descriptive Definition of the Day of the Lord - The DAY of the LORD describes a time when God intervenes in the "day of man." The DAY of the Lord can have a historical fulfillment (NEAR), and an eschatological fulfillment (FAR). This DAY begins with the Great Tribulation when God judges the Gentile nations & Israel, purifying a redeemed remnant of Israel who will enter into the Promised Land for a period of unprecedented blessing & prosperity in the Messianic Kingdom ruled by the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. The DAY of the Lord terminates with God's "uncreation" of the creation at the end of 1000 years. (See Day of the LORD)

Zephaniah is essentially saying "*Before the decree of judgment takes effect, come together as a nation, examine yourselves, and return to the LORD—even though you have become a people who have lost all sense of shame.*" God's warning is therefore an act of mercy. Even though the nation is described as shameless, God still invites them to repent before the Day of the LORD

arrives. When people lose the ability to feel shame for sin, spiritual danger is at its greatest—but God still calls sinners to stop, examine their hearts, and return to Him before judgment comes (cf. Isaiah 55:6)

MacArthur - No longer sensitive to God's call to repentance through His many prophets, Judah had sunk to shamelessness. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

KJV Commentary (online) - Having painted a dark picture of judgment in the preceding chapter, the prophet now points to the fact that there is one thing that can keep the judgment (which is about twenty years away) from being realized—repentance. Thus, he calls on the nation and its people to repent. The first step in repentance would be to heighten the national awareness of its peril and need. Every person has been going his own way, giving attention only to his own wants. Now the nation is implored to gather itself together (heightened by the repetition of the thought) and seek the Lord so that the dark things predicted might be averted; The nation is addressed O nation not desired because of its sin and spiritual insensitivity. In fact, Jehovah does desire her (for he is jealous over her, cf. Zep 1:18b); but the nation has become so calloused in its sinning that she has become totally insensitive to God's desire and will concerning her. Thus, the nation is implored to gather together as in a solemn assembly to seek Jehovah in repentance and thus avert the national catastrophe.

Moody Bible Commentary - Few things so powerfully demonstrate God's sovereign rule over the earth as His ability to bring the nations of the world into accountability (Ps 33:10; Is 13:3–5; 45:1–5; Jr 51:20; Dn 4:3, 17, 35). But prior to describing this end-of-days judgment, God calls Israel to return to Him. At the outset, Zephaniah exhorted the people of Judah to gather yourselves together, yes, gather (v. 1). Although this could be a call to collective repentance, it could also be a call to return to the land of Israel prior to the eschatological "day of the LORD." The word used for "gather" (qashash) is used only here in Zephaniah, but two other synonyms for "gather" ('asaph, 3:8, 18; and qabats, 3:19, 20) are also used in the book. Since both of these uses refer to a physical and literal gathering, it is also likely that in this context the word should be taken literally as well. Thus, it refers to the Lord literally regathering Judah back to the land prior to the "day of the LORD," the seven-year tribulation period (Dan 9:27). The nation would be returned to the land of Israel before the decree (of judgment) takes effect (v. 2). Here is the evident mercy of God, even in the face of certain dreadful judgment.

Matthew Henry rightly said that Zephaniah intended "not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins"

NET NOTE The Hebrew text combines a Hitpoel imperative of **קָשַׁשׁ** (qashash - GATHER) with a Qal imperative of the same root. Elsewhere this root appears in the polel stem with the meaning "gather stubble." Zephaniah's command is ironic, implying the people are like stubble or straw. As such, they are vulnerable to the Lord's fiery judgment that will quickly consume them (see Zeph 1:18). See Adele Berlin, Zephaniah (AB 25A), 96. **WITHOUT SHAME** ("Undesirable" in NET) = **tn** Some relate this word to an Aramaic cognate meaning "to be ashamed." With the negative particle it would then mean "unashamed" (cf. NIV "shameful"; NRSV "shameless"). However, elsewhere in biblical Hebrew the verb means "to desire," or with the negative particle "undesirable." Cf. also NEB "unruly."

Without shame ([03700](#)) **kasaph** means to long for, to yearn deeply, or to desire intensely, describing a powerful emotional craving for someone or something. The word conveys more than a casual wish; it expresses a deep, almost overwhelming longing that affects the whole person, sometimes to the point of emotional weakness or faintness. In Genesis 31:30, Laban uses the verb to describe Jacob's strong yearning to return to his father's house, while Psalm 84:2 portrays the godly soul that "longs and even faints for the courts of the LORD," expressing an intense spiritual desire for God's presence. Job 14:15 presents the remarkable thought that God Himself will "long for the work of His hands," reflecting His deep desire for restored fellowship with His people. The word can also describe a fierce or consuming craving, such as the violent hunger of a lion ready to tear its prey (Psalm 17:12). Cognate forms in related languages suggest shades of meaning connected with paleness or faintness, implying that the longing is so strong it overwhelms the person emotionally.

In **Zephaniah 2:1**, the idea shifts toward the negative sense of being "**shameless**," describing a nation so hardened in rebellion that it no longer turns pale with shame over its sin. Thus, the term encompasses an intense inward yearning—whether directed toward God, home, or even evil—and in its negative use exposes a heart so consumed or hardened that normal shame has disappeared.

The word reminds us that the human heart is capable of deep longing, and Scripture calls us to direct that powerful desire toward God rather than sin, because what we long for ultimately shapes who we become.

KASAPH - **eager(1), long(1), longed(1), longed greatly(1), shame(1)**. Gen. 31:30; Job 14:15; Ps. 17:12; Ps. 84:2; Zeph. 2:1

In this chapter we have the prophet's appeal, on the ground of the approaching day of wrath. This opening call might with accuracy be rendered in our colloquialism: "Pull yourselves together." That is the exact idea. All the Nation was spiritually and morally relaxed, and so mentally dulled, and unable to realize the true meaning of its own sin. The prophet stood before the Nation as a physician, and cried to it sharply, urgently: "Pull yourselves together." The sign of moral paralysis was that the Nation had no shame. To a sense of sin, and a consequent sense of shame, the prophet sought to bring them, in view of the decree of the Divine judgment which was determined against them. He commenced by describing the judgments which were to fall on the surrounding nations, Philistia, Moab, Ammon Ethiopia, and Assyria; and then proceeded to show how this same fiery destructive force would fall on Jerusalem (Zeph 3.1-7). In the course of this appeal the prophet specially addressed the remnant of elect souls who were loyal to Jehovah. Two things are impressive in this section of the prophecy. The first is that this is the very call that nations constantly need to hear; and that it is difficult for them to obey. Today, those nations most highly privileged need to pull themselves together, and to face moral and spiritual facts. The second is that the souls within the national life who are loyal to God are those who constitute the only hope of the nation being able to do this.

Zephaniah 2:2 Before the decree takes effect– The day passes like the chaff– Before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you.

KJV Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you.

BGT πρ το γεν σθαι μ ς ς νθος παραπορευ μενον πρ το πελθε ν φ μ ς ργ ν κυρ ου πρ το πελθε ν φ μ ς μ ραν θυμο κυρ ου

LXE before ye become as the flower that passes away, before the anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the wrath of the Lord come upon you.

NET before God's decree becomes reality and the day of opportunity disappears like windblown chaff, before the LORD's raging anger overtakes you– before the day of the LORD's angry judgment overtakes you!

CSB before the decree takes effect and the day passes like chaff, before the burning of the LORD's anger overtakes you, before the day of the LORD's anger overtakes you.

ESV before the decree takes effect-- before the day passes away like chaff-- before there comes upon you the burning anger of the LORD, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the LORD.

NIV before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's wrath comes upon you.

NLT Gather before judgment begins, before your time to repent is blown away like chaff. Act now, before the fierce fury of the LORD falls and the terrible day of the LORD's anger begins.

NRS before you are driven away like the drifting chaff, before there comes upon you the fierce anger of the LORD, before there comes upon you the day of the LORD's wrath.

NJB before you are dispersed like chaff which disappears in a day; before Yahweh's burning anger overtakes you (before the Day of Yahweh's anger overtakes you).

NAB Before you are driven away, like chaff that passes on; Before there comes upon you the blazing anger of the LORD: Before there comes upon you the day of the LORD'S anger.

YLT Before the bringing forth of a statute, As chaff hath the day passed on, While yet not come in upon you doth the heat of the anger of Jehovah, While yet not come in upon you doth a day of the anger of Jehovah,

- **the decree:** Zep 3:8 2Ki 22:16,17 23:26,27 Eze 12:25 Mt 24:35 2Pe 3:4-10
- **like the chaff:** Job 21:18 Ps 1:4 Isa 17:13 41:15,16 Ho 13:3
- **Before the burning anger of the LORD:** Zep 1:18 2Ch 36:16,17 Ps 2:12 50:22 Jer 23:20 La 4:11 Na 1:6 Mal 4:1,2 Lu 13:24-28
- **Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you:** Ps 95:7,8

Related Passages:

Zephaniah 3:8 "Therefore **wait** for Me," declares the LORD, "For **the day** (THE DAY OF THE LORD) when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My

indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal. (cf Revelation 6-19+)

Amos 5:5,14 (PROPHET TO NORTHERN KINGDOM ABOUT 100 YEARS BEFORE ZEPHANIAH'S MESSAGE) "But do not resort to Bethel And do not come to Gilgal, Nor cross over to Beersheba; For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity And Bethel will come to trouble. (5:14) Seek good and not evil, that you may live; And thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, Just as you have said!

GOD'S WARNING "BEFORE" THE FIRE FALLS

Before ([terem](#)) **the decree takes effect**—Hebrew = "before the giving birth of a decree." Don't miss the critical time phrase **before** (3x!) which means during the period of time preceding a particular event or time. In this context **before** is a word that speaks of God's grace and mercy, a divine warning to give the hearers time to respond before the divine "hammer drops!" They had better gather together before it is too late! This is God's solemn call to urgent repentance before judgment arrives. The prophet is urging the people to seek the LORD immediately because once God's decree of judgment begins to unfold, it will be too late to avoid its consequences.

In this verse the urgency of repentance is powerfully emphasized by the repeated use of the word **BEFORE**, which appears three times to press the people to act without delay. The prophet is essentially pleading with them to repent while there is still time. **First**, they must repent before the appointed judgment arrives, while the opportunity for mercy still remains. **Second**, they must repent before the LORD's fierce anger falls upon them, recognizing that God's patience will not last forever. **Third**, they must repent before the day of the LORD's wrath overtakes them, the moment when divine judgment will finally break forth and it is TOO LATE! By repeating "**before**," the prophet intensifies the warning and underscores the narrow window of time available for repentance, urging the people to turn back to God immediately rather than waiting until judgment is already at the door. Assuming Zephaniah is prophesying to Judah in about 625 BC, that means the people had about 20 years until God's wrath fell on the nation. You may say that 20 years does not sound like it is an urgent situation. But fallen flesh tends to procrastinate until one day the door of opportunity is slammed shut by God!

The **decree** refers to the divine decision of judgment already determined by God. In the prophets, when God issues **a decree**, it means that the sentence has been announced and is certain unless repentance intervenes. God's judgments are never impulsive; they are the result of His righteous evaluation of sin. Zephaniah therefore warns the nation of Judah that a fixed verdict has been pronounced, but there is still a brief window before the judgment actually falls. This reflects the biblical principle that God often announces judgment before executing it in order to give opportunity for repentance. For example we see this in Jonah 3:4–5

Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." 5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them

God's warnings are therefore expressions of His great grace and mercy, because they invite sinners to turn before the decree is carried out.

The day passes like the chaff ([mot](#))—literally, "like chaff it passes by a day." **Like...chaff** stresses how quickly the opportunity will vanish. **Chaff** is the light husk separated from grain and blown away by the wind. The picture is that time is fleeting and unstable, and the chance to repent may disappear suddenly. Scripture frequently uses **chaff** to describe what is temporary and easily swept away as in Ps 1:4 "The wicked are not so, But they are like **chaff** which the wind drives away." With the comparison to **chaff**, Zephaniah warns that the present moment of grace is fragile and short-lived.

Wiersbe observes - The prophet used several agricultural images to describe their coming judgment: like chaff (v. 2), like a tree uprooted (v. 4), "overrun with weeds" (v. 9), like a desert (v. 13). (See [With the Word: The Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook - Page 266](#))

NET NOTE is interesting - The translation (NET = *before God's decree becomes reality and the day of opportunity disappears like windblown chaff, before the LORD's raging anger overtakes you— before the day of the LORD's angry judgment overtakes you!*) assumes the "day" is the brief time God is giving the nation to repent. The comparison of this quickly passing opportunity to **chaff** is consistent with the straw imagery of Zeph 2:1.

Before the burning ([charon](#)) **anger** ([aph](#); LXX - [orge](#) - settled indignation) **of the LORD comes upon you** - **Burning anger** (literally "the heat of His anger") emphasizes the intensity of God's holy wrath against sin. **Anger** is the Hebrew word [aph](#) (the nose, nostril), which refers to the breathing part of the body. By the act of breathing emotions can be expressed and so by the flaring of the

nostrils the **anger** is expressed (See Anthropomorphism). God's anger is not uncontrolled rage but the righteous reaction of a holy God against rebellion, idolatry, and injustice.

Other prophets describe the same coming judgment Isaiah 13:9+ "Behold, the **day of the LORD** is coming, cruel, with fury and **burning anger**, to make the land a desolation."

Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you. - Clearly **The day** is the Day of the LORD, when He will visit Judah for punishment. Note the repetition of **comes upon you** which speaks of God's righteous anger! In a broader definition, the Day of the LORD refers to a time when God decisively intervenes in human history to judge sin and vindicate His righteousness. In Zephaniah's immediate context, it pointed toward the coming Babylonian devastation of Judah, but it also anticipates the ultimate eschatological fulfillment in the end times. Some refer to this as Near and Far Fulfillment of prophecy. Another way it can be described is Already/Not Yet. **Already** signifies the prophecy was partially fulfilled in the Babylonian destruction of Judah. **Not yet** ultimately points to the final eschatological Day of the LORD when God judges the nations and establishes His righteous rule, especially as described in Revelation 6-19+.

God is a God of great compassion and mercy and He always warns before He judges! Noah built the Ark (possibly for 120 years - cf Ge 6:3+) and was a preacher of righteousness (2Pe 2:5+) before God brought the flood and destroyed all the sinners on the earth! He warned through a man, but men refused to heed the warning from God's prophet!

THOUGHT - Dear reader, are you skeptical of the claims of the Bible and of Jesus Christ? Do you doubt that Jesus is the Lamb of God Who alone (Acts 4:12+) can take away the sins of the world (of all who place their faith in Him) and specifically can take away your sins forever (cf John 1:29+)? If you doubt this truth, then you need to take heed of the time phrase in this verse, that little word **BEFORE**! You do not know that God will even grant you breath one more day (Da 5:23+). Today is the day you must humble your heart, bow your knee and cry out to the Merciful God to save your soul from eternal punishment **BEFORE** ("pun" intended) it is too late (READ 2Cor 6:2+)! **You do not want to experience Jehovah's burning anger!!!**

Zephaniah 2:2 is therefore a triple warning of urgency - **Before** the decree is executed, **Before** the opportunity passes like chaff in the wind, **Before** God's righteous anger falls. The repetition of "**before... before... before...**" heightens the sense of immediacy and urgency. God is saying that judgment is certain, but repentance must happen now. God's warnings are acts of mercy: He announces judgment beforehand so that sinners may repent before the decree falls. The wise response is to not delay but immediate to turn to the Lord while there is still time (cf. Isaiah 55:6 "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.")

WHAT ARE TWO ASPECTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD FROM THIS VERSE? DOL = Will be like chaff ("burning anger of Yahweh") DOL = Yahweh's anger. See similar descriptions of the Day of the LORD **highlighted in yellow** in the chart below...

2 Th 2:1-12	Acts 2:15-21	1Th 4:13-5:11	2Pt 3:1-13	Isaiah 13	Obadiah	Amos 5	Joel 1-3
Coming of Lord Gathering to Him	Pentecost Spirit→Tongues	Context- Catching up of Believers	1 Stir mind of sayings of prophets & apostles	When?739-681bc Who? Babylon	Who? Edom/Esau Why? Violence to brother Jacob	Context: 760 Northern Kingdom Israel was in time of prosperity & peace 1-A Dirge	Addressed to: Elders, inhabitants, priests (v2,13) Context: Locust plague
Shaken/disturbed DOL had come Events Preceding	Peter's Response This is that → Joel (Joel 2:28-31)	DAY OF THE LORD 1 Like a thief in the night (surprise) (v2) 2 THEY saying peace & safety (v3) 3 Suddenly – like labor pains (v3) 4 No escape (v3)	3 When? Last days 3 What? Mocking 4 Coming of Christ 4 Logic? Continues as from beginning 5-6 Rebuttal? Creation & flood DAY OF THE LORD 7 Heavens & earth reserved for fire 7 Day of judgment 7 Destroy ungodly 9 Repentance 10 Like a thief 10 Heavens pass away with a roar Elements destroy Earth/works→burn DAY OF GOD 12 Heavens→burn Elements→melt	DAY OF THE LORD 6 Wail/howl 6 Near 6 Destruction 6 From Almighty Reaction to DOL? 7-8 All men hands limp, hearts melt, terror, pain & anguish, writhe like labor pains, aghast, flushed DAY OF THE LORD 9 Coming, cruel, fury, burning anger, land desolate, sinners exterminated. 10 Cosmic signs – stars, sun, moon 11 Punish world 12 Men scarce 19 – Babylon like Sodom & Gomorrah 20 – Never inhabited, no tents	DAY OF THE LORD 15 Near for all nations 15 Pay back 16 All nations cease to exist 17 BUT - On Mt Zion escapees, 17 Mt Zion holy 17 Jacob possess possessions (Millennium) 18-Israel like fire No survivor-Edom 19-20 – Extent of Israel's possessions 20 The Kingdom will be the LORDS (Millennium) Cf Rev 11:15 "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."	722BC Assyria takes Israel exile = NEAR FULFILLMENT of D.O.L. 18 Foolishly longed for DAY OF THE LORD 18 Darkness, not light 18 Gloom, no brightness 19 No escape Way of Escape 3x- Seek the Lord that you may live (5:4, 6, 14)	1:15 DAY OF THE LORD Near, destruction, from the Almighty 2:1 DAY OF THE LORD 2:2 Darkness, gloom, clouds & darkness, army like down on mts. -Never anything like it, nor will there be after it. (cf Mt 24:21) 2:11 DAY OF THE LORD Great & very awesome; Who can endure??? 2:12-18 Tells who can endure! (return "repent") 2:19ff THEN – Lord zealous for Israel→will never make them a reproach among the nations (Millennium) 2:28-31 – See Acts 2 2:31 DAY OF THE LORD 32 Call→Delivered 3:1 Restore fortunes of Israel (Millennium) 3:2 God gathers nations to Valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment (See next chart)
(Mt 24:15, Da 9:27) His coming is in energy of Satan – power, signs, false wonders Lord slays w breath & appearance of His coming ED'ers – God sends deluding influence to believe false > to be judged bc did not believe truth loved wickedness	15 Men not drunk 16 Joel prophesied of this day 17-18 Last days Spirit poured out on all mankind (partially fulfilled) (TIME GAP) (Following Future) 19 Wonders in sky Signs on earth DAY OF THE LORD 20 Sun→Dark Moon→Blood Great & glorious (cf Rev 6:12) DAY OF THE LORD: 21 Everyone (Jew or Gentile) who calls on the Name of the Lord (JESUS) will be saved (rescued).	4 Believers not in darkness 5 Sons of light 5 Sons of day SQ (therefore)... 6 Be alert 6,8 Be sober (2x) 8 We have hope of salvation (rescue) 9 Believer's Destiny: NOT for wrath BUT For Salvation (rescue) THEREFORE 11 Encourage & build up ONE ANOTHER	11 Application: -Holy/godly 12 Looking→Living 13 Looking for NH RIGHTEOUSNESS DWELLS (VERTICAL VISION)				

Before (02962) terem - The Hebrew word תֶּרֶם (terem) is an adverb and sometimes an adverbial preposition that primarily means “before” or “not yet.” It is used to indicate that something occurs prior to another event or before a certain condition has taken place. As a temporal expression, it highlights the idea of precedence in time, marking a moment that occurs earlier than another expected or significant point. In many passages it carries the sense that something has not yet happened when another action occurs, drawing attention to the timing and sequence of events.

TEREM - 58X/48V - before(45), before*(3), no*(2), nor(1), prior(1), yet(6). Gen. 2:5; Gen. 19:4; Gen. 24:15; Gen. 24:45; Gen. 27:4; Gen. 27:33; Gen. 37:18; Gen. 41:50; Gen. 45:28; Exod. 1:19; Exod. 9:30; Exod. 12:34; Lev. 14:36; Num. 11:33; Deut. 31:21; Jos. 2:8; Jos. 3:1; Jdg. 14:18; Ruth 3:14; 1 Sam. 2:15; 1 Sam. 3:3; 1 Sam. 3:7; 1 Sam. 9:13; 2 Ki. 2:9; 2 Ki. 6:32; Job 10:21; Ps. 39:13; Ps. 58:9; Ps. 90:2; Ps. 119:67; Prov. 8:25; Prov. 18:13; Prov. 30:7; Isa. 7:16; Isa. 8:4; Isa. 17:14; Isa. 28:4; Isa. 42:9; Isa. 48:5; Isa. 65:24; Isa. 66:7; Jer. 1:5; Jer. 13:16; Jer. 38:10; Jer. 47:1; Ezek. 16:57; Zeph. 2:2; Hag. 2:15

In Scripture, **terem** frequently appears with verbs to express the idea of “not yet” or “before something happened.” For example, in Genesis 2:5 the word describes the condition of the earth before vegetation had appeared: “no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted.” The term emphasizes that certain developments had not yet taken place, highlighting the stage of creation before God provided rain and a man to cultivate the ground. In this way, **terem** helps frame the narrative by describing circumstances that existed prior to God’s next creative action.

TEREM is also used to show that something occurs before another action is finished, sometimes emphasizing the immediacy of God’s response. In Genesis 24:15 and Ge 24:45, Abraham’s servant is praying for guidance when seeking a wife for Isaac. The text states that **before** he had finished speaking, Rebekah appeared. Here **terem** underscores the remarkable timing of God’s providence: the answer arrived even before the prayer was complete, highlighting divine initiative and responsiveness.

In other passages, **terem** simply indicates a time prior to another anticipated event. For instance, in Genesis 27:4, Isaac asks Esau to prepare food for him so that he may bless him before he dies. Likewise, in Exodus 12:34, the Israelites took their dough before it was leavened as they hurried to leave Egypt. In these contexts the word functions as a straightforward chronological marker, identifying actions that occur before a certain moment or condition.

Terem can also describe events that occur before a specific time of day. In Isaiah 17:14, the prophet declares that a terrifying enemy presence will vanish before morning arrives. The expression emphasizes the suddenness and completeness of God’s judgment, indicating that the threat will disappear within a single night. Thus **terem** can convey not only sequence but also dramatic timing, highlighting how quickly God can reverse a situation.

In some passages **terem** reaches even further back, referring to time before creation itself. Psalm 90:2 declares, “**Before** the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.” Here **terem** emphasizes God’s eternal existence prior to the formation of the world. The term thus helps express a profound theological truth: God exists **before** and beyond all created time.

Grammatically, **terem** is most often used as an adverb of time, but it can also function like a temporal conjunction, meaning “before,” or occasionally like a preposition indicating priority in time. It frequently appears with verbs in the imperfect form, which can express an action that has not yet occurred at the moment described. In some contexts, however, the force of the word causes the verb to function more like a past narrative statement.

Terem sometimes appears with prefixes, particularly בְּ (be, “in” or “before”), as in Isaiah 17:14 and Jeremiah 1:5, where God tells Jeremiah, “**Before** I formed you in the womb I knew you.” The addition of this prefix does not significantly change the meaning but reinforces the temporal idea of something occurring prior to another event. On one occasion **terem** appears with the prefix מִן (min, “from”), as in Haggai 2:15, where it indicates a time before a certain point in the rebuilding of the temple.

In summary, **terem** is a significant temporal term in biblical Hebrew that highlights events occurring prior to other actions, conditions, or moments in time. Whether describing the state of the world before creation developments, the timing of human actions before an expected event, or God’s activity before human awareness, the word consistently emphasizes priority and anticipation. In many passages it subtly underscores the sovereignty of God, showing that His knowledge, purposes, and actions often operate before human plans, expectations, or even existence itself.

Chaff (04671) mot - refers literally to chaff, the light, dry husks or fragments of straw that surround grain and must be removed during the threshing process. In ancient agriculture, harvested grain was threshed and then winnowed by tossing it into the air so that the wind would blow away the lighter husks, while the heavier kernels of grain fell back to the ground. Because chaff had little value and was easily scattered by the wind, it became a vivid biblical image of worthlessness, instability, and transience. The word occurs about eight times in the Old Testament, and cognate terms appear in Arabic (mauṣ, "straw"), later Hebrew, and Aramaic, all carrying the same basic idea of straw-like husks or worthless agricultural residue. The Septuagint consistently translates the term with χυο ς (chnous), meaning chaff or light dust.

MOT - 8V - Job 21:18; Ps. 1:4; Ps. 35:5; Isa. 17:13; Isa. 29:5; Isa. 41:15; Hos. 13:3; Zeph. 2:2

In Scripture, chaff frequently serves as a metaphor for the wicked. Just as chaff has no substance and is blown away by the wind during winnowing, so the ungodly are portrayed as unstable, insubstantial, and ultimately subject to divine judgment. Psalm 1:4 contrasts the righteous—who are firmly rooted like a fruitful tree—with the wicked, declaring, "The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away." Similarly, Job 21:18 and Psalm 35:5 portray the enemies of God as chaff driven before the wind, emphasizing their fragility and inability to stand when God acts in judgment. In prophetic literature, the image expands beyond individuals to include nations opposed to God, which will likewise be scattered and destroyed like chaff before the wind (Isaiah 17:13; 29:5; 41:15; Hosea 13:3).

The metaphor also conveys the brevity and fleeting nature of evil. Just as chaff quickly disappears once the wind blows, so the prosperity or apparent strength of the wicked proves temporary and insubstantial. Zephaniah 2:2 uses the imagery to describe the swift passing of time and the inevitability of coming judgment, comparing the approaching day of the Lord to chaff that is suddenly blown away. Thus, the biblical use of mōts combines several related ideas: worthlessness, instability, vulnerability to judgment, and the temporary nature of evil.

In summary, chaff in Scripture symbolizes whatever lacks substance and permanence before God. It represents people, powers, or pursuits that appear significant for a moment but are ultimately empty and easily swept away by the breath of divine judgment, in contrast to the righteous, who endure because they are rooted in God's truth.

Burning (02740) charon literally means "burning," "heat," or "fierceness," and in Scripture it is used almost exclusively as a metaphor for God's intense anger against sin. The word derives from the verb הָרָא (hārâ), meaning "to burn" or "to be kindled with anger." In the Old Testament it frequently appears in the idiomatic expression אַף הָרֹן (hārôn 'aph), literally "the burning of the nose." This vivid Hebrew expression reflects the physical signs of anger: when a person becomes enraged, the nostrils flare, the face flushes, and heat rises, symbolizing intense emotion. Thus the phrase communicates the idea of the fierce, heated wrath of God.

CHARON - 40V - burning(17), burning anger(2), fierce(15), fierceness(3), fury(1), wrath(3). Exod. 15:7; Exod. 32:12; Num. 25:4; Num. 32:14; Deut. 13:17; Jos. 7:26; 1 Sam. 28:18; 2 Ki. 23:26; 2 Chr. 28:11; 2 Chr. 28:13; 2 Chr. 29:10; 2 Chr. 30:8; Ezr. 10:14; Neh. 13:18; Job 20:23; Ps. 2:5; Ps. 58:9; Ps. 69:24; Ps. 78:49; Ps. 85:3; Ps. 88:16; Isa. 13:9; Isa. 13:13; Jer. 4:8; Jer. 4:26; Jer. 12:13; Jer. 25:37; Jer. 25:38; Jer. 30:24; Jer. 49:37; Jer. 51:45; Lam. 1:12; Lam. 4:11; Ezek. 7:12; Ezek. 7:14; Hos. 11:9; Jon. 3:9; Nah. 1:6; Zeph. 2:2; Zeph. 3:8

This noun occurs about forty-one times in the Old Testament and is used almost exclusively in reference to the LORD's anger, highlighting the seriousness of divine judgment. The expression often appears as "the fierceness of the anger of the LORD", emphasizing the intensity and consuming nature of God's response to sin. Scripture repeatedly associates this burning wrath with Israel's rebellion, idolatry, and covenant violations. For example, Moses pleaded with God to turn from "the burning of Your anger" after Israel's sin with the golden calf (Exodus 32:12). Similarly, God's wrath was kindled when Israel engaged in idolatry with the Moabites (Numbers 25:4), when Achan kept items devoted to destruction (Joshua 7:26), and when the nation repeatedly abandoned the covenant for idols (2 Kings 23:26). In these passages, hārôn expresses the holy and judicial response of God's righteousness against sin.

Although the term primarily refers directly to God's anger, sometimes His burning wrath is carried out indirectly through instruments of judgment, such as invading nations or destructive forces (Jeremiah 25:37–38). In a few contexts the word appears without the accompanying term 'aph ("nose/anger"), yet the meaning remains essentially the same—the intense heat of divine indignation (e.g., Exodus 15:7; Nehemiah 13:18; Psalm 88:16).

In summary, hārôn portrays God's anger as a burning, consuming heat—a powerful [anthropomorphic image](#)

that communicates the intensity, righteousness, and inevitability of His judgment against sin. It does not describe uncontrolled rage but rather the holy, judicial indignation of a just God whose covenant people have violated His law.

Anger (0693)(aph from **anaph** = to breathe hard, to be angry) is a masculine noun meaning nose, nostril, snout (pigs - Pr 11:22), face (2Sa 25:23) and anger. Both senses are found in Proverbs 30:22 - "For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the **nose** (aph) brings forth blood; so the churning of **anger** (aph) produces strife." In the first use God "breathed into (man's) nostrils the breath of life." (Ge 2:7) **Aph** sometimes refers to the entire whole face (Ge 3:19), especially in the expression, *to bow one's face to the ground* (Ge 19:1; 1Sa 24:8). To have *length of nose* is to be *slow to wrath* (Pr 14:29, 16:32). To have *shortness of nose* is to be *quick tempered* (Pr. 14:17; Jer. 15:14, 15). Aph is used in a phrase (goba aph) which means pride, arrogance, formally, high of nose, an improper haughtiness and self-confidence (Ps 10:4). Often speaks of divine anger or wrath (Ps 2:5, 2:12, 6:1, 30:5, 74:1, 77:9, 78:21) and thankfully is "Slow to **anger**." (Ps 103:8; 145:8, both Lxx = makrothumos = long-suffering)

APH IN THE MAJOR AND MINOR PROPHETS - Isa. 2:22; Isa. 3:21; Isa. 5:25; Isa. 7:4; Isa. 9:12; Isa. 9:17; Isa. 9:21; Isa. 10:4; Isa. 10:5; Isa. 10:25; Isa. 12:1; Isa. 13:3; Isa. 13:9; Isa. 13:13; Isa. 14:6; Isa. 30:27; Isa. 30:30; Isa. 37:29; Isa. 42:25; Isa. 48:9; Isa. 49:23; Isa. 63:3; Isa. 63:6; Isa. 65:5; Isa. 66:15; Jer. 2:35; Jer. 4:8; Jer. 4:26; Jer. 7:20; Jer. 10:24; Jer. 12:13; Jer. 15:14; Jer. 17:4; Jer. 18:23; Jer. 21:5; Jer. 23:20; Jer. 25:37; Jer. 25:38; Jer. 30:24; Jer. 32:31; Jer. 32:37; Jer. 33:5; Jer. 36:7; Jer. 42:18; Jer. 44:6; Jer. 49:37; Jer. 51:45; Jer. 52:3; Lam. 1:12; Lam. 2:1; Lam. 2:3; Lam. 2:6; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 2:22; Lam. 3:43; Lam. 3:66; Lam. 4:11; Lam. 4:20; Ezek. 5:13; Ezek. 5:15; Ezek. 7:3; Ezek. 7:8; Ezek. 8:17; Ezek. 13:13; Ezek. 16:12; Ezek. 20:8; Ezek. 20:21; Ezek. 22:20; Ezek. 23:25; Ezek. 25:14; Ezek. 35:11; Ezek. 38:18; Ezek. 43:8; Dan. 9:16; Dan. 11:20; Hos. 8:5; Hos. 11:9; Hos. 13:11; Hos. 14:4; Joel 2:13; Amos 1:11; Amos 4:10; Jon. 3:9; Jon. 4:2; Mic. 5:15; Mic. 7:18; Nah. 1:3; Nah. 1:6; Hab. 3:8; Hab. 3:12; Zeph. 2:2; Zeph. 2:3; Zeph. 3:8; Zech. 10:3

Zephaniah 2:3 **Seek** the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; **Seek** righteousness, **seek** humility. Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD'S anger.

KJV Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

BGT ζητσατε τ ν κ ριον π ντες ταπεινο γ ς κρ μα ργ ξεσθε κα δικαιοσ νην ζητσατε κα ποκρ νεσθε α τ πως σκεπασθ τε ν μ ρ ργ ς κυρ ου

LXE Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth; do judgment, and seek justice, and answer accordingly; that ye may be hid in the day of the wrath of the Lord.

NET Seek the LORD's favor, all you humble people of the land who have obeyed his commands! Strive to do what is right! Strive to be humble! Maybe you will be protected on the day of the LORD's angry judgment.

CSB Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who carry out what He commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be concealed on the day of the LORD's anger.

ESV Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.

NIV Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

NLT Seek the LORD, all who are humble, and follow his commands. Seek to do what is right and to live humbly. Perhaps even yet the LORD will protect you-- protect you from his anger on that day of destruction.

NRS Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the LORD's wrath.

NJB Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the earth, who obey his commands. Seek uprightness, seek humility: you may perhaps find shelter on the Day of Yahweh's anger.

NAB Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law; Seek justice, seek humility; perhaps you may be sheltered on the day of the LORD'S anger.

YLT Seek Jehovah, all ye humble of the land, Who His judgment have done, Seek ye righteousness, seek

humility, It may be ye are hidden in a day of the anger of Jehovah.

- **Seek the LORD** Ps 105:4 Isa 55:6,7 Jer 3:13,14 4:1,2 29:12,13 Ho 7:10 10:12 Am 5:4-6,14,15 Mt 7:7,8
- **All you humble of the earth:** 2Ch 34:27,28 Ps 22:26 25:8,9 76:9 149:4 Isa 61:1 Jer 22:15,16 Zec 8:19 Mt 5:5 Jas 1:21,22 1Pe 3:4
- **Seek righteousness, seek humility:** Php 3:13,14 1Th 4:1,10 1Pe 1:22 2Pe 3:18
- **Perhaps** 2Sa 12:22 Joe 2:13,14 Am 5:15 Jon 3:9
- **you will be hidden** Ge 7:15,16 Ex 12:27 Ps 31:20 Ps 32:6,7 Ps 57:1 Ps 91:1 Pr 18:10 Isa 26:20,21 Jer 39:18 Jer 45:5 Col 3:2-4

Related Passages:

Colossians 3:3+ For you have died and **your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

Matthew 6:33+ But **seek** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

GOD'S FORBEARANCE AND PATIENCE

This is the prophet's final appeal of mercy before the coming judgment described in the Day of the LORD. After warning that divine judgment is approaching, Zephaniah turns to those who are still responsive to God and urges them to pursue the Lord with humility and obedience.

Seek ([baqas](#); LXX - [zeteo](#)) **the LORD**, **All you humble** ([anav](#); LXX - [tapeinos](#) - literally of low position, lowly) **of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek** ([baqas](#); LXX - [zeteo](#)) **righteousness** (lit - "seek what is right"), **seek** ([baqas](#); LXX - [zeteo](#)) **humility**. Three commands to seek ([aorist imperative](#) in the Septuagint = "Just do it!" "Do not delay!"). What God commands, He enables. He is calling on Judahites to humble themselves and [depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). Note this offer of amazing grace is not just for Judah but for **all the humble of the earth!** The only souls who would even consider seeking Yahweh are those who are humble. Proud people would not even consider seeking Him! How does God identify a humble person? Humility and obedience go hand in hand. So it is one who carries out His ordinances (He is not speaking of legalistically, but from a humble, contrite heart, one that the Spirit even in the OT would have given grace to which would allow them to carry out the ordinances).

Seek the LORD means more than simply acknowledging God—it involves turning to Him in repentance, dependence, and obedience. The Hebrew verb implies earnest pursuit, a deliberate turning of the heart toward God. Throughout Scripture, seeking the Lord is the pathway to life and restoration (Isa 55:6, Amos 5:4). Zephaniah is urging the people to turn back to God before judgment arrives.

Walter Kaiser on seek - That is one of the four ways that the writer of 2 Chronicles, in the post-exilic period, would declare that God would send a revival: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2Ch 7:14+)."

Kaiser adds "It is startling that Zephaniah never uses the verb [shub/sub](#), "to turn, or repent," in his cry for a change in the lives of his listeners, since that was the hallmark of almost every other prophet's message. To seek the Lord was to turn to Him with all of one's heart and being. It was to depend on Him rather than oneself and to let His eye guide in all the affairs of life. This text enjoins the people to seek three objects: the Lord himself, first of all; righteousness; and humility. To seek anything or anyone other than the Lord was to fall into idolatry. The genus of idolatry was, simply, making something or someone else equal to, or greater than, God. He alone must be the object of our affections and worship. To seek righteousness meant to seek God's standard in human behavior. It meant making God's Law, His will, and His covenant normative, for He alone was "in-the-right," or "righteousness." Righteousness was not obtained merely by obeying the Law, but by having faith in God that resulted in a lifestyle of obedience (Deut. 30:16, 20). To seek humility meant the opposite of asserting one's self-will and pride. Blessed are the meek (not to be confused with the "weak"), asserted our Lord. Those who have gone into spiritual bankruptcy in order to gain the treasures of heaven are not foolish, but wise followers indeed. Their hearts and spirits were broken and contrite before God (Ps. 34:18; 51:17; Is. 57:15; 66:2; 1 Pet. 5:6). (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

All you humble ([anav](#); LXX - [tapeinos](#) - literally of low position, lowly) **of the earth** - Notice the message is here not just directed to Judah but to **the earth**. The appeal is directed to all the **humble**, to those who recognize their dependence on God and submit to His authority. The Hebrew idea of humility often describes meekness, lowliness, and submission before the Lord.

These are the people who still respond to God's Word and have not hardened their hearts. In the midst of His

judgment, God always preserves a faithful remnant, here those characterized by humility. The humble are those who acknowledge their need for God and submit to His instruction. Psalm 25:9 says "He leads the **humble** in justice, and He teaches the **humble** His way."

THOUGHT - As an aside **humble** believers are not perfect or sinless and still struggle with the presence and power of sin. However, a defining mark of true humility is how they respond when they do fall and sin. Rather than excusing or ignoring their sin or [sweeping it under the rug](#) (cf Pr 28:13+), they quickly acknowledge it, completely confess it to the LORD, seek His forgiveness and His gift of repentance allowing them to forsake that sin (1Jn 1:9+). Their hearts remain tender toward the LORD, and they desire restored fellowship with Him more than they desire to defend themselves or hide their wrongdoing. This readiness to confess and turn from sin is a vital expression of genuine humility. A humble believer understands his or her continual need for God's Spirit and grace and therefore lives in a posture of dependence, repentance, and trusting in the LORD's mercy and forgiveness (cf Lam 3:22,23,24)

Who have carried out His ordinances - This description identifies those already seeking to obey God's commands. While the nation as a whole was corrupt, there remained a group who still desired to walk in obedience to God's standards of justice and righteousness. These faithful individuals are part of the remnant God preserves in times of judgment.

Seek righteousness ([tsedeq](#); LXX - [dikaiousune](#)), **seek humility** - The command **seek** is repeated three times (cf with "before" 3x) to emphasize the character God desires, which (praise God) is the character He supplies to those who trust and obey! **Righteousness** refers to living according to God's "right" standards, practicing justice and integrity (cf Mic 6:8+), which clearly is only possible by the Holy Spirit Who was also active in the OT but did not indwell believers permanently as He does today. **Humility** describes a heart that depends on God rather than pridefully trusting itself. The repetition underscores that true seeking of God is demonstrated in transformed character.

Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger - **NEB** "it may be that you will find shelter"; **NRSV** "perhaps you may be hidden." The word **hidden** reflects the Hebrew root from which the name Zephaniah itself is derived, meaning "the LORD hides" or "hidden by Jehovah" The idea is that God can shelter His faithful people when judgment falls. Those who truly seek the Lord may experience His protection even when judgment comes upon the broader society.

Walter Kaiser on **perhaps** (NKJV - "it may be that") - In saying "**it may be that**," Zephaniah was not casting doubt on the character or consistency of God; rather, he was pointing, even at this late moment, to the compassion of the Lord and His power to suspend or to restrain the judgment He had announced—if humans would but change. Often this "it may be that," or "perhaps," or "unless," is left unstated in the prophecy, but it is always implied. Did not the king and people of Nineveh infer from Jonah's prophecy that the Lord might be compassionate (Jon. 3:9)? What would we mortals ever do without this conditionality in all of God's threatening and warning? (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

The day in context is the Day of the LORD, that time when He pours out His wrath (e.g. as described in the seals, trumpets and bowls in Revelation 6-19). As we will learn in Zephaniah 3 it is a Day balanced by His mercy, forgiveness and restoration. It is much like the description in Genesis 1:19 "There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day." That is to say, the darkness is followed by the light!

Passages related to God hiding His children in the day of wrath...

1 Thessalonians 1:10+ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who **rescues us from the wrath to come**.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10+ For God has **not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

Revelation 3:10+ 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, **I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world**, to test those who dwell on the earth.

When judgment looms, the safest place is not self-defense or denial but humble pursuit of God. Those who seek the Lord, walk in righteousness, and remain humble before Him find that God Himself becomes their refuge in the day of trouble. Nahum 1:7 echoes this truth declaring "The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him."

David Guzik - **It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger**. In more than one place, God promises to *hide* His righteous people in the day of great judgment. This is especially relevant to the time of the Great Tribulation, when Jesus warned us to *Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*. (Luke 21:36)

Moody Bible Commentary - Although the decision to punish cannot be averted, mindful of His covenant with Israel and his "[hesed/chesed/heced](#)" (His steadfast, covenantal love), God offered mercy through forgiveness and providential care amid their suffering (See 2:7, 9; Neh 9:27–28; Ps 25:6; Is 30:18–26; Ezk 39:25–29).

Regarding the **Day of the Lord** we repeatedly see the Father's heart is to "default" to mercy ([hesed/chesed/heced](#)), not wrath, even as described in 2 Peter 3:9+ (in the context of a description of the Day of the Lord), Peter writing "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Believers Study Bible - This verse comes closest to summarizing briefly the theme of the book. The only means by which one can hope to escape the judgment of God as well as to please the Lord on a daily basis is to "seek" Him (cf. Ps. 105:4; Amos 5:6; Matt. 7:7, 8). "Meek of the earth" has reference to those who adhere to the Lord's standard of justice. They are exhorted to continue seeking "righteousness" and "humility" even more diligently as the day of the Lord approaches.

If Zephaniah is prophesying during Manasseh or Amon's time and Josiah is hearing this, then Josiah did repent and did clean up the country as best he could, but he could not cancel our God's judgment. He could only postpone it. Therefore, the prophet continues with his description of certain judgment.

Seek (01245) [baqas](#) expresses a person's earnest seeking of something or someone which exists or is thought to exist with the intention that it will be found or acquired. It pictures one searching earnestly until the object of the search is located. The [Septuagint \(LXX\)](#) translates **baqas** with the verb [zeteo](#) which implies giving attention and priority to and deliberately pursuing after. Webster says that to seek means to go in search or quest of, to look for, to try to discover, to search for by going from place to place. **Zeteo** in classical Greek is often used as a technical term for philosophical investigation, something "examined, considered" or "deliberated."

For example, **baqas** describes seeking for Moses' life (Ex 4:19 Lxx = [zeteo](#)), Absalom seeking to kill David (2Sa 16:11), those seeking to kill Pharaoh and Zedekiah (Jer 44:30)

Baqas describes an earnest search until the object of the search is located. Thus peace is to be searched for earnestly (Ps 34:14+). The Lord's face (His presence) must especially be sought (Ps 27:4, 8+) On the other hand, we are not to seek the occult (Lev 19:31). Naomi sought for security for her daughter-in-law Ruth (Ru 3:1+). Jehovah "**sought out** for Himself a man after His own heart." (1Sa 13:14 - As an aside God is ever looking for this quality in a man or woman! Does it describe you [me]?) God promises if we seek for Him we will find Him (Dt 4:29).

Humble (06035) [anav](#) from '[anah](#) = be bowed down, afflicted; cf related word humility = [anawah](#)) means poor, oppressed, afflicted, humble, meek. In Nu 12:3 the Lxx translates it with the adjective praus used for example in Mt 5:5 "Blessed are the **gentle**, for they shall inherit the earth." [Praus](#) is used to describe the character of Jesus in Mt 11:29. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS." More frequently [anav](#) seems to denote an attitude of mind, more characteristic of the poor than of the rich, one of humility and dependence on God.

The Hebrew word '[ānāw](#) describes a person who is humble, meek, afflicted, or oppressed, often referring both to outward hardship and inward humility produced through that hardship. In Scripture the term commonly identifies those who are lowly, vulnerable, or socially disadvantaged, yet who respond to their circumstances with dependence on God rather than pride. While some uses highlight poverty or oppression (Job 24:4; Amos 2:7; Ps. 10:17), the word more deeply emphasizes the spiritual quality of humility that God intends affliction to produce. The afflicted are frequently mistreated by the powerful, but God presents Himself as their protector and advocate, remembering their suffering, strengthening their hearts, and ultimately bringing justice and salvation (Ps. 9:12, 18; 25:9; 147:6; Isa. 11:4). The humble are promised divine favor, guidance, and future blessing, even inheriting the land and rejoicing in God's deliverance (Ps. 34:2; 37:11; 149:4). Moses is the primary biblical example of this quality (Num. 12:3)—a man not socially weak or poor, but deeply humbled before God through life's trials. Thus, '[ānāw](#) portrays those who, whether through suffering or circumstance, adopt a gentle, dependent posture before God, which Scripture consistently honors and blesses.

ANAV - 19V - Num. 12:3; Ps. 9:12; Ps. 10:12; Ps. 10:17; Ps. 22:26; Ps. 25:9; Ps. 34:2; Ps. 37:11; Ps. 69:32; Ps. 76:9; Ps. 147:6; Ps. 149:4; Prov. 3:34; Prov. 14:21; Isa. 11:4; Isa. 29:19; Isa. 61:1; Amos 2:7; Zeph. 2:3

Righteousness (06664) ([tsedeq](#) from root "**sdq**" - to be straight, norm) the basic idea is that which conforms to an ethical or moral standard. Tsedeq is noun meaning a right relation to an ethical or legal standard.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew words [ṭṣḏq](#) ([tsedeq](#)) and [ṭṣḏqâ](#) ([tsedāqâ](#)) express the rich concept of righteousness, combining the ideas of moral rightness, justice, covenant faithfulness, and a right relationship

with God. Biblically, righteousness has a twofold dimension: it refers both to conduct that conforms to God's standards and to a right standing granted by God (Gen 15:6; Deut 6:25; Ps 106:3; Isa 51:1,5). In everyday life it describes integrity, fairness, and justice in relationships and society, such as honest dealings and righteous judgment (Gen 30:33; Lev 19:36; Deut 16:18–20; Prov 1:3; Mic 6:8). At the same time, Scripture presents righteousness as a status credited by God through faith, as seen in Abraham being counted righteous (Gen 15:6; Ps 32:1–2; Rom 4:3–5). Ultimately righteousness flows from God's own holy character, for the Lord is perfectly righteous in all His ways and judges the world with justice (Ps 89:14; 96:13; 145:17). His righteousness is displayed both in salvation for those who trust Him and judgment upon sin (Isa 45:8; 26:9; Jer 11:20). The prophets further reveal that God will provide righteousness through the coming Messiah, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:6), fulfilled in Christ who grants believers the gift of righteousness (Rom 5:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9). Thus biblical righteousness encompasses God's perfect character, His just rule and saving acts, the believer's right standing before Him, and the righteous life that flows from that relationship.

EXCURSUS ON SEEKING THE LORD

To seek the LORD in Scripture means to pursue God Himself with wholehearted devotion, repentance, humility, and obedience. It is the deliberate turning of the heart toward God in order to know Him, walk in His ways, and depend on Him for life and salvation. Seeking the Lord is not merely an intellectual search or a religious activity; it is the earnest pursuit of a living relationship with the holy God. God repeatedly invites His people to seek Him because true life flows from communion with Him. Thus the Lord declares, "Seek Me that you may live" (Amos 5:4 NASB), and again, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6 NASB). These commands show that seeking God is both urgent and life-giving.

Seeking the Lord Requires Turning from Sin

Seeking God always involves repentance, a turning away from sin and self-reliance toward God. One cannot genuinely seek God while clinging to rebellion. Isaiah 55:6–7 (NASB) explains, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Likewise Hosea 10:12 (NASB) urges, "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you." Seeking the Lord therefore involves a moral and spiritual change of direction—abandoning sin and returning to God.

Seeking the Lord Means Wholehearted Pursuit

Scripture consistently emphasizes that seeking God must be wholehearted, not superficial. Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB) promises, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." Likewise Deuteronomy 4:29 (NASB) says, "You will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul." The idea is a deep longing for God Himself, not merely for His blessings. David expressed this longing when he wrote, "My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1 NASB).

Seeking the Lord Means Desiring His Presence

The Bible often describes seeking God as seeking His face, which signifies personal relationship and communion. Psalm 27:8 (NASB) says, "When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.'" Similarly Psalm 105:4 (NASB) commands, "Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face continually." To seek God's face means desiring His presence, favor, and fellowship, not merely His help in times of trouble.

Seeking the Lord Involves Humble Dependence

Seeking God also expresses humility and dependence upon Him. Those who seek the Lord recognize their need for His wisdom, righteousness, and strength. 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NASB) records God's promise: "If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven." Likewise Psalm 34:10 (NASB) assures, "They who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing." Seeking God therefore reflects a heart that relies upon Him rather than upon human strength.

Seeking the Lord Leads to Obedience

Biblical seeking is inseparable from obedience to God's Word. Those who truly seek the Lord desire to live according to His commands. Psalm 119:2 (NASB) declares, "How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart." In the same spirit 1 Chronicles 28:9 (NASB) instructs, "If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever." Seeking God therefore means aligning one's life with His revealed will.

Seeking the Lord Is the Pathway to Life and Joy

Scripture repeatedly connects seeking God with life, blessing, and spiritual renewal. Lamentations 3:25 (NASB) says, "The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him." Psalm 69:32 (NASB) adds, "You who seek God, let your heart revive." When people seek God sincerely, they experience renewal because they encounter the living God Himself.

Seeking the Lord Ultimately Means Coming to Christ

In the New Testament the pursuit of God finds its fullest expression in coming to Jesus Christ, who perfectly reveals the Father. Jesus asked two early disciples, "What do you seek?" (John 1:38 NASB), drawing out the true desire of their hearts. They followed Him because they longed to know Him, and He responded with the invitation, "Come, and you will see" (John 1:39 NASB). Because the Father is revealed through the Son, seeking God now means coming to Christ in faith. Jesus declared, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28 NASB). Through Him believers find reconciliation with God and true spiritual life.

At the same time Scripture teaches that seeking God is ultimately a response to God's gracious initiative. Because sin blinds the human heart, people do not naturally seek God on their own. Romans 3:11 (NASB) says, "There is none who seeks for God." Yet God continually reaches out to sinners. As Paul quotes God saying, "I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me" (Romans 10:20 NASB), and "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people" (Romans 10:21 NASB). Thus when a person begins to seek God, it is evidence of God's grace already drawing the heart toward Him.

Summary

In Scripture, seeking the LORD means turning from sin, pursuing God with the whole heart, desiring His presence, submitting to His authority, and responding to His gracious invitation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is expressed through prayer, worship, obedience, and continual dependence upon God. Those who seek Him discover that God delights to reveal Himself, fulfilling His promise: "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13 NASB). Ultimately the greatest reward of seeking God is not merely His blessings, but God Himself—the living source of life, forgiveness, and eternal joy.

Seeking the LORD means turning from sin and pursuing Him with a whole, repentant heart (Isaiah 55:6–7; Deuteronomy 4:29).

Seeking the LORD means desiring His presence and relationship above all else, not merely His blessings (Psalm 27:8; Psalm 105:4).

Those who earnestly seek the LORD find true life, renewal, and salvation in Him (Amos 5:4; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 11:28).

J.C. Philpot - How are we to follow after this grace of meekness? By learning the contrary. How often have we mistaken false fire for the light and fire of God's Spirit! and have contended more for our own views, in our own spirit, with many rash and unbecoming words, rather than for the glory of God. But after a time we are led to see that strife and contention, in our own spirit, are contrary to the spirit and temper of the gospel, and are brought to see what a blessed grace the spirit of meekness is. Nay, the very want of it, the rising up of an excited temper, the anger, strife, envy, and jealousy that often work in our bosoms convince us how little we know of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." We thus feel what a blessing it is to be made humble and submissive; and how impossible it is to enter into communion with a broken-hearted Jesus, till the soul is in some measure meekened by his Spirit. But it is by having a succession of things to try and provoke us, that we learn whether we have meekness or not. The husband can be very meek, while his wife and children are doing everything to please him; but where is his meekness when they thwart and provoke him? The master may be very meek, while the servant is obedient, obliging, and attentive, but how is he when things are different? Thus the knowledge of the disease makes us desire the remedy; and by the wretched sensations caused by wrath and evil temper, we are brought to desire an experience of those sweet feelings which gospel meekness produces in our consciences. - Ears from

C H Spurgeon - Sermon Notes - Zephaniah 2:3—"Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

There is a "may be" about all temporal things; and in pleading for them we ask with much diffidence.

Yet we may plead confidently when our appeal is made to God in the day of his anger. Then our need is pressing: it is for our life that we are pleading, and the Lord is very gracious in our extremities.

In spiritual things we may draw encouragement from the faintest sign of hope when it proceeds from God: "it may be ye shall be hid."

The seeking for refuge, here commanded, is directed only to the meek and righteous; but it is our joy to proclaim a hiding-place for the guilty, and to bid them seek the Lord even on the least encouragement.

The three seekings commanded are:—

"Seek the Lord;" or, repent, and trust in Jehovah.

"Seek righteousness." Directed as it is in the text to those who are already righteous, it bids them persevere in righteousness.

"Seek meekness." Spoken to the meek, it bids them bow even more humbly before the chastening hand of God.

But our point is this: that we may seek the Lord upon the faintest encouragement. There are strong inducements and large promises; but if we cannot grasp these we may come even with a "may be."

I. IN MANY A RECORDED INSTANCE "MAY BE" HAS PROMPTED AND JUSTIFIED A RIGHT ACTION.

From the cases which we will mention lessons may be learned.

1. A "may be" led Jonathan to attack the garrison of the Philistines. 1 Sam. 14:6. "It may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." This should nerve saints for holy enterprises.

2. A "may be" cheered David when Absalom rebelled, and Shimei cursed. 2 Sam. 16:12. "It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction." Let us hope in God in our darkest hours.

3. A "may be" induced the lepers to visit the Syrian camp. 2 Kings 7:4. Their desperate venture should be laid to heart by those who are in like condition. They can but perish in any case; let them seek the Lord, and try whether he does not save.

4. A "may be," diluted with an "if so be," moved the afflicted to humble himself. See Jeremiah's Lamentations 3:29. Let no tried soul refuse the like hope.

5. A "may be," in the form of "Who can tell?" brought all Nineveh to repentance. Jonah 3:9.

If others have acted so vigorously upon such slender encouragement, may not we, when dreading the ruin of our souls, act with like decision and hopefulness? If we fly to Jesus by childlike faith, there is more than a "may be" that the result will be happy.

II. IN THE INSTANCE OF A SINCERE SEEKER THE "MAY BE" IS OF UNUSUAL STRENGTH.

There is every probability of the penitent obtaining salvation if we—

1. Consider the gracious nature of our God. Micah 7:18.

2. Consider the glorious work of Christ for sinners. 1 Tim. 1:15.

3. Consider the mercy they have already received. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed": Lam. 3:22.

4. Consider the number and character of those who have been saved. Rev. 5:9, 7:9. 1 Cor. 6:11.

5. Consider the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit. John 3:8.

6. Consider the glory which is to be the Lord's at the last: surely it will come by saving souls, and saving many of them.

III. BUT IN THE SEEKER'S CASE HE HAS FAR MORE TO GO UPON THAN A MERE "MAY BE."

There are innumerable sure promises in the Word of God, and these are made to—

Repentance. Prov. 28:13. Isa. 55:7.

Faith. Mark 16:16. John 3:18. Acts 16:31.

Prayer. Matt. 7:7. Acts 2:21.

Let these promises be studied, and their encouragement accepted by immediate compliance with their requirements.

Consider that God foresaw all events when he made these promises, and accordingly he has not made them in error.

Consider that he cannot withdraw his promise.

Consider that he is the same as when he made the promise, and so in effect makes it again every day.

Consider that it will be a crime to doubt the Lord our God, and an act of reverence to believe him. Venture now upon the bare promise of God, who cannot lie. Titus 1:2.

O sinner, seek the Lord!

He comes to you in Christ Jesus. Look to him at once, and live.

CHEERING WORDS

Possibly ye may be hid from punishment, probably ye shall escape sorrow: but pardon of sin ye shall be sure of; mitigation also of

sorrow, if not prevention of it. Saved ye shall be, or more gently handled, or so inwardly calmed, that ye shall be able to call your souls to rest when others are at their wits' ends. You shall be safe under the cover of God's wings, and in the hollow of his hand; when others, that are without God in the world, shall be as a naked man in a storm, as an unarmed man in the field of battle, or as a ship at sea without an anchor, subject to dash and split against rocks and quicksands.—Trapp.

Dr. John Duncan was once heard thus addressing a beggar-woman in Edinburgh:—"Now, you'll promise me that you'll seek: but mind, seeking will not save you, yet it is your duty; and if you seek you'll find, and finding will save you."

Our hope is not hung upon such untwisted thread as "I imagine so", or, 'it is likely'; but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of him who is eternal verity; our salvation is fastened with God's own hand, and Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchanging nature.—Rutherford.

How long a beggar will wait, and how eagerly he will plead, although he has no promise of an alms, but only the bare chance of winning a penny from a passer-by! How laboriously will fishers cast their nets again and again, though nothing has been taken as yet, and their only encouragement is the possibility that fish may come that way! How desperately will men dive into the sea with the expectation of finding pearls in oyster-shells, encountering fierce monsters of the deep with the uncertain hope of being enriched! And will not men draw near to God when their outlook is so much more bright, their expectation so much more justifiable? As for me, I will lay down my sick soul at Christ's feet, in sure and certain belief that he will heal me, and then I will follow him whithersoever he goeth, in calm assurance that he will lead me to his eternal kingdom and glory.—C. H. S.

F B Meyer - It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

The name of this prophet means, "Whom God hides or protects." The hidden man invites others to his hiding-place; and shows how we may be hidden in the day of God's anger. It is said that in the center of the wildest cyclone there is a point of absolute calm: so amid the wildest storms that have swept the face of the world there have always been some of God's hidden ones:—

"The secret place, the refuge from the blast,
The glorious Temple, Lamb of God art Thou;
Our feet shall tread the golden courts at last,
Our souls have entered now."

"I cannot deny," writes Tersteegen, "the corruptions of the external Church; but I think my dear friend has more necessary things to attend to. Within! Within! With God alone!" There is truth here, though not all the truth. We must have Elijahs as well as Zephaniahs.

Only those may know the hidden life who fulfill the conditions here described. They must be meek; they must work his judgment; they must seek righteousness and meekness. It is the soul that bends before the blast of the terrible ones; that gives place to wrath, not because of pusillanimity, but because of the fear of the Lord; that hands over its cause of alarm and fear to the Most High, which abides in his secret place, and hides under his shadow.

Let us seek these things, and then there will be no may-be in our being hidden. We shall certainly be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger; hidden in the wounds of Jesus, hidden in his heart, hidden in God with Christ, hidden in the fiery glory of his intolerable holiness.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"

Zephaniah 2:4 For Gaza will be abandoned And Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon And Ekron will be uprooted.

KJV For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

BGT δι τι Γ ζα διηρπασμ νη σται κα σκαλ ν σται ε ς φανισμ ν κα ζωτος μεσημβρ ας κριφ σεται κα Ακκαρων κριζωθ σεται

LXE For Gaza shall be utterly spoiled, and Ascalon shall be destroyed; and Azotus shall be cast forth at noon-day, and Accaron shall be rooted up.

NET Indeed, Gaza will be deserted and Ashkelon will become a heap of ruins. Invaders will drive away the people of Ashdod by noon, and Ekron will be overthrown.

CSB For Gaza will be abandoned, and Ashkelon will become a ruin. Ashdod will be driven out at noon, and Ekron will be uprooted.

ESV For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted.

NIV Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted.

NLT Gaza and Ashkelon will be abandoned, Ashdod and Ekron torn down.

NRS For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted.

NJB For Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon reduced to ruins; Ashdod will be driven out in broad daylight and Ekron uprooted.

NAB For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon shall be a waste, Ashdod they shall drive out at midday, and Ekron shall be uprooted.

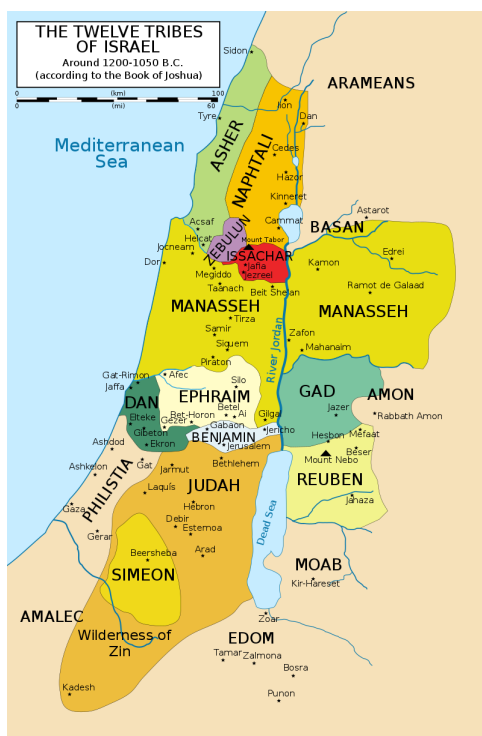
YLT For Gaza is forsaken, And Ashkelon is for a desolation, Ashdod! at noon they do cast her forth, And Ekron is rooted up.

- **Gaza:** Jer 25:20 47:1-7 Eze 25:15-17 Am 1:6-8 Zec 9:5-7
- **Ashdod will be driven out at noon:** Ps 91:6 Jer 6:4 15:8

Related Passages:

Jeremiah 25:17,20 Then I took the cup from the LORD'S hand and made all the nations to whom the LORD sent me drink it:.....and all the foreign people, all the kings of the land of Uz, all the kings of the land of the Philistines (even Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and the remnant of Ashdod)

Amos 1:6-8 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they deported an entire population To deliver it up to Edom. 7 "So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza And it will consume her citadels. 8 "I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, And him who holds the scepter, from Ashkelon; I will even unleash My power upon Ekron, And the remnant of the Philistines will perish," Says the Lord GOD.



JUDGMENT AGAINST PHILISTINES

Notice Zephaniah began declaration of God's judgment in the Day of the LORD against Judah which parallels the truth in 1Pe 4:17+ that it is "the time for judgment to begin with the household of God." Now the prophet begins announcing the Day of the LORD judgments on the surrounding Gentile nations, starting with the Philistine cities along Judah's western border, declaring that the power and security of these cities will be completely overturned by God's judgment. You might ask why are the Gentiles judged for they did not have the Law as Judah did (Ps 147:19–20)? The Gentile nations were still responsible before Him because God had revealed Himself through the evidence of creation (Ro 1:18-25+) and the testimony of their conscience (Ro 2:14,15+). In addition, these nations had frequently treated Israel with hostility and injustice, and the time had now come for Yahweh to execute His righteous judgment upon them.

Walter Kaiser - In these verses the prophet selects two nearby nations (Philistia [vv. 5–7] and Moab-Ammon [vv. 8–11]) and two distant nations (Ethiopia [v. 12] and Assyria [vv. 13–15]) to represent all the nations of the world. These nations were at the four points of the compass. (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

For - In context this term of explanation would seem to introduce the reason or explanation for the urgent call to seek the LORD in the preceding verses. The **for** explains why repentance is urgently needed by introducing evidence that God's judgment is already moving toward fulfillment. In other words **for** signals that what follows is the justification for the warning in Zeph 2:1-3. Stated another way, the destruction of the Philistine cities in the following passages demonstrates that God's judgment is real and imminent. If God is about to judge the surrounding nations, Judah cannot assume immunity. In fact, the description of the coming devastation on these cities serves as a preview of the Day of the LORD that is coming soon on Judah.

Gaza will be abandoned ('[azab](#); LXX - [diarpazo](#) = thoroughly plundered, despoiled as in Mt 12:29) **And Ashkelon a desolation** (Lxx - [aphanismo](#) - vanishing away, no longer visible); **Ashdod will be driven out at noon** **And Ekron will be uprooted** - See map above for **Philistia** on the southwestern side of Israel. Note the intensity of the description (abandoned, desolation, driven out, uprooted) as the description moves from south to north. **Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron** were four of the five major Philistine city-states (the fifth was Gath) and for centuries were persistent enemies of Israel, known from the time of Samson and David. By naming these prominent cities, the prophecy shows that God's day of wrath will not be restricted to Judah, but even the strong centers of Philistine power will fall.



Gaza will be abandoned - **Gaza**, the southernmost Philistine city (see map above) and an important trade center, is predicted to be **abandoned** or forsaken. A once thriving city would become empty, showing that God's judgment can reduce even prosperous cities to ruin.

Ashkelon a desolation ([shemaman](#); LXX - [aphanismo](#) - vanishing away, disappearance) - **Ashkelon**, another major coastal city, is said to become a **desolation**, meaning devastation so complete that the city would lie in ruins and largely uninhabited. Prophets often used such language to describe the aftermath of divine judgment.

Ashdod will be driven out ([garash](#)) **at noon** - The phrase **driven out at noon** is striking because normally attacks occurred at dawn or night for strategic advantage. Being expelled in broad daylight, and the hottest part of the day, suggests an unexpected, sudden and overwhelming defeat, when the inhabitants are forced to flee openly with no chance of resistance.

NET NOTE - The reference to **noon** may suggest a sudden, quick defeat (see Jer 6:4; 15:8). Heb "**uprooted**." There is a sound play here in the Hebrew text: the name "Ekron" (עֲקֶרוֹן, 'eqron) sounds like the word translated "uprooted" (תֵּעָקַר, te'aqer).

Believers Study Bible - "At **noonday**," at a time when Orientals generally refrain from civil and military activities to spend the time in sleep, sudden destruction is to come upon Ashdod (cf. 2 Sam. 4:5; Jer. 6:4).

Ekron will be uprooted - The imagery of "uprooting" portrays total removal, like a plant pulled out of the ground. The city would not

merely be defeated but would be torn out from its place, losing its stability, power, and population. Zephaniah's prophecy shows that God's judgment extends beyond Judah to the nations. The Philistine cities that once seemed strong and secure would be overturned because no nation stands secure when it opposes the purposes of God.

Walter Kaiser - Zephaniah did allow just a pinch of playfulness in his text, using the assonance and alliteration in "Gaza" (ʿāzzāh) being "forsaken" (ʿāzûbâh) (v. 4a) and "Ekron" (ʿeqrôn) being "uprooted" (ʿāqēr). (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

Historical Fulfillment - These words were fulfilled through a series of conquests, especially by Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar in the late 7th–early 6th century BC, when the Philistine cities were devastated and their political power effectively ended.

Warren Wiersbe adds that "The Philistines were ancient enemies of the Jews (Ge 20-21, 26). According to Amos 1:6-8, they took Jewish people captive from cities in southern Judah and sold them to other nations as slaves. But the time would come when their populous cities would be empty and their land left desolate, a place for shepherds to feed their flocks. Their coastal cities, made wealthy by vast shipping enterprises, would be destroyed by the enemy and left in ruins. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Philistia and conquered it, and the only remnant of that great nation left today is the name "Palestine," which comes from "Philistine" (see Ezek. 25:15-28:26). However, the Jews will inhabit the land of the Philistines when the kingdom is established (**ED: MILLENNIAL KINGDOM**), and the Lord will enable them to live in peace. Zephaniah will later have more to say about this when he describes the kingdom blessings (Zeph. 3:9-20+). ([Bible Exposition Commentary-OT](#))

Takeaway - Human strength, wealth, and political power cannot guarantee security. Cities that once appeared invincible can quickly fall, reminding us that true safety is found not in worldly strength but in seeking the Lord (Zeph 2:3).

John Walton - Philistine cities in late seventh century. After Sargon II's and Sennacherib's campaigns of the late eighth century and the capture and destruction of many of the Philistine cities, these sites were then rebuilt by the Assyrians, and several of them (particularly Timnah and Ekron) prospered as centers for olive oil production. Archaeological evidence has identified industrial districts where olive oil was processed and cloth was woven (based on large numbers of loom weights in these levels). There are indications of Egyptian presence in Philistia after the Assyrian empire collapsed (see comment on Ezek 25:15). These cities were then destroyed in 600 B.C. in the campaigns of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar ([page 795 IVP Bible Background Commentary: OT](#))

Abandoned (forsaken) (05800) **'azab** basically means to depart from something -- to leave, to forsake (48x), to leave (26x; "left" 22x), to loose, to depart, to abandon. Things that can left behind or forsaken include persons (Ge 44:22; Nu 10:30; Ru 1:16; 2Ki4:30), people who should left behind (Ge 2:24); places (2Ki 8:6; Jer 18:14; 25:38) and objects (Ge 39:12,13; 50:8; Ex 9:21). Men can forsake God (apostatize) (Dt 28:20, 31:16, Jer 1:16), can abandon qualities of virtue (1Ki 12:8, 2Chr 10:8, 13), the way (of righteousness) (Pr 15:10), instruction/wisdom (Pr 4:2, 6), reproof (Pr 10:17 - "ignore" = forsake), kindness (lovingkindness, faithfulness) (Pr 3:3). God promises to not forsake His people (Ge 24:27, 28:15, Dt 31:6,7 contrast what God's people will do = Dt 31:16). In a use similar to Pr 28:13, we are instructed to "forsake wrath." (Ps 37:8)

Desolation (08077) **shemamah** Shemamah, from shamam (be desolate), denotes desolation or desolate (Jer 34:22). It means ruin (Jer 25:12) or wasteland (Mic 7:13). Shemamah connotes in grief (Ezek 7:27). It occurs with "make" (siym: Jer 12:11; nathan: Jer 34:22; 'asah: Ezek 35:14): make desolate/a desolation, or destroy (Mic 1:7). Shemamah with shamam implies desolate waste (Ezek 33:28). Related shammah (39x) means devastation (Ezek 23:33) alongside shemamah. Shammah denotes desolate or desolation (Isa 5:9). It suggests horrible thing, horror, or object of scorn (Jer 5:30; 42:18). With "make" (siym: Jer 4:7; shiyth: Jer 50:3; or nathan: Mic 6:16), shammah is lay waste or make desolate (Jer 2:15). Both nouns with chorbah ("ruin") imply desolate ruin. Related meshammah and shimmah (Ezek 33:29; 35:7) with shemamah indicate desolate waste. Meshammah (7x) elsewhere means desolate (Isa 15:6) or horror (Ezek 5:15). Shamem (2x) means desolate (Jer 12:11). Shimmamon (2x) signifies dread (Ezek 4:16).

Shemamah in Zephaniah - Zeph. 1:13; Zeph. 2:4; Zeph. 2:9; Zeph. 2:13

SHEMAMAH - 54V - **MAINLY IN THE PROPHETS** - desolate(19), desolation(33), horror(1), utterly desolate(1), waste(1), waste and a desolation(1). Exod. 23:29; Lev. 26:33; Jos. 8:28; Isa. 1:7; Isa. 6:11; Isa. 17:9; Isa. 62:4; Isa. 64:10; Jer. 4:27; Jer. 6:8; Jer. 9:11; Jer. 10:22; Jer. 12:10; Jer. 12:11; Jer. 25:12; Jer. 32:43; Jer. 34:22; Jer. 44:6; Jer. 49:2; Jer. 49:33; Jer. 50:13; Jer. 51:26; Jer. 51:62; Ezek. 6:14; Ezek. 7:27; Ezek. 12:20; Ezek. 14:15; Ezek. 14:16; Ezek. 15:8; Ezek. 23:33; Ezek. 29:9; Ezek. 29:10; Ezek. 29:12; Ezek. 32:15; Ezek. 33:28; Ezek. 33:29; Ezek. 35:3; Ezek. 35:4; Ezek. 35:7; Ezek. 35:9; Ezek. 35:12; Ezek. 35:14; Ezek. 35:15; Ezek. 36:34; Joel 2:3; Joel 2:20; Joel 3:19; Mic. 1:7; Mic. 7:13; Zeph. 1:13; Zeph. 2:4; Zeph. 2:9; Zeph. 2:13; Mal. 1:3

Driven (01644) **garash** is a verb that means to cast out, drive out. **Garash** depicts God driving Adam and Eve from Eden (Ge 3:24),

God driving Cain from His presence (Ge 4:14), Jonah expelled from God's sight (Jonah 2:4), Pharaoh driving out the Israelites (Ex 6:1; 12:39), Pharaoh driving Moses and Aaron from his presence (Ex. 10:11), repeatedly used of God driving out Israel's enemies (Ex 23:28-31, 33:2, 34:11, Dt 33:27, Jos. 24:12, Ps. 78:55, Ps. 80:8 contrast result because of Israel's disobedience - Jdg 2:3-note, Hos. 9:15) . It is used in the general sense of banishing outcasts from society (Job 30:5). In its figurative usage, it indicates divorcing one's wife (Lev. 21:7). It describes the sea or a river as driven and tossed (Isa. 57:20; Amos 8:8). The word is also used of a divorced woman in Lev. 21:7, a woman that is "put away from her husband."

QUESTION - [What is the significance of Gaza in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - Gaza, also called Azzah, is first mentioned in Genesis as one of the border cities of Canaan (Genesis 10:15–19). The city was on the border of Israel and Egypt in the southwest part of Israel near the Mediterranean Sea. Gaza is one of the oldest cities in history. The name *Gaza* means "strong," which is a fitting name considering the city's strongholds and fortifications for protection.

Gaza was a city associated with the Philistines. Originally, the Avvites lived in Gaza, but the Caphtorites displaced them and settled in the city (Deuteronomy 2:23). The Philistines were most likely identical or related to the Caphtorites, who came from Crete. The ancient [Philistines](#) had traveled to Canaan from a coastal region (Jeremiah 47:4), so it's quite possible that they originally came from Crete.

In the time of Joshua, the Israelites conquered the land "from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon" (Joshua 10:41). The tribe of Judah inherited Gaza, and they were able to keep the city for a short time before it fell back into the hands of the Philistines (Judges 1:18). By the time of [Samson's judgeship](#), the Philistines were living in and controlling Gaza (Judges 16:1). When Samson visited Gaza, the people there planned to kill him, but he escaped and carried off the city gates (Judges 16:1–3). After [Delilah](#) tricked Samson into divulging the secret of his strength, the Philistines captured him and took him to a prison in Gaza (Judges 16:21). Later, Samson regained his strength from the Lord and pushed down the pillars of Dagon's temple, destroying the edifice and killing many Philistines in the process (Judges 16:23–30).

The Philistines continued to control Gaza during the time of [Samuel](#) (see 1 Samuel 6:17). King Hezekiah won great victories over the Philistines, "as far as Gaza and its territory," but did not conquer Gaza itself (2 Kings 18:8).

Gaza was a city associated with judgment. Jeremiah, Amos, Zephaniah, and Zechariah all prophesied judgment on Gaza because of the sin of the Philistines. Amos 1:6–7 records God's judgment on Gaza: "For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom. So I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour her strongholds" (ESV). Likewise, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah prophesied of Gaza's destruction (Jeremiah 25:17–20; Zephaniah 2:4; Zechariah 9:5). King Sargon of Assyria conquered Gaza and probably destroyed it in 720 BC. Later, [Alexander the Great](#) destroyed the city again in 332 BC, after a lengthy battle. During the [Maccabean period](#), Jonathan subjugated Gaza to Israel.

Gaza was a city associated with the spread of the gospel. The New Testament mentions Gaza once. An angel told Philip the evangelist to "go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza" (Acts 8:26). On the road to Gaza, Philip shared the gospel with an [Ethiopian eunuch](#) and subsequently baptized him (Acts 8:26–39). A city once filled with hostility toward the Lord served as a marking point for an Ethiopian to hear of and trust in the grace of God.

The Bible associates Gaza mainly with the Philistines. God had given the city to Judah, but the Israelites had failed to obey God in driving out the former occupants of Canaan (Numbers 33:51–53). Because of that disobedience, the Philistines and the city of Gaza remained a thorn in Israel's side for centuries (see Judges 2:3).

QUESTION - [What is the significance of Ashdod in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - Ashdod was one of the five primary [Philistine](#) cities: [Gaza](#), [Gath](#), [Ashkelon](#), [Ekron](#), and Ashdod. These were major metropolitan areas because later Ashdod, as well as the other cities, are mentioned as having "town and villages" ([Joshua 15:46–47](#)), perhaps similar to modern suburbs.

Ashdod is mentioned several times in the book of Joshua in conjunction with the conquest of the Promised Land. Joshua 11:22 mentions that most of the [Anakim](#) (giant warriors) had been destroyed in the conquest, but a few remained in some of the Philistine cities including Ashdod. Gath, the future home of Goliath, is also mentioned here.

Joshua led the people in the [conquest](#) and captured a number of major cities. The land was then divided among the tribes of Israel who were then supposed to finish taking control of their territory. However, by the time Joshua is old and ready to pass from the

scene, there were some areas that had not yet been subdued including Ashdod and the other four primary Philistine cities (Joshua 13:3). Ashdod was in the territory allotted to Judah (Joshua 15:46–47). The Philistines continued to present problems for Israel for many years to come. Although the Philistines figure prominently in the book of Judges, Ashdod is not mentioned in that book.

In 1 Samuel, the Israelites decide to carry the [ark of the covenant](#) into battle against the Philistines. They do this, treating the ark almost as if it were a “good luck charm,” and God, in response, allows the ark to be captured by the Philistines and taken to Ashdod:

When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god” (1 Samuel 5:1–7, ESV).

The leaders of Ashdod sent the ark to Gath, where similar things happened, and the Gathites sent it on to Ekron. Ultimately, the Philistines decided they had to send the ark back to Israel. The whole story is found in 1 Samuel 5—6.

During the time of Saul and David, the Philistines are a frequent enemy, but Ashdod is not specifically mentioned in conjunction with either king. After the time of David, the Philistines are not mentioned as prominent enemies, although [King Uzziah](#) is commended for his campaign against the Philistines. One of his specific accomplishments was breaking through the wall of Ashdod (2 Chronicles 26:6).

Amos prophesied judgment against Ashdod (Amos 1:8; 3:9), and later the Assyrian armies defeated Ashdod (Isaiah 20:1). Years after that, Jeremiah also prophesied judgment against “the remnant of Ashdod” to be carried out at the hands of the king of Babylon (Jeremiah 25:20).

After the Jews’ return from exile, some of the people of Ashdod were among those who opposed the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah (Nehemiah 4:7). Nehemiah was also dismayed to find that some of the Israelites had intermarried with the women of Ashdod and many of the children could not even speak “the language of Judah” (Nehemiah 13:23–24).

Zephaniah also gives a word on the Philistines: “For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation, Ashdod’s people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted” (Zephaniah 2:4, ESV). And, finally, Zechariah weighs in: “Ashkelon shall see [the judgment of God on the surrounding nations] and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded. The king shall perish from Gaza; Ashkelon shall be uninhabited; a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of Philistia” (Zechariah 9:5–6, ESV).

However, even in judgment there is mercy. Immediately following the pronouncement of doom, Zechariah includes a note of hope: “I will take away its blood from its mouth, and its abominations from between its teeth; it too shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah” (Zechariah 9:7, ESV). In the future, the Philistines would cease to eat unclean food and join in true worship of God. The historian [Josephus](#) reports that many Philistines became proselytes to Judaism. Yet there still awaits an even greater fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy. Philistines or their descendants will one day be part of the great congregation made of every tribe and tongue and people and nation who worship God (Revelation 7:9–10).

QUESTION - [What is the significance of Ekron in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - Ekron, an ancient Philistine city, is first mentioned in Joshua 13:2–3, “This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines and Geshurites, from the Shihor River on the east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north, all of it counted as Canaanite though held by the five Philistine rulers in Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron; the territory of the Avvites.” The cities mentioned in this text—including Ekron—were the five major Philistine cities. Philistia of old was situated along the Mediterranean coast, which is now modern-day Israel and the Gaza strip. The [Philistines](#) were long enemies of ancient Israel.

Ekron served as a significant border city of the Philistines. During the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan, Ekron came under the possession of the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:43). However, Dan appears to have lost Ekron back to the Philistines. The city is mentioned in 1 Samuel 5:10 as a Philistine territory.

An especially noteworthy mention of Ekron is found in 1 Samuel 5, showcasing God's power over other gods. During the time of Eli the high priest, God permitted the Philistines to triumph over the Israelites and capture the [ark of the covenant](#). The Philistines saw the event as a victory of their gods over the God of Israel. They faced a rude awakening when they kept the ark in the temple of their god Dagon at Ashdod and woke the following day to see Dagon fallen close to the ark. This happened twice, and the second time the image of Dagon was broken in pieces (1 Samuel 5:4–5).

The people of Ashdod also felt the heavy hand of God's judgment in the form of a plague, so the Philistines moved the ark to Gath, then to Ekron, the closest Philistine city to Jerusalem. When it came to Ekron, the people exclaimed, "They have brought the ark of the god of Israel around to us to kill us and our people" (1 Samuel 5:10). The Philistine leaders then returned the ark from Ekron to Israel (1 Samuel 6:4–5).

In the time of [Elijah](#), the Israelites under King Ahaziah lived contrary to God's commands. After getting injured, Ahaziah sent men to Ekron to consult the false god Baal-Zebub rather than seeking help from the true God, incurring God's wrath (2 Kings 1:2–4). His attempt to consult Baal-Zebub at Ekron marked the spiritual decline of Israel at the time. With a few exceptions, the kings of Judah after Solomon rebelled against God, eventually leading to exile in Babylon.

Another passage that links Ekron to sin and judgment is Zephaniah 2:4, "Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted." Judgment is also mentioned in Jeremiah 25:17–20: "So I took the cup from the Lord's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn, a curse—as they are today; Pharaoh king of Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines (those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left at Ashdod)."

In the broader biblical narrative, Ekron stands as a reminder of God's supremacy and His judgment over evil. It also serves as a point of enduring conflict between Israel and the Philistines.

Zephaniah 2:5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; And I will destroy you So that there will be no inhabitant.

KJV Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

BGT ο α ο κατοικο ντες τ σχο νισμα τ ς θαλ σσης π ροικοι Κρητ ν λ γος κυρ ου φ μ ς Χανααν γ λλοφ λων
κα πολ μ ς κ κατοικ ας

LXE Woe to them that dwell on the border of the sea, neighbours of the Cretans! the word of the Lord is against you, O Chanaan, land of the Philistines, and I will destroy you out of your dwelling-place.

NET Those who live by the sea, the people who came from Crete, are as good as dead. The LORD has decreed your downfall, Canaan, land of the Philistines: "I will destroy everyone who lives there!"

CSB Woe, inhabitants of the seacoast, nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, Canaan, land of the Philistines: I will destroy you until there is no one left.

ESV Woe to you inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.

NIV Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. "I will destroy you, and none will be left."

NLT And what sorrow awaits you Philistines who live along the coast and in the land of Canaan, for this judgment is against you, too! The LORD will destroy you until not one of you is left.

NRS Ah, inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.

NJB Disaster to the members of the coastal league, to the nation of the Cherethites! This is the word of Yahweh against you: I shall subdue you, land of the Philistines, I shall destroy you till there are no inhabitants left;

NAB Woe to you who dwell by the seacoast, to the Cretan folk! The word of the LORD is against you, I will humble you, land of the Philistines, and leave you to perish without an inhabitant!

YLT Ho! O inhabitants of the sea-coast, Nation of the Cherethites, A word of Jehovah is against you, Canaan, land of the Philistines, And I have destroyed thee without an inhabitant.

- **Cherethites:** Jer 47:7 Eze 25:16, Cherethims
- **The word of the LORD:** Am 3:1 5:1 Zec 1:6 Mk 12:12
- **O Canaan:** Jos 13:3 Jdg 3:3

WORD OF LORD AGAINST PHILISTINES

This verse continues the prophet's announcement of divine judgment against the Philistines, the long-standing enemies of Israel who lived along the Mediterranean coast southwest of Judah.

Woe ([hoy](#)) to the inhabitants of the seacoast- The word **woe** is a prophetic cry announcing impending judgment and calamity. The "**seacoast**" refers to the fertile Mediterranean coastal plain where the Philistine cities were located (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and formerly Gath). These cities were wealthy trade centers and military strongholds, but Zephaniah declares that their prosperity and strategic position will not protect them from God's judgment.

NET NOTE - Heb "Woe, inhabitants of the coast of the sea, nation of Kerethites." The Hebrew term הוי (hoy, "ah, woe"), is used to mourn the dead and express outwardly one's sorrow (see 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18; 34:5). By using it here the prophet mourns in advance the downfall of the Philistines, thereby emphasizing the certainty of their demise ("as good as dead").

The nation of the Cherethites! - The [Cherethites](#) were associated with the Philistines and likely originated from Crete or the Aegean region. In Scripture the term can function almost synonymously with the Philistines. Earlier references connect them with Philistine territory (e.g., 1 Samuel 30:14), and some Cherethites even served as elite warriors in David's army (2 Samuel 8:18). Here, however, the term emphasizes the ethnic identity and foreign origin of the Philistines.

The word of the LORD is against you - This phrase is particularly serious because when **the word of the LORD** comes against someone, it means God Himself has issued a judicial verdict. The same divine WORD that creates, sustains, and blesses can also pronounce judgment. Once God declares such a sentence, it is certain to come to pass.

O Canaan, land of the Philistines - Calling Philistia **Canaan** connects these people with the broader land historically known for its pagan practices and opposition to God. It would also indicate that Philistia would, like **Canaan**, suffer its fate by the extermination of its inhabitants. In effect, the **Philistines** represented the continuation of the Canaanite culture that had long resisted the rule of the LORD.

THE LAND WOULD BE DEPOPULATED

And I will destroy ([abad](#); LXX - [apollumi](#)) you So that there will be no inhabitant - Yahweh is angry with the inhabitants of the seacoast and their destruction will be sure and here predicts total devastation. Although they considered themselves secure, God's judgment would swiftly sweep through the land from south to north with devastating force, leaving it desolate (cf. Jer 47:4–7; Ezek 25:15–17). The cities and population of Philistia would be so thoroughly defeated that their land would be emptied of its people. Historically this began to occur during the Babylonian campaigns in the late seventh and early sixth centuries BC, which shattered the independence of the Philistine cities.

This prophecy demonstrates that God's sovereignty extends beyond Israel to all nations. The Philistines had long opposed God's people, but now the Lord Himself declares judgment against them. No nation, however powerful or prosperous, can stand when "the word of the LORD is against" it. Nations and cultures (and individuals) may appear secure in their strength, wealth, or influence, but the decisive factor in history is whether God's word stands for them or against them. True security is found not in geography or power, but in humbly seeking the Lord and His righteousness.

Woe ([01945](#)) [hoy](#) is an interjection of distress used primarily by the prophets, 6x in mourning for the dead ([1Ki 13:30](#) [Jer 22:18](#); [34:5](#)), and 40x as negative warnings specifying Divine punishment in the form of disaster, etc, for failing to repent from certain sins. The wicked are under the judgment of God (cp [Ro 1:18ff](#)) and therefore face a time of ruin and mourning, so that the only thing left for an unrepentant people is to mourn the destruction of their lives! **Woe! Patterson** - Woe oracles typically contain the following elements: invective ("woe to"), threat, and criticism (the reason for the denunciation and threatened judgment).

HOY - 45V - 1 Ki. 13:30; Isa. 1:4; Isa. 1:24; Isa. 5:8; Isa. 5:11; Isa. 5:18; Isa. 5:20; Isa. 5:21; Isa. 5:22; Isa. 10:1; Isa. 10:5; Isa. 17:12; Isa. 18:1; Isa. 28:1; Isa. 29:1; Isa. 29:15; Isa. 30:1; Isa. 31:1; Isa. 33:1; Isa. 45:9; Isa. 45:10; Isa. 55:1; Jer. 22:13; Jer. 22:18; Jer. 23:1; Jer. 30:7; Jer. 34:5; Jer. 47:6; Jer. 48:1; Jer. 50:27; Ezek. 13:3; Ezek. 13:18; Ezek. 34:2; Amos 5:18; Amos 6:1; Mic. 2:1; Nah. 3:1; Hab. 2:6; Hab. 2:9; Hab. 2:12; Hab. 2:15; Hab. 2:19; Zeph. 2:5; Zeph. 3:1; Zech. 2:6; Zech. 2:7; Zech. 11:17

CHERETHITES (executioners) A Philistine tribe, which adhered to David, and with the Pelethites formed his bodyguard, 1 Sam. 30:14, 16; 2 Sam. 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kin. 1:38, 44; 1 Chr. 18:17; Ezek. 25:16; Zeph. 2:5. and of King David. It is plain that these royal guards were employed as executioners. They originally came from the island of Crete.

Zephaniah 2:6 So the seacoast will be pastures, With caves for shepherds and folds for flocks.

KJV And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

BGT καὶ σταί Κρ τη νομ ποιμνῶν καὶ μνῶρα προβάτων

LXE And Crete shall be a pasture of flocks, and a fold of sheep.

NET The seacoast will be used as pasture lands by the shepherds and as pens for their flocks.

CSB The seacoast will become pasturelands with caves for shepherds and folds for sheep.

ESV And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks.

NIV The land by the sea, where the Kerethites dwell, will be a place for shepherds and sheep pens.

NLT The Philistine coast will become a wilderness pasture, a place of shepherd camps and enclosures for sheep and goats.

NRS And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks.

NJB and the coastal league will be reduced to pasture land, to grazing grounds for shepherds and folds for sheep;

NAB The coastland of the Cretans shall become fields for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

YLT And the sea-coast hath been habitations, Cottages for shepherds, and folds for a flock.

- **So the seacoast:** Zep 2:14,15 Isa 17:2 Eze 25:5

THE FUTURE OF THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES

So the seacoast will be pastures, With caves for shepherds and folds for flocks- This describes the complete transformation of the Philistine coastal region after God's judgment. The once-powerful cities of Philistia—Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron (Zeph 2:4)—would be so thoroughly devastated that the bustling urban centers would become quiet rural grazing land. The Mediterranean coastal plain, formerly filled with fortified cities and commerce, would be reduced to open pastureland. Where armies once marched and merchants traded, sheep would quietly graze. The imagery emphasizes how thoroughly God would humble the proud Philistine cities, transforming them from centers of power to simple fields.

Zephaniah 2:7 And the coast will be For the remnant of the house of Judah, They will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; For the LORD their God will care for them And restore their fortune.

KJV And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

BGT καὶ σταί τ σχο νισμα τς θαλ σσης το ς καταλοιποις ο κου Ιουδα π α το ς νεμ σονται ν το ς ο κοις

σκαλ νος δε λης καταλ σουσιν π προσ που υ ν Ιουδα τι π σκεπται α το ς κ ριος θε ς α τ ν κα π στρεψε τ ν α χμαλωσ αν α τ ν

LXE And the sea coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Juda; they shall pasture upon them in the houses of Ascalon; they shall rest in the evening because of the children of Juda; for the Lord their God has visited them, and he will turn away their captivity.

NET Those who are left from the kingdom of Judah will take possession of it. By the sea they will graze, in the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down in the evening, for the LORD their God will intervene for them and restore their prosperity.

CSB The coastland will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; they will find pasture there. They will lie down in the evening among the houses of Ashkelon, for the LORD their God will return to them and restore their fortunes.

ESV The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.

NIV It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The LORD their God will care for them; he will restore their fortunes.

NLT The remnant of the tribe of Judah will pasture there. They will rest at night in the abandoned houses in Ashkelon. For the LORD their God will visit his people in kindness and restore their prosperity again.

NRS The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall pasture, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.

NJB and the league will belong to the remnant of the House of Judah; they will pasture their flocks there, at night they will rest in the houses of Ashkelon; for, when Yahweh their God has punished them, he will restore their fortunes.

NAB The coast shall belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; by the sea they shall pasture. In the houses of Ashkelon at evening they shall couch their flocks, For the LORD their God shall visit them, and bring about their restoration.

YLT And the coast hath been for the remnant of the house of Judah, By them they have pleasure, In houses of Ashkelon at even they lie down, For inspect them doth Jehovah their God, And He hath turned back to their captivity.

- **the coast:** Isa 14:29-32 Ob 1:19 Zec 9:6,7 Ac 8:26,40
- **the remnant:** Zep 2:9 Isa 11:11 Jer 31:7 Mic 2:12 4:7 5:3-8 Hag 1:12 2:2 Ro 11:5
- **shall visit:** Ge 50:24 Ex 4:31 Lu 1:68 7:16
- **restore:** Zep 3:20 Ps 85:1 126:1-4 Isa 14:1 Jer 3:18 Jer 23:3 Jer 29:14 Jer 30:3,18,19 Jer 33:7 Eze 39:25 Am 9:14-15 Mic 4:10

Related Passages:

Amos 9:14-15+ "Also I will **restore** (SAME VERB "[shub/sub](#)" USED HERE IN Zeph 2:7 AND IN Zeph 3:20) the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 "I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them," Says the LORD your God. **(CLEARLY A PROMISE OF BLESSING OF ISRAEL IN THE MILLENNIUM).**

Jeremiah 3:18 "In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance (Fulfilling Land promise of Abrahamic Covenant).

Jeremiah 23:3 "Then I Myself will gather the **remnant of** My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and **bring them back** to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.

Jeremiah 29:14 'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will **restore** ([shub/sub](#)) **your fortunes** and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

Jeremiah 33:7+ 'I will **restore** ([shub/sub](#)) the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first.

Joel 3:1+ "For behold, in those days and at that time, When I **restore**([shub/sub](#)) **the fortunes** of Judah and Jerusalem,

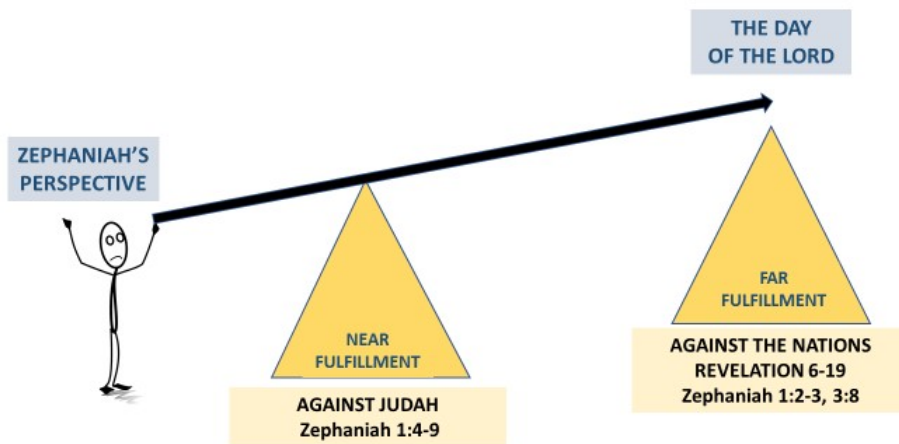
Ezekiel 39:25 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Now I will **restore** ([shub/sub](#)) **the fortunes** of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.

Hosea 6:1 "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.

Micah 2:12 "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will **surely gather the remnant of Israel**. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture They will be noisy with men.

Zechariah 8:6; 12 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the LORD of hosts. (8:12) 'For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew; and I will **cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things**.

NEAR AND FAR FULFILLMENT OF THE DAY OF THE LORD IN ZEPHANIAH



PROPHECY CALLING FOR NEAR AND FAR FULFILLMENT

After announcing destruction upon the Philistine cities (Zeph 2:4–6), the prophet explains that the land will not remain empty forever. Instead, God will give it to the faithful remnant of Judah, demonstrating His justice against the nations and His mercy toward His people.

And the coast will be For the remnant ([sheerith](#); LXX - kataloipos = left, remaining - see Zech 13:8-9+) **of the house of Judah, They will pasture on it** - The Mediterranean coastal region, formerly controlled by the Philistines, will eventually belong to **the remnant of the house of Judah**.

The **remnant** here refers first and foremost to the faithful survivors of Judah who would remain after God's judgment upon the nation and its surrounding enemies. In the near historical sense, this prophecy pointed to those Jews who would return from Babylonian exile and once again inhabit the land that had been devastated by foreign powers. The mention of Ashkelon, a Philistine city, emphasizes that even territories once hostile to Israel would become places of rest and restoration for God's people.

Note that the surviving Jewish group is called by several designations -

- "the remnant of the house of Judah" (Zeph 2:7),
- "My people" (Zeph 2:8),
- "the remnant of My people" (Zeph 2:9),

- “the remainder of my nation” (Zeph 2:9),
- “the people of the LORD of hosts” (Zeph 2:10),

This passage on the **remnant** looks forward to the Jews who will be saved in the Day of the Lord, at the end of the Great Tribulation when they will cry out (Zech 12:10+) and 1/3 (a "remnant") are brought through the fire (Zech 13:8,9+) . How can we be sure this is also a far fulfillment? We know this must be the time frame by observing the added details -- (1) they would **lie down at evening** (implying at peace and/or without fear), (2) God will take **care** of them and (3) God would **restore their fortune**. It is March, 2026 and the Jews certainly cannot lie down in peace at this time of war with their enemies.

In support of this interpretation Jeremiah 30:3+ says, “‘For behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when **I will restore the fortunes** of My people Israel and Judah.’ The LORD says, ‘I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it (NOTE THAT DID NOT HAPPEN WITH THE REMNANT’S RETURN FROM BABYLONIAN EXILE. THE NORTHERN 10 TRIBES WERE STILL “LOST”! THIS HAS TO SPEAK OF A FUTURE FULFILLMENT).’ This points forward to a future, ultimate restoration that will occur when God fulfills all the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant promises to Israel. This final restoration will take place when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, returns to establish His kingdom on earth (Rev 19:11-21+). At that time, Israel will experience complete spiritual renewal and national restoration (Ro 11:25-29+).

Zephaniah 3:20 also speaks of **restore the fortunes** - “At that time I will bring you in, Even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I **restore your fortunes** before your eyes,” Says the LORD.

In sum **restore their fortune** in the prophetic sense is not merely about material prosperity or political sovereignty, but is about God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises to Abraham and David, His mercy in forgiving Israel’s sin, and His ultimate plan to redeem and renew a faithful remnant of His chosen people. The full realization of this promise awaits the second coming of Christ, when Israel will be both physically regathered and spiritually restored under the righteous reign of the Messiah.

They will pasture on it - The imagery of pasturing conveys peace, provision, and safety. The land once controlled by Israel’s enemies would become a place where God’s restored people could shepherd flocks and live securely.

Henry Morris - house of Judah. During the New Testament period, the land of the Philistines was a part of the province of Judaea, occupied by the Jews. In modern times, the Gaza Strip, as it is now called, although under dispute, was until recently officially a part of the modern state of Israel. The whole region is very volatile, with ownership and control wavering between Israel and Palestine.

In the houses of [Ashkelon](#) they will lie down at evening - Ashkelon had been one of the major Philistine cities destined for destruction (Zeph 2:4). Yet the ruined houses of that city would eventually provide resting places for the restored people of Judah. The implication is they will have a restful, not a restless night, because they will be without fear of anti-Semitic actions. **Lie down at evening** suggests security and peace, because lying down without fear implies safety from enemies.

David Levy agrees that this passage has a **near** and **far** fulfillment - The Judeans would “lie down” (Zeph 2: 7) at night in safety, not having to fear ferocious beasts or evil intruders. This promise was fulfilled in 536 B.C. when Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity (**ED: NOT EVERYONE WOULD AGREE WITH THIS ASSESSMENT**); it will be further fulfilled during the Millennium (Zeph 3:14–20).

For - Term of explanation. Zephaniah gives the basis or cause for Judah’s future possession of the Philistine territory and the reason they can **lie down at evening**.

The LORD their God will care ([paqad](#); LXX - [episkopeo](#) - perfect tense = enduring, middle voice = God initiates action & participates in it = watch over) **for them and restore their fortune** (literally captivity) - This description would support the premise that the remnant above has not only a near (historic) fulfillment of a remnant returning to this area after the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, but also describes a future **remnant** of faithful Jews who will inhabit this area. Their fortune will be restored.

THOUGHT - Beloved, God is not finished with Israel as so many evangelicals are teaching today! They simply are not reading the word of God literally. God says what He means and means what He says! That should settle it for all the [replacement theologians](#) (an aberrational teaching which I interpret as a subtle form of anti-Semitism!) This prophetic promise will be fully fulfilled in the MILLENNIUM. What you need to understand is that yes the Day of the Lord is a horrible day for Israel in the future (Great Tribulation), but the dark night is followed by a bright morning for them when their Messiah returns to save them from destruction

(Ro 11:26,27+, Zech 13:8,9+) and give them eternal life and fulfill all the unfulfilled OT promises, including the promises to give Israel the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It will come to pass for the Lord has promised and He is not a man that He should lie! The only way to twist this great promise is to allegorize or spiritualize the literal nation of Israel and say God did not mean the Jewish nation of Israel but He really meant the non-Jewish entity, the Church. (See discussion of The Israel of God) Can you see how you have to twist the Scriptures to force God to say something He did not say! Woe to those men who do this!!! But back to the Day of the Lord which is indeed a day of gloom but is also a day of hope as it includes the time when Messiah reigns on earth for 1000 years. In that "phase" of the Day of the Lord, Israel will be blessed by God and renowned among all the nations!

Walter Kaiser - Zephaniah's prediction is that these well-heeled cities of the coastal plain would be destroyed and left without any inhabitants. The seacoast pastures would become grazing grounds and sheepfolds for "the remnant of the house of Judah" (v. 7). This indeed is a startling prophecy to contemplate in our time, for in recent days the world's attention has been focused once again on the difficult topic of a national home for the Palestinian Arabs. Some, noting that the term "Palestinian" is related to the word "Philistine," have suggested that the Gaza Strip, our modern name for the area of the five cities of Philistia, be given as a national homeland for the Palestinians. But this text, the first in this prophecy of Zephaniah to mention the hopeful word of the "remnant," declares that "the LORD their God will intervene for them and return their captives" (v. 7d) to the very territory formerly claimed by the Philistines but now known as the Gaza Strip. This formula, literally "to restore [the] fortune[s]," has a substantial place in the theology of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. While the day of the Lord will be a time of great judgment, it will also be a time of hope. There will emerge a "remnant" of Israel and Judah that will signal God's ability to deliver all who trust in Him as this remnant did. The prophets often mention this "remnant" (Amos 5:15; Mic. 2:12; 5:7-8; Jer. 23:3). The people of the remnant will be exempt from judgment in the day of the Lord. The Judahite refugees, in particular, will inhabit the Philistine coast in the day of the Lord! (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

Restore (shub/sub) their fortune (literally "restore their captivity") in the Septuagint is rendered "He will turn away their captivity." This verse marks an amazing, mercy filled divine turn around! In Zephaniah 1:8, 9, 12 this same Hebrew word **care** ([paqad](#)) is translated **punish**! Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved wretches like these! (and me!) The restoration of Judah's fortune awaits a future fulfillment, to be consummated in the glorious Millennium (which is also a component of the Day of the Lord as depicted in the diagram below which demonstrates that the end times component of the Day of the Lord begins at the inception of the Great Tribulation and continues through the return of the Lord Jesus Who defeats all His foes and restores the Promised Land to the Chosen People who are part of the saved remnant of Jews who have survived the Great Tribulation and enter into the Kingdom of the Lord - cf Obadiah 1:21).

We see a repetition of the prophetic promise of Yahweh to restore Israel's fortunes in **Zephaniah 3:20+**

"At that time I will bring you in, Even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, **When I restore (shub/sub) your fortunes before your eyes,**" Says the LORD."

Moses had predicted the restoration of the fortunes of Israel in Deuteronomy...

Dt 30:1-6+ So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul (THE ONLY WAY THEY COULD OBEY WITH ALL THEIR HEART IS EXPLAINED IN Dt 30:6! THEY HAVE A NEW HEART!) according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God **will restore (shub/sub)** you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 "The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 **"Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.**

There can be little doubt, however, that the vision will be re-enacted in the end times.

John Phillips - All this had an initial fulfillment in the wars of Nebuchadnezzar and the return of the Jews after their seventy-year exile in Babylon. There can be little doubt, however, that the vision will be re-enacted in the end times. Modern Israel now controls the ancient territory of the Philistines. One area of the coastline, the Gaza Strip, was held by the Arabs until 1967, but it was seized

by the Jews during the Six-Day War. But the Arab states are not reconciled to Israel's control of the Gaza Strip. Old hatreds still slumber and the so-called occupied territories are held by Israel under simmering protest and defiance. (See [Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary - Page 234](#))

P. Harding on Zephaniah 2:7 - While having a **near** application, the passage also looks on to its final fulfilment which is yet **future** (Jer 23:3; Micah 2:12; Zech 8:6, 12). (What the Bible Teaches – Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

Bible Knowledge Commentary on **restore their fortune** - Judah's future occupancy of this territory is guaranteed by the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:18–20). (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

CSB Study Bible - **Restore their fortunes** is an OT technical formula (lit "restore the captivity") for total restoration, whether physical (cp. Jr 33:10–13) or spiritual (Ps 85:1–4; Jer 32:44; cp. Zeph 3:20).

NET NOTE **restore their fortune** - Traditionally, "restore their captivity," i.e., bring back their captives, but it is more likely the expression means "restore their fortunes" in a more general sense (cf. NEB, NASB, NIV, NRSV).

Restore their fortune - FREQUENT IN THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS - 16x - Jer 29:14 Jer 30:3 Jer 30:18 Jer 31:23 Jer 32:44 Jer 33:7 Jer 33:11 Jer 33:26 Jer 48:47 Jer 49:6 Jer 49:39 Ezek 39:25 Hosea 6:11 Joel 3:1 Zep 2:7 Zep 3:20

Life Application Study Bible - All the prophets, even while prophesying doom and destruction, speak of "the remnant"—a small group of God's people who remain faithful to him and whom God will restore to the land. Although God said he would destroy Judah, he also promised to save some, thus keeping his original covenant to preserve Abraham's descendants (Genesis 17:4-8). Because God is holy, he cannot allow sin to continue. But God is also faithful to his promises. He cannot stay angry forever with Israel or with you, if you are his child, because he loves his children and always seeks their good.

H. A. Ironside has stated, "This is all a picture of the time of the end. Judah then will be much in the position she occupied in Zephaniah's day—in the land, surrounded by enemies, a feeble remnant, crying, 'How long, O Lord?' the mass, apostate and swayed by Antichrist—and all this because of their rejection of Messiah when He came in grace. Therefore they must drink the cup of retribution to the dregs; but that cup emptied, the Lord will arise in His might as their Deliverer, and their enemies who have gloried over their helplessness shall become the objects of His avenging wrath, preparatory to the ushering in of the world-kingdom of our God and His Christ".

Care (visit) (06485) **pequddah/pāqadh/paqad** conveys the root idea of something that is attended to or set in order -- fighting men under an officer (2 Chr. 17:14), priests in an order (1 Chr. 23:11; 24:19); arrangement of Tabernacle (Nu 4:16[2x]). Office of one in charge of something (Ps 109:8) or officers (2 Ki. 11:18; Isa. 60:17). Usually pequddah means accounting when God attended to people's actions, usually to call them to account for their sins (Nu 16:29; Jer. 48:44). In Job 10:12 God's attention was for Job's good.

Gilbrant - The verb pāqadh possesses the basic meaning or "to intervene" or "to muster," "to inspect." In the Qal, it can mean "to attend to," "to pay attention to," "to care for," "to punish," "to muster," "to assemble," "to record," "to enroll," "to commit," "to appoint," "to call to account" or "to avenge." In the Niphal stem, the word can be defined as "to be missed," "to be lacking," "to be appointed" or "to be called to account." The Piel and Pual define pāqadh as "to muster" and "to be mustered," respectively. The Hiphil translates the verb as "to appoint," "to entrust" or "to commit." Essentially meaning "intervention," "division," or "duty," pequddāh occurs thirty-two times in the OT. The noun is derived from pāqadh. In Middle Hebrew, the word means "custody." A cognate in Akkadian means "handing over" or "examination." Frequently, pequddāh refers to various positions of authority (Num. 3:32, 36; 2 Ki. 11:18; Isa. 60:17; Ezek. 44:11). For example, Eleazar was appointed as the chief leader over the Levites (Nu 3:32) and was to be in charge of the Tabernacle and everything in it (4:16). Elsewhere, the idea of punishment is indicated by pequddāh (Isa. 10:3; Jer. 8:12; 10:15; Hos. 9:7). On one occasion, God's kindness and providence in the life of Job is cited (Job 10:12). BDB 824, KB 3:958, NIDOTTE 3:657-63, Strong <H6486>, TWOT 2:731-32. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Remnant (rest) (07611) **sheerith** conveys root idea of **sha'ar/sa'ar** as that which is left over or has survived after a previous elimination = the remainder, the residue. **Sheerith** basically refers to the rest or to what is left over of anything. For example sheerith refers to wood left over after making a fire, this "remnant" being used to carve idols (Isa 44:17). Sheerith refers to undesignated territory (Isa 15:9) or to any group of people that remained (Jer 15:9; Am 1:8). **Sheerith** (as discussed below) was used by the prophets to denote the few among Israel or Judah that remained faithful to God (Isa 37:32; Mic. 5:7, 8) or those who survived the calamity of the exile (Zech. 8:11).

Sheerith...however, finds what may be its most intriguing usage as a

Gary Cohen ([TWOT](#)) has an intriguing note on **sheerith** - In the vast majority of cases, however, context shows that the remnant is that which has come or will come from out of the house of Israel. Here it may further refer to a remnant out of Israel which was in existence and living during the lifetime of the biblical speaker or writer, **hence a historic remnant**. This is the case in such passages as Isa 37:4, where Hezekiah seven centuries before Christ asks Isaiah to "lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left," i.e. those Israelites still surviving in Jerusalem after Assyria had earlier slaughtered and led away captive the Northern Kingdom. (**ED**: Cf same thought on **remnant** in 2Ki 21:14+) This **remnant** was still alive when Hezekiah referred to them as such, [sheerith](#), however, finds what may be its most intriguing usage as a prophetic technical term representing the final future remnant of Israel, namely, those Jews who survive to the end of this present age upon whom God showers all of the blessings which have been promised to Israel through the centuries. Thus [sheerith](#) is used in Zech 8:6, 11, 12 speaking of the **remnant** and residue of Israel at a time when Jerusalem shall be called "a city of truth" (Zech 8:3), children will play in her streets (Zech 8:5), it will be marvelous (Zech 8:6), God will call them "my people" and will have brought them from the east and west (Zech 8:7), God will be their God "in truth and in righteousness" (Zech 8:8), her agriculture shall prosper with much rain (Zech 8:12), Israel and Judah will be a blessing, not a curse (Zech 8:13), nations will send representatives to worship the Lord in Jerusalem (8:22), and people of the various nations shall acknowledge that God dwells again with Israel in a special blessed way (Zech 8:23). Any fair-minded person would have great difficulty in taking the above passages and those like it to represent the **remnant of Israel** in any of her past history—contrast, e.g., Rev 11:8 where John refers to first century a.d. Jerusalem as "Sodom and Egypt"! Thus God will in the end, after **great tribulation**, fulfill all of his promises of blessedness to the nation out of Abraham, and he will do it by blessing the **remnant**, the survivors by grace of time, human cruelties, and divine judgments (so Rom 11:25–29+). ([TWOT](#))

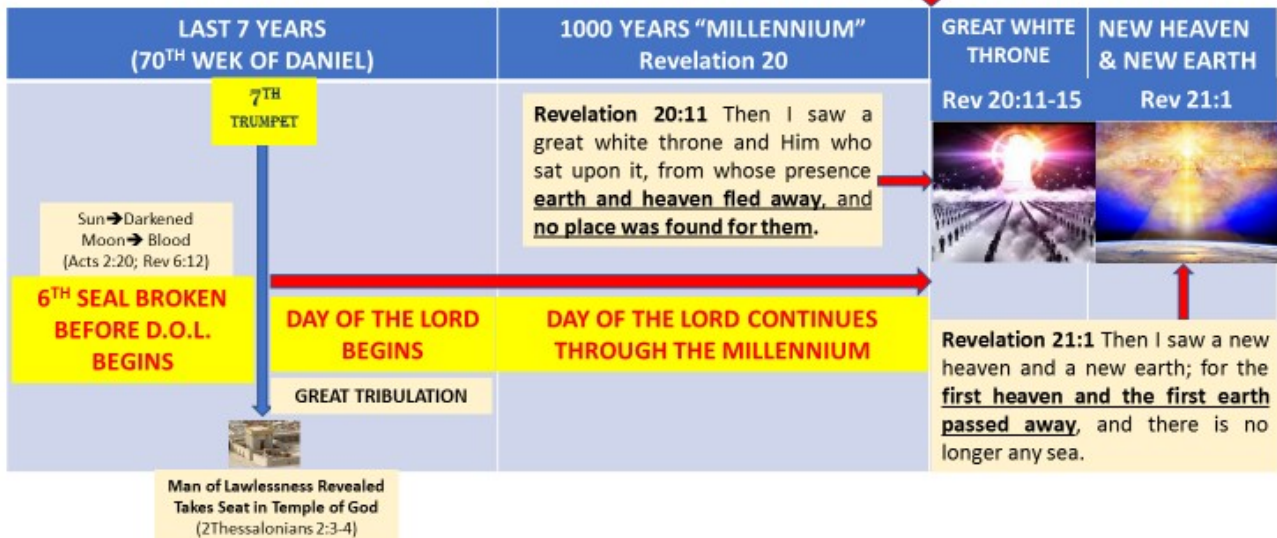
Sheerith refers to the "remnant" or "survivors" of any people, not only the Israelites. The Lord declared that He would destroy the remnant of the Philistines (Jer. 47:4f; Ezek 25:16; Amos 1:8). **Sheerith** refers to a part of a larger group or class of people such as the "rest" of the Babylonian officials (Jer 39:3). The Lord would cause the Israelites to dispossess the remnant of the Edomites (Amos 9:12).

The remnant that is referred to is often what was left after a catastrophe, often God's judgment. The Lord promised to preserve a remnant of his people (Amos 5:15) but to banish some of them from the land (Jer 8:3; 24:8), while eventually returning a faithful remnant back to the land (2Ki 19:31; Isa 37:32) who would live in and again go forth from Jerusalem (Ezra 9:14; Isa. 46:3; Mic. 2:12; 5:7-8).

Sheerith often refers to the remnant left in the land after Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem and taken away the best of the people (Jer. 40:11, 15; 42:2, 15). Jeremiah feared even the destruction of this remnant because of their lack of faith (Jer 44:7, 12). In fact, the Lord caused them to perish in Egypt (Jer 44:12). Yet still a remnant of God's choosing would be spared (Jer 50:20) for Israel, while Babylon would be spared no remnant (Jer 44:26; cf. Zech. 8:11f).

THE DAY OF THE LORD ACCORDING TO 2 PETER 3:1-13 PARALLELED WITH REVELATION 20-21

2Peter 3:10 But the **DAY OF THE LORD** will come like a thief, in which the heavens will **pass away** with a roar and the elements will be **destroyed** with intense heat, and the earth and its works **will be burned up**.



Zephaniah 2:8 "I have heard the taunting of Moab And the revilings of the sons of Ammon, With which they have taunted My people And become arrogant against their territory.

KJV I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.

BGT κουσα νειδισμο ς Μωαβ κα κονδυλισμο ς υ ν Αμμων ν ο ς νε διζον τ ν λα ν μου κα μεγαλ νοντο π τ ρι μου

LXE I have heard the revilings of Moab, and the insults of the children of Ammon, wherewith they have reviled my people, and magnified themselves against my coasts.

NET "I have heard Moab's taunts and the Ammonites' insults. They taunted my people and verbally harassed those living in Judah.

CSB I have heard the taunting of Moab and the insults of the Ammonites, who have taunted My people and threatened their territory.

ESV "I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory.

NIV "I have heard the insults of Moab and the taunts of the Ammonites, who insulted my people and made threats against their land.

NLT "I have heard the taunts of the Moabites and the insults of the Ammonites, mocking my people and invading their borders.

NRS I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory.

NJB I have heard the taunt of Moab and the insults of the Ammonites, as they taunted my people and boasted of their own domains.

NAB I have heard the revilings uttered by Moab, and the insults of the Ammonites, When they reviled my people and made boasts against their territory.

YLT I have heard the reproach of Moab, And the revilings of the sons of Ammon, Wherewith they reproached My people, And magnify themselves against their border.

- heard: Jer 48:27-29 Eze 25:8-11
- the revilings: Ps 83:4-7 Jer 49:1 Eze 25:3-7 36:2 Am 1:13

BEWARE OF TAUNTING THE NATION OF ISRAEL

I have heard the taunting ([charaph](#); Lxx - [oneidismos](#) = unjustifiable verbal abuse inflicted by others) of Moab And the revilings of the sons of Ammon, With which they have taunted ([charaph](#)) My people And become arrogant against their territory - Recall that the Moabites and Ammonites both come from Lot's incestuous union with his two daughters (Ge 19:30-38+). Although they are relatively close relatives of Israel, they were intractable enemies of the Jews who did not just taunt but who also attacked (Nu 22:1-41+; Jdg 3:12-30+, Jdg 10:7-18+; 1Sa 11:1-5+; 2Sa 12:26ff+). As an aside this passage is a warning to anyone who reviles and taunts the little nation of Israel.

THOUGHT - It is inconceivable to me that a Bible believing saint would revile and taunt Israel, and yet I hear some today (2026) who belittle and speak down against Israel. I think such individuals need to be very cautious and recall the promise to Abram in Ge 12:3+ "I will bless those who bless you, And **the one who curses you I will curse**. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." In the context of Zephaniah 2, we see that Moab and Ammon would be cursed.

Charles Feinberg says, "The nations are exceedingly dull in learning how greatly they displease the Lord when they deal in pride against the nation whom He has chosen as His medium for world-wide blessing" ([The Minor Prophets](#))

Walter Kaiser - Moab and Ammon. These nations had historically had a tumultuous relationship with Judah. Though related to Judah, through the descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:30-38), they had repeatedly hurled "reproach" and "revilings" (v. 8) at God's people. But to attack God's people was to attack God Himself; He was the "God of Israel." (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

Walter Kaiser on **become arrogant against their territory** - Not only did the people of Moab and Ammon reproach God's people, but they "made arrogant threats against their borders" (v. 8d). In this they presumed to countermand the expressed plan and purpose of God. So this issue has stood all these years as the rock on which Judah's eastern neighbors would hurt themselves; further, this issue of the nations' borders will eventually force all the nations of the earth to come to terms with the fact that God has been in charge of history all along. This was only the most visible evidence of the general rebellion of all the nations against God Himself!...Like Zephaniah, other prophets warned Moab and Ammon (Is. 15-16; Jer. 48-49; Ezek. 25:1-11; Amos 1:13-15; 2:1-5). (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

John Walton - Moab and Ammon in late seventh century. Like all the small kingdoms in Syro-Palestine, Moab and Ammon were vassals of the Assyrians during the eighth and seventh centuries. Evidence of this is found in the mention of four Moabite kings in the Assyrian Annals (ranging from the time of Tiglath-Pileser III to Ashurbanipal). It can be expected that they gained some measure of independence toward the end of the seventh century as chaos reigned in Assyria (see the comment on Ezek 25:8). However, Josephus records that they were subjugated by the Babylonians shortly after the fall of Jerusalem (see the comment on Ezek 25:2). ([page 795 IVP Bible Background Commentary: OT](#))

Zephaniah 2:9 "Therefore, as I live," declares the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, "Surely Moab will be like Sodom And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah— A place possessed by nettles and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them And the remainder of My nation will inherit them."

KJV Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

BGT δι το το ζ γ λγει κριος τ ν θυν μεων θες Ισραηλ δι τι Μωαβ ς Σοδομα σται κα ο υ ο Αμμων ς Γομορρα κα Δαμασκ ς κλειμνη ς θιμωνι λωνος κα φανισμνη ες τ ν α να κα ο κατ λοιποι λαο μου διαρπ νται α το ς κα ο κατ λοιποι θνους μου κληρονομ σουσιν α το ς

LXE Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall be as Sodoma, and the children

of Ammon as Gomorrah; and Damascus shall be left as a heap of the threshing-floor, and desolate for ever: and the remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the remnant of my nations shall inherit them.

NET Therefore, as surely as I live," says the LORD who commands armies, the God of Israel, "be certain that Moab will become like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah. They will be overrun by weeds, filled with salt pits, and permanently desolate. Those of my people who are left will plunder their belongings; those who are left in Judah will take possession of their land."

CSB Therefore, as I live-- this is the declaration of the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel-- Moab will be like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah-- a place overgrown with weeds, a salt pit, and a perpetual wasteland. The remnant of My people will plunder them; the remainder of My nation will dispossess them.

ESV Therefore, as I live," declares the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Moab shall become like Sodom, and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a land possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever. The remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them."

NIV Therefore, as surely as I live," declares the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, "surely Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah-- a place of weeds and salt pits, a wasteland forever. The remnant of my people will plunder them; the survivors of my nation will inherit their land."

NLT Now, as surely as I live," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, "Moab and Ammon will be destroyed-- destroyed as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah. Their land will become a place of stinging nettles, salt pits, and eternal desolation. The remnant of my people will plunder them and take their land."

NRS Therefore, as I live, says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall become like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a land possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever. The remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them.

NJB For this, as I live -- declares Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel -- Moab will become like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah: a realm of nettles, a heap of salt, a desolation for ever. What is left of my people will plunder them, the survivors of my nation will take their heritage.

NAB Therefore, as I live, says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall become like Sodom, the land of Ammon like Gomorrah: A field of nettles and a salt pit and a waste forever. The remnant of my people shall plunder them, the survivors of my nation dispossess them.

YLT Therefore, I live, An affirmation of Jehovah of Hosts, God of Israel, Surely, Moab is as Sodom, And the sons of Ammon as Gomorrah, An overrunning of nettles and salt-pits, And a desolation -- unto the age. A residue of My people do seize them, And a remnant of My nation inherit them.

- **as I:** Nu 14:21 Isa 49:18 Jer 46:18 Ro 14:11
- **Surely:** Isa 11:14 15:1-16:14 25:10 Jer 48:1-49:7 Eze 25:1-26:21 Am 1:13-15 2:1-3
- **as Gomorrah:** Zep 2:14 Ge 19:24,25 De 29:23 Isa 13:19,20 34:9-13 Jer 49:18 50:40
- **the residue:** Zep 2:7 Zeph 3:12-13 Joe 3:19,20 Mic 5:7,8

Related Passages:

Zephaniah 3:12-13+ "But I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, And they will take refuge in the name of the LORD. 13 "The **remnant of** Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies, Nor will a deceitful tongue Be found in their mouths; For they will feed and lie down With no one to make them tremble."

Amos 1:13-2:3 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of the sons of **Ammon** and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead In order to enlarge their borders. 14 "So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah And it will consume her citadels Amid war cries on the day of battle, And a storm on the day of tempest. 15 "Their king will go into exile, He and his princes together," says the LORD. 1 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of **Moab** and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. 2 "So I will send fire upon Moab And it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; And Moab will die amid tumult, With war cries and the sound of a trumpet. 3 "I will also cut off the judge from her midst And slay all her princes with him," says the LORD.

**MOAB AND AMMON END UP
LIKE SODOM AND GOMORRAH**

Therefore - Term of conclusion, records the "conclusion" of their taunting when their nations are "concluded!"

As I live," declares the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel- This is a divine oath. When God says **As I live**, He is swearing by His own eternal existence. Since God cannot swear by anyone greater, He swears by Himself (cf. Hebrews 6:13). The expression underscores the absolute certainty and seriousness of the judgment. **LORD of hosts** ([Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts of armies](#)) emphasizes God's sovereign authority over heavenly and earthly armies, meaning He has full power to carry out His judgment. **The God of Israel** reminds us that the LORD is the covenant God of **Israel**, Who defends His people and holds nations accountable for how they treat them.

AS I LIVE - 27X IN BIBLE - ALL BUT THREE (Ps 63:4; Ps 104:33; Ps 116:2) REFER TO GOD TAKING THE OATH - Nu 14:21; Nu 14:28; Dt. 32:40; Ps. 63:4; Ps. 104:33; Ps. 116:2; Isa. 49:18; Jer. 22:24; Jer. 46:18; Ezek. 5:11; Ezek. 14:16; Ezek. 14:18; Ezek. 14:20; Ezek. 16:48; Ezek. 17:16; Ezek. 17:19; Ezek. 18:3; Ezek. 20:3; Ezek. 20:31; Ezek. 20:33; Ezek. 33:11; Ezek. 33:27; Ezek. 34:8; Ezek. 35:6; Ezek. 35:11; Zeph. 2:9; Ro 14:11

Surely Moab will be like Sodom And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah- Zephaniah's comparison invokes one of the most famous acts of divine judgment in Scripture in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). Those cities became symbols of total devastation and divine judgment against extreme wickedness. By invoking those cities, the prophet declares that Moab and Ammon will experience a similar catastrophe because of their hostility toward (see [Amos passage above](#)) and mockery of Israel. The passage also illustrates how the consequences of sin can extend across generations. The divine curse of Ge 12:3 falls on Moab and Ammon which are likened to what God did to the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Walker - "The comparison of Moab and Ammon to Sodom and Gomorrah is not surprising in view of their origin: Moab and Ammon were the offspring of the incestuous relations of Lot's daughters with their drunk father after he fled the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah." (See [Jonah, Nahum, Habukkuk, Zephaniah - Page 53](#))

A place possessed by nettles and salt pits The imagery describes barrenness and abandonment. **Nettles** are thorny weeds that grow where cultivation has ceased. **Salt pits** describes land so saturated with salt that it becomes infertile and lifeless. Together these images portray a land rendered unproductive and desolate, where normal human life and agriculture can no longer thrive.

And a perpetual desolation ([shemamah](#)) - This emphasizes lasting ruin. The once-inhabited land would remain a wasteland for generations, demonstrating the enduring consequences of God's judgment.

The prophecy that Moab and Ammon would become like Sodom and Gomorrah was historically fulfilled primarily through the Babylonian invasions in the early 6th century BC, followed by their gradual disappearance as nations. Historical records from Babylon show that Nebuchadnezzar conducted western campaigns around 582 BC, which likely included the Transjordan nations. Archaeology also shows destruction and decline in the regions historically associated with Moab and Ammon during the 6th century BC.

The remnant of My people will plunder them - Though Moab and Ammon had previously oppressed and mocked Israel, God promises that the surviving remnant of His people will ultimately triumph over them. The nations that once threatened Israel would themselves be defeated and stripped of their power.

And the remainder of My nation will inherit them - Notice that again Zephaniah gave a prophetic promise that Israel would occupy the land of their enemies Moab and Ammon, a promise that will be fulfilled when the Millennial kingdom is established.

Zephaniah 2:10 This they will have in return for their pride, because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the LORD of hosts.

KJV This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts.

BGT α τ η α τ ο ς υ τ τ ς β ρ ε ω ς α τ υ δι τι νε δι σ α ν κα μ ε γ α λ ν θ η σ α ν π τ υ κ ρ ι ο ν τ υ π α ν τ ο κ ρ τ ο ρ α

LXE This is their punishment in return for their haughtiness, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the Lord Almighty.

NET This is how they will be repaid for their arrogance, for they taunted and verbally harassed the people of the LORD who commands armies.

CSB This is what they get for their pride, because they have taunted and acted arrogantly against the people

of the LORD of Hosts.

ESV This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts.

NIV This is what they will get in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking the people of the LORD Almighty.

NLT They will receive the wages of their pride, for they have scoffed at the people of the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

NRS This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they scoffed and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts.

NJB This will be the price of their pride for having taunted and boasted over the people of Yahweh Sabaoth.

NAB Such shall be the requital of their pride, because they reviled and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts.

YLT This is to them for their arrogancy, Because they have reproached, And they magnify themselves against the people of Jehovah of Hosts.

- **for:** Zep 2:8 Isa 16:6 Jer 48:29 Da 4:37 5:20-23 Ob 1:3 1Pe 5:5
- **become arrogant** : Ex 9:17 10:3 Isa 10:12-15 37:22-29 Eze 38:14-18

Related Passages:

Proverbs 16:5 Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

MOAB AND AMMON'S REPAYMENT FOR ARROGANCE

This they will have in return for their pride ([gaon](#); LXX - [hubris](#) - quality of being insolent, arrogance) - **NET** - "This is how they will be repaid for their arrogance." This speaks of Moab and Ammon reaping the prideful, hateful seeds they sowed against Israel.

Walter Kaiser - From a theological perspective, Moab and Ammon's problem was not their sense of racial superiority, but their "pride" (v. 10a). Both Isaiah (16:6) and Jeremiah (48:26) cite "pride" as the one sin that led Moab and Ammon to insult and mock the people of God. (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

G. K. Chesterton once said, "If I had only one sermon to preach, it would be a sermon against Pride. The more I see of existence, and especially of modern practical and experimental existence, the more I am convinced of the reality of the old religious thesis; that all evil began with some attempt at superiority; some moment when, as we might say, the very skies were cracked across like a mirror, because there was a sneer in Heaven. (Common Man, 246)

Because they have taunted ([charaph](#); LXX - [oneidizo](#) - to reproach, revile, heap insults upon) **and become arrogant** ([gadal](#)) **against the people of the LORD of hosts** ([Jehovah Sabaoth](#), [LORD of host](#); LXX - [pantokrator](#)) - **NET** - "people of the LORD who commands armies." **Because** is a term of explanation and here is explaining why Moab and Ammon would receive a just retribution from Yahweh. Note that this is the third use of the verb taunt (twice in v8).

Pride ([01347](#))([gaon](#)) The Hebrew noun גָּאוֹן (gā'ōn), derived from the root גָּאָה (gā'āh) meaning "to rise," "be exalted," or "be lifted up," is a masculine singular term that carries a wide semantic range depending on its context. It can denote swelling, elevation, majesty, splendor, excellence, or pride, and its meaning shifts between positive descriptions of greatness and negative descriptions of arrogance. In its most basic sense, the word conveys the idea of something rising or being elevated, whether physically, politically, morally, or spiritually. In the Old Testament it is sometimes used in a literal or physical sense to describe natural growth or swelling, such as the thick vegetation along the Jordan River during its seasonal flooding (Jer. 12:5; Zech. 11:3). In these contexts the term simply refers to height, abundance, or flourishing growth. Similarly, Isaiah speaks of the future restoration of Israel when "the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious" and the land will display renewed bounty for the restored remnant (Isa. 4:2), illustrating how the concept of exaltation can describe the flourishing condition of the land and people under God's blessing.

The term also frequently describes the splendor, prominence, or ascendancy of nations, referring to their

political power, prestige, or glory. Nations such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon possessed such “pride” or magnificence for a time, yet Scripture emphasizes that this greatness is never intrinsic or permanent. Rather, national glory exists only insofar as it is permitted by God and remains subject to His sovereign judgment. Thus the pride of Egypt would be shattered (Ezek. 32:12), and Babylon—the “glory of kingdoms”—would ultimately fall (Isa. 13:19). Israel itself could be described as possessing “the excellency of Jacob,” yet this status depended entirely upon a faithful relationship with Yahweh. When Israel turned away from God, that same “excellence” became an object of divine abhorrence (Amos 6:8), and the nation’s pride testified against it (Hos. 5:5). These passages reveal an important theological principle: true glory is not inherent in any nation or people but is derived from their relationship to God. When that relationship is abandoned, pride becomes the very reason for judgment.

In its highest and most positive sense, *gā’ôn* describes the majesty and transcendence of God Himself. In the Song of Moses, Yahweh’s enemies are overthrown by “the greatness of His majesty” (Exod. 15:7), highlighting the overwhelming superiority of God over all earthly powers. Isaiah likewise portrays humanity hiding in terror from “the splendor of His majesty” (Isa. 2:10, 19, 21), where the term is paired with words for fear or dread, emphasizing the awe-inspiring holiness and sovereignty of the Lord. Creation itself testifies to this divine grandeur, as seen in Job’s recognition of God’s majestic voice in the thunder and the ordered power of nature. Even in the midst of worldwide judgment, Isaiah foresees a time when people will lift up their voices in praise because of the Lord’s majesty (Isa. 24:14). Ultimately, God’s purpose includes restoring His people and clothing Himself with righteousness to bring salvation (Isa. 59:16–17), making His redeemed people an “everlasting excellence” or glory (Isa. 60:15).

Despite these positive uses, the word most often carries a negative moral sense of human pride, arrogance, and self-exaltation. In Ezekiel 16:49 the pride of Sodom is explicitly identified as sin, characterized by arrogant prosperity and indifference to the needy. Israel likewise displayed stubborn arrogance that testified against itself (Hos. 7:10). Throughout Scripture pride is portrayed as a destructive force that leads both individuals and nations toward downfall. History repeatedly illustrates how civilizations collapse under the weight of their own arrogance. On the personal level, Scripture consistently contrasts the proud with the humble, teaching that the righteous are better off identifying with the lowly than aligning themselves with those who exalt themselves. Pride ultimately represents not merely neglect of God but active defiance against Him, often expressed in oppression of the righteous. Proverbs summarizes this principle succinctly: “Pride goes before destruction” (Prov. 16:18).

Yet the biblical picture goes beyond a simple cause-and-effect principle. Pride leads to ruin not only because it contains the seeds of its own collapse but also because God Himself actively opposes it. Divine judgment against arrogance is a recurring theme throughout Scripture. Zephaniah announces this clearly when God declares concerning the nations that mocked His people, “This they will have in return for their pride” (Zeph. 2:10). Thus the term *gā’ôn* encapsulates a profound theological tension: it can describe the true majesty of God, the derived glory of His people, the temporary splendor of nations, or the sinful arrogance of human beings. Ultimately the word underscores the biblical truth that all genuine majesty belongs to God alone, and whenever human beings or nations exalt themselves apart from Him, their pride inevitably invites His judgment.

GAON - 44V - Exod. 15:7; Lev. 26:19; Job 35:12; Job 37:4; Job 38:11; Job 40:10; Ps. 47:4; Ps. 59:12; Prov. 16:18; Isa. 2:10; Isa. 2:19; Isa. 2:21; Isa. 4:2; Isa. 13:11; Isa. 13:19; Isa. 14:11; Isa. 16:6; Isa. 23:9; Isa. 24:14; Isa. 60:15; Jer. 12:5; Jer. 13:9; Jer. 48:29; Jer. 49:19; Jer. 50:44; Ezek. 7:20; Ezek. 7:24; Ezek. 16:49; Ezek. 16:56; Ezek. 24:21; Ezek. 30:6; Ezek. 30:18; Ezek. 32:12; Ezek. 33:28; Hos. 5:5; Hos. 7:10; Amos 6:8; Amos 8:7; Mic. 5:4; Nah. 2:2; Zeph. 2:10; Zech. 9:6; Zech. 10:11; Zech. 11:3

Taunted (reproach, revile, scorn) ([02778](#)) **charaph** basically describes reproach with connotation of casting blame or scorn on. To treat with contempt, insult, reproach, taunt, ridicule, defy. To agitate someone about something, especially to cast blame or scorn on them. It refers to sarcastic challenge in a mocking or insulting manner. It suggests a jeeringly provoking insult or challenge. As explained below this word actually has 3 senses. Vine says the idea “to say sharp things, reproach.” The root with the meaning “to be sharp” is found in Northwest and South Semitic languages. In Hebrew the verb refers to a manner of speech, i.e., to reproach someone. The word appears about 50 times in the Old Testament, once in Psa. 42:10: “As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?” Charaph is more than mere rude talk, this strong verb denotes demeaning something or someone by complete devaluation, defiance, or despising

Become arrogant ([01431](#)) **gadal** The Hebrew verb גדל (*gādal*) fundamentally means “to grow,” “become great,” “make great,” or “magnify,” and it describes the idea of increase in size, importance, influence, or honor. The root occurs frequently in the Old

Testament and applies to a wide range of contexts, including physical growth, social prominence, emotional intensity, and spiritual exaltation. Unlike related Hebrew roots such as *rābab* or *rābā*, which often refer to numerical increase, *gādal* emphasizes greatness in magnitude, status, value, or significance rather than quantity. Thus the term can describe the natural development of people, animals, and plants, as well as the expansion of influence, authority, wealth, or reputation. In its most literal sense the verb refers to growing up or maturing, as seen in references to children such as Isaac, Moses, Samuel, and others who “grew” as they developed physically and socially (Gen. 21:8; Ex. 2:10; 1 Sam. 3:19). It also describes the growth of animals and plants (2 Sam. 12:3; Isa. 44:14) and even physical extensions such as hair growing long (Num. 6:5). In these cases the word depicts the natural process of development from small beginnings into maturity.

Beyond physical growth, **gādal** often refers to becoming great in status, wealth, or influence. Individuals such as Abraham and Isaac are described as becoming “great” because of God’s blessing and prosperity (Gen. 24:35; 26:13). Kings and rulers are likewise described as “great” when their authority, prestige, or power increases; for example, Solomon’s greatness surpassed that of other kings in wealth and wisdom (1 Kgs. 10:23). The word may also refer to the importance or value of something, as when David speaks of Saul’s life being “highly valued” in his eyes (1 Sam. 26:24). In other contexts the term describes intensity or magnitude, such as great grief, loud outcry, or severe punishment (Job 2:13; Gen. 19:13; Lam. 4:6). Thus the root can apply to both tangible and intangible realities—anything that becomes large, significant, influential, or powerful.

A particularly important dimension of **gādal** is its theological use to describe the greatness of God Himself. Scripture repeatedly affirms that Yahweh is incomparable in greatness and majesty (2 Sam. 7:22; Ps. 104:1). His works are great, His counsel is magnificent, and His acts of salvation demonstrate His sovereign power (Ps. 92:5; Isa. 28:29). The psalmists frequently use the verb in a call to worship, urging believers to “magnify the LORD” and to exalt His name (Ps. 35:27; 40:16; 70:4). In such contexts the word does not mean that humans literally make God greater, but that they recognize, proclaim, and celebrate His greatness. Similarly, God Himself declares that through His acts in history He will “magnify” Himself among the nations, revealing His holiness and sovereignty (Ezek. 38:23). This self-revelation shows that true greatness belongs ultimately to God alone, and all other forms of greatness derive from Him.

The verb also describes the future greatness of the Messiah, who will shepherd His people in the strength of the Lord and whose rule will extend to the ends of the earth (Mic. 5:4). In this sense the word points beyond human kingship to the ultimate ruler whose greatness is universal and enduring. Likewise, God promises to make Abraham’s name great (Gen. 12:2), illustrating how divine blessing can elevate individuals or nations to prominence. Personal names built from this root—such as Gedaliah (“Yahweh is great”)—reflect Israel’s recognition that true greatness comes from the Lord.

Grammatically, the verb appears in several stems that nuance its meaning. In the Qal stem it typically means “to become great,” “grow,” or “be exalted.” In the Piel stem it often means “to make great,” “raise,” “rear,” or “honor,” such as raising children or promoting someone to prominence (Isa. 1:2; Esth. 3:1). In the Hiphil stem the verb can mean “to cause to be great,” “exalt,” “lift up,” or “promote.” In the reflexive (Hithpael) form, however, it may describe self-exaltation or boasting, which introduces a negative moral dimension. Scripture uses this reflexive sense to condemn human arrogance, such as when individuals or nations magnify themselves against God (Isa. 10:15; Dan. 11:36–37). In such cases the verb exposes the sinful tendency of human beings to elevate themselves above their rightful place.

Because of this range of meaning, gādal can also describe arrogant boasting or defiance. Nations like Moab and Edom are condemned for “magnifying themselves” against the Lord or His people (Jer. 48:26, 42; Ezek. 35:13; Zeph. 2:8–10). Isaiah vividly portrays this arrogance by comparing it to a tool boasting against the one who wields it (Isa. 10:15). Such passages highlight the folly of human pride: those who claim greatness apart from God ultimately reveal their rebellion against Him. Scripture consistently contrasts this false, self-exalting greatness with the true greatness that belongs to God alone.

In summary, the root gādal encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings centered on the concept of greatness or enlargement—whether physical growth, social elevation, emotional intensity, or spiritual exaltation. It can describe the natural growth of people and living things, the increasing influence of individuals or nations, the magnitude of events or emotions, and the supreme majesty of God. Yet the word also warns against the danger of human pride, when people attempt to magnify themselves rather than acknowledging the greatness of the Lord. Ultimately the biblical use of *gādal* teaches that all genuine greatness originates with God, who alone has the power to raise up, bless, exalt, and reveal His glory throughout the earth.

Zephaniah 2:11 The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place.

KJV The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

BGT πιφαν σεται κ ριος π α το ς κα ξολεθρε σει π ντας το ς θεο ς τ ν θ ν ν τ ς γ ς κα προσκυν σουσιν α τ καστος κ το τ που α το π σαι α ν σοι τ ν θ ν ν

LXE The Lord shall appear against them, and shall utterly destroy all the gods of the nations of the earth; and they shall worship him every one from his place, even all the islands of the nations.

NET The LORD will terrify them, for he will weaken all the gods of the earth. All the distant nations will worship the LORD in their own lands.

CSB The LORD will be terrifying to them when He starves all the gods of the earth. Then all the distant coastlands of the nations will bow in worship to Him, each in its own place.

ESV The LORD will be awesome against them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.

NIV The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land.

NLT The LORD will terrify them as he destroys all the gods in the land. Then nations around the world will worship the LORD, each in their own land.

NRS The LORD will be terrible against them; he will shrivel all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the coasts and islands of the nations.

NJB Yahweh will be fearsome to them, for he will scatter all the gods of the earth, and they will bow down to him, each from his own place -- all the islands of the nations.

NAB The LORD shall inspire them with fear when he makes all the gods of earth to waste away; Then, each from its own place, all the coastlands of the nations shall adore him.

YLT Fearful is Jehovah against them, For He made bare all gods of the land, And bow themselves to Him, each from his place, Do all islanders of the nations.

- **for:** De 32:38 Ho 2:17 Zec 13:2
- **starve:** Heb. make lean
- **the nations will bow down:** Ps 2:8-12 22:27-30 72:8-11,17 86:9 97:6-8 117:1,2 138:4 Isa 2:2-4 11:9,10 Mic 4:1-3 Zec 2:11 8:20,23 14:9-21 Mal 1:11 Joh 4:21-23 1Ti 2:8 Rev 11:15
- **all the coastlands:** Ge 10:5 Isa 24:14-16 Isa 42:4,10 49:1

Related Passages:

Zephaniah 3:8-9+ Therefore wait for Me,” declares the LORD, “For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations (cf gathered...together...Har-Magedon - Rev 16:16+), To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal (cf **Revelation 6-19**). 9 “For then (cf **"ALL NATIONS...WILL BOW DOWN"**) I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

Malachi 1:11+ (THIS PROPHECY IS YET TO BE FULFILLED) “For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, **My name will be great among the nations**, and in **every place** incense is going to be offered to **My name**, and a grain offering that is pure; for **My name will be great among the nations**,” says the LORD of hosts.

Zechariah 14:16+ Then it will come about that any who are left of **ALL THE NATIONS** that went against Jerusalem **will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts** and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

Philippians 2:9-11+ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name, 10 so that at the Name of Jesus **EVERY KNEE WILL BOW**, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory

of God the Father.

GLOBAL DESTRUCTION OF IDOLATRY PRECEDING THE MILLENNIUM

After pronouncing judgment on the surrounding nations (Philistia, Moab, and Ammon), the prophet reveals a larger purpose behind these judgments: God will demonstrate His supremacy over every false god and ultimately bring the nations to acknowledge Him alone.

The LORD will be terrifying to them - Terrifying means that God will reveal Himself in such a powerful display of judgment and authority that the nations will stand in awe and fear. The same God whom the nations ignored or mocked will suddenly be recognized as the sovereign ruler over all the earth. However recognition does not mean they will receive Him as sovereign Ruler as for example in Revelation 16:21+ "And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe." They will clearly see His power, but they will not bow.

for He will starve all the gods of the earth - How do you "starve" a god? You cease to give it sacrifices (often of food and drink as we see today in idol worship in Hinduism). Ancient pagan religions believed their gods were sustained by sacrifices and offerings from worshipers. Zephaniah declares that God will **starve** these **gods**, for when He destroys the nations that worship these gods, the gods will in effect be destroyed. In the end God will completely expose them as powerless idols, including no power to keep their nations from being destroyed! Scripture repeatedly mocks the impotence of idols as in Isaiah 44:9 "Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile." Thus the Lord will strip false gods of their worship and reveal that He alone is the true God. Ultimately God will destroy these little g gods when He destroys all pagan nations, which He will accomplish when he returns as the Stone in Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 2:34-35+

(DANIEL EXPLAINING THE DREAM TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR) You continued looking until a **STONE** was cut out without hands (SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN ~ AKA "VIRGIN BIRTH"), and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold **were crushed all at the same time** (Rev 19:11-21+) and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found (**ED: INCLUDING THEIR ABOMINABLE IDOLS!**). But the **STONE** that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (YESHUA SETS UP HIS MESSIANIC KINGDOM ON EARTH).

Note that the phrase **all the gods of the earth** takes this promise to the future when idolatry will be demolished by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah 14:9+ says it this way "And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day **the LORD will be the only one** (NO IDOLS IN THE MILLENNIUM!), and His name the only one."

And all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him- The **coastlands** often refers to distant lands and Gentile nations beyond Israel. The prophecy therefore looks beyond local judgment to a future time when people from every nation will acknowledge the LORD. The language anticipates the global worship of God that the prophets frequently predicted. Ps 22:27 says "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD."

Walter Kaiser - the time was coming when the Lord would "reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth" (v. 11b). Every alleged deity would be exposed for what it really was—impotent and, indeed, nonexistent! That would finally clear the way for all people to worship the Lord, "each one from his place, indeed all the shores of the nations" (v. 11d–e). This startling text (for so it must have seemed to all who were accustomed to thinking that only in Jerusalem did true worship of God take place) is very similar to Malachi 1:11. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem would not always be necessary, for everyone could legitimately worship God in their own country. Undoubtedly, Zephaniah is referring to those days when the Messiah rules and reigns in the Millennium, but everything we have experienced along these lines in part in the New Testament era is a foretaste of what will come. (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

One has to ask first, has this ever occurred in history? Clearly the answer is no! So when will **ALL...NATIONS** bow to Jehovah? The only reasonable conclusion is when all the pagan nations and their idols have been destroyed which will occur when Christ returns. What else will Christ do when He returns? He will set up His Messianic Kingdom and all the **nations** of the earth will bow down to Him.

***This Scripture is not fulfilled in our age
when some worship the Lord from every nation.***

Charles Feinberg on **all the gods of the earth...all the coastlands of the nations**- The Lord is said to famish **ALL** the gods of

the earth; that is, He will make lean, diminish, or destroy them. The Lord is the destroyer of their gods when He brings judgment on the nations who worshiped them. Idols have no real existence apart from the people who serve them (1 Co 8:4-6). Along with the complete destruction of the idolatrous nations will go idol worship from **ALL** the earth. Then will men worship the one true God, each from his place, that is, each in the place where he lives, thus making the worship of the Lord universal. This Scripture is not fulfilled in our age when some worship the Lord from every nation. (See Jn 4:21-24 and 1 Co 1:2.) The prophet is speaking of that time when the world of nations will be converted to the worship of the true and living God. A similar thought is strongly expressed in Malachi 1:11+. The picture refers to the latter days of Israel's history and brings us directly into Messianic times and millennial conditions. Indeed, it is the other side of the picture given in some prophetic passages, such as Isaiah 2:2+; Micah 4:1-2+; and Zechariah 8:22-23; Zechariah 14:16+. These portions should be studied in their contexts to give the true chronological framework. After the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, these conditions will exist. All nations in that day will be united, not to do their own wills nor to worship the works of their own wicked hands, but to worship and serve the only God. It is the hour for which the waiting believer devoutly hopes and the one toward which he labors in his day. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

John Hannah - The Lord will judge them with His power and will destroy all their idols. Then the prophet made another statement that awaits future fulfillment. In the Millennium people in all nations... will worship the true God (cf. Mal. 1:11), everyone in his own land. The removal of all idolatry will pave the way for worldwide worship when Christ rules as King on the earth. (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Minor Prophets - Page 153](#))

David Levy - God will make lean and ultimately destroy idolatry worldwide, leaving only Himself to be worshiped. Worship of God alone will become a reality during the Millennium (Mic. 4:1-2; Zech. 14:16; Mal 1:11).

John MacArthur - The final fulfillment of these predictions is yet future, depicting the Millennium when all the gods of the nations will be reduced to nothing and the Lord Himself will be worshiped universally (Isa 66:18-21; Zec 14:16; Mal 1:11). (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Charles Feinberg - That the final fulfillment of these predictions is yet future to our day can be seen from the connection of verses 8 to 10 with verse 11. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

ESV Study Bible - He will **famish** them, causing them to waste away (cf. Isa. 10:16; 17:4). Unlike Israel's God, many of the gods of her neighbors needed nourishment, which was provided through offerings. In one Mesopotamian story about a flood—the myth of Gilgamesh—the gods are famished because there are no people to feed them. Instead of worshiping these powerless pagan deities, foreigners will **bow down** to the God of Israel, either coming to worship in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3) or else joining in the worship of the true God spreading around the world (Zeph. 3:9; cf. Phil. 2:10-11; Rev. 5:9-10). (**ED: NOTE ESV NOTES MAKE NO DEFINITE STATEMENT THIS IS FUTURE WHICH IS NOT SURPRISING AS THIS RESOURCE DOES NOT ALWAYS INTERPRET SCRIPTURE LITERALLY. IT IS AN EXCELLENT RESOURCE BUT IS NOT GOOD ON ESCHATOLOGICAL TEXTS, IN MY OPINION**).

Hindson has an interesting comment - The prophet looks beyond the destruction of Moab and Ammon to the ultimate destruction of all heathen peoples, together with the gods that they worship. The destruction of Moab and Ammon adumbrates the ultimate destruction of every vestige of idolatry and every godless person. With the destruction of the heathen goes the destruction of the gods that they worship which, in reality, are only products of their own minds. This will result in a universal worship of the only God, Jehovah; and every man will worship him in His own geographical location throughout all the world, even in the remotest part of the world. (Available Online [King James Bible Commentary](#) - BETTER ON PROPHECY THAN ESV STUDY BIBLE)

NLT Study Bible - At the end of history, all people in all places will worship God alone (Zeph 3:9; Ps 66:4; Zech 14:16; Mic 4:1-2). (See [NLT Study Bible - Page 1515](#))

Moody Bible Commentary - After this judgment, the prophet foretold conditions in the Millennial Kingdom when the Lord will end all false worship and all nations will bow down to Him (Zeph 2:11).

Charles Stanley - The Lord wants the whole world to know Him and serve Him and worship Him and love Him. The gospel is for every kingdom, tribe, nation, and tongue on earth, and God commissions us to be His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). (See [Life Principles Bible](#))

Charles Feinberg - UNIVERSAL WORSHIP OF THE LORD

We cannot stress too strongly that God's ultimate object and purpose are not to punish and destroy but to overrule evil for good and to bring peace out of hopeless chaos. In His wrath He will be terrible to the sinning nations, thus dealing summarily with the gods they worshiped.

The Lord is said to famish all the gods of the earth; that is, He will make lean, diminish, or destroy them. The Lord is the destroyer of

their gods when He brings judgment on the nations who worshiped them. Idols have no real existence apart from the people who serve them (1 Co 8:4-6). Along with the complete destruction of the idolatrous nations will go idol worship from all the earth. Then will men worship the one true God, each from his place, that is, each in the place where he lives, thus making the worship of the Lord universal.

This Scripture is not fulfilled in our age when some worship the Lord from every nation. (See Jn 4:21-24 and 1 Co 1:2.) The prophet is speaking of that time when the world of nations will be converted to the worship of the true and living God. A similar thought is strongly expressed in Malachi 1:11. The picture refers to the latter days of Israel's history and brings us directly into Messianic times and millennial conditions.

Indeed, it is the other side of the picture given in some prophetic passages, such as Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1-2; and Zechariah 8:22-23; 14:16. These portions should be studied in their contexts to give the true chronological framework. After the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, these conditions will exist. All nations in that day will be united, not to do their own wills nor to worship the works of their own wicked hands, but to worship and serve the only God. It is the hour for which the waiting believer devoutly hopes and the one toward which he labors in his day. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

QUESTION - [When did Moab and Ammon eventually worship the Lord?](#) GOTQUESTIONS.ORG

ANSWER - Zephaniah 2:11 proclaims that the people of [Moab](#) and [Ammon](#) would eventually worship the Lord. Immediately after predicting the destruction of Moab and Ammon, the prophet says, "The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land." Has this already taken place? If so, when did it happen? If not, when will it take place?

The larger context of this section of Zephaniah details God's judgment on the non-Jewish nations. The judgment spread in all four directions around Judah—the Philistines (to the west, 2:4-7), Moab and Ammon (to the east, 2:8-11), Ethiopia (to the south, 2:12), and Assyria (to the north, 2:13-15). Along with the judgments is a promise that people from all the nations would one day worship the Lord (cf. Malachi 1:11). We have not yet seen these nations worship the Lord. That aspect of Zephaniah's prophecy has not yet been fulfilled and must therefore take place in the future.

The prophet predicts that Moab and Ammon will be destroyed "like Sodom and Gomorrah" (Zephaniah 2:9). Such total annihilation calls to mind the devastation that will take place in the tribulation period, referenced in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Judgment will come upon the earth, concluding with a battle at [Armageddon](#) (Revelation 19:11-21+). At that point, the Messiah (Jesus) will return and reign from His throne in Jerusalem for a 1,000-year time period known as the [millennium](#) (Revelation 20:1-6).

The prophet Zechariah says that, during this millennial kingdom, the nations of the world will worship the Lord Jesus:

"Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16+).

This would include remnants of the ancient nations of Moab and Ammon.

The many references in Zephaniah to the "[Day of the Lord](#)" indicate a time yet to come when peace and justice will rule because Jesus Himself has taken up His rightful throne.

Good things in the future (Homilist.)

I. THE DESTRUCTION OF IDOLATRY. You may burn up all heathen temples and leave idolatry as rampant as ever.

II. THE ADVANCEMENT OF TRUE WORSHIP. "And men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." Observe--

1. The object of true worship. "Men shall worship Him,"--that is, Jehovah. Him, not it--not the universe, but the Infinite Personality that created it.

2. The scene of true worship. "Every one from his place." Wherever he is. He need not go to any particular scene--to temple, chapel, or cathedral.

3. The extent of true worship. "Even all the isles of the heathen." What a glorious future awaits this world!

Zephaniah 2:12 "You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword."

KJV Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword.

BGT καὶ μετὰ τὰς θοπέρας τραυματῶν ὁμοφάσμοστέ

LXE Ye Ethiopians also are the slain of my sword.

NET "You Ethiopians will also die by my sword!"

CSB You Cushites will also be slain by My sword.

ESV You also, O Cushites, shall be slain by my sword.

NIV "You too, O Cushites, will be slain by my sword."

NLT "You Ethiopians will also be slaughtered by my sword," says the LORD.

NRS You also, O Ethiopians, shall be killed by my sword.

NJB You Ethiopians too will be run through by my sword.

NAB You too, O Cushites, shall be slain by the sword of the LORD.

YLT Also ye, O Cushim, pierced of My sword are they.

- **Ethiopians:** Isa 18:1-7 20:4,5 43:3 Jer 46:9,10 Eze 30:4-9
- **My sword:** Ps 17:13 Isa 10:5 13:5 Jer 47:6,7 51:20-23

Jehovah's Judgment to the South

THE SWORD OF THE LORD AGAINST ETHIOPIA

You also connects this verse with the previous judgments against Philistia, Moab, and Ammon (Zeph 2:4–11). Zephaniah is moving geographically around Judah, announcing judgment in every direction, in this case to the south. By saying **you also** the prophet emphasizes that Ethiopia (Cush) will not escape the divine judgment described for the other Gentile nations. See [Excursus on the Sword of the LORD](#).

O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword ([hereb](#); LXX - [rhomphaia](#) - strictly, a long Thracian javelin; later a large and broad sword) - **Ethiopians** refers to the people of Cush, a region south of Egypt corresponding roughly to parts of modern Sudan and Ethiopia. In the ancient world Cush represented the far southern edge of the known world. By mentioning Cush, Zephaniah demonstrates that God's rule extends far beyond Israel and its immediate neighbors. Even nations that seemed distant or uninvolved in Judah's affairs were still accountable to God. **My sword** indicates that the coming judgment is directly from God, even though it would often be carried out through human armies. In the prophetic literature, God frequently describes invading nations as instruments of His judgment (e.g. Jer 27:6).

Throughout the chapter, Zephaniah moves in a circle around Judah—west (Philistia), east (Moab and Ammon), south (Cush), and then north (Assyria in the following verses)—showing that God's judgment reaches the entire world. No nation, culture, or individual exists outside God's authority. The passage reminds us that the LORD governs all peoples and all history, and therefore the wisest response for every person and every nation is to humbly seek Him while there is still time (Zeph 2:3).

Walter Kaiser - The instrument of God's judgment will be His "sword" (cf. Is. 34:5; Ezek. 30:25). God often used other nations as the implements in His judgment, while maintaining that the "sword" was His. Judgments against Ethiopia were also given in Isaiah (18) and Ezekiel (30). (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

David Levy - Zephaniah then turned from the east to the south and prophesied judgment on the Ethiopians. "Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword" (Zeph 2: 12; cp. Isa. 20:4; Ezek. 30:4–9), said the Lord. Ethiopia is southwest of Egypt and was inhabited by the Cushites. They were descendants of Ham (Gen. 10:6) and controlled the area known as Eastern Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea. The Ethiopians ruled Egypt from 720–654 B.C., and at times they threatened Judah (2 Ki 19:9; 2 Chr. 14:9–13; Isa. 37:9). Ethiopia's destruction is simply stated: "**ye shall be slain by my sword**" (Zeph 2: 12). The sword referred to is the Babylonians (**ED**: SOME SOURCES FAVOR ASSYRIA), whom God used, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, to destroy Ethiopia in 586 B.C. (Ezek. 30:4–5, 9)....Still, the Lord is concerned about the salvation of Ethiopia and will include her in the Millennium (Zeph 3:10+) "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, Will bring My offerings."

NET NOTE on **Ethiopians** - Heb "Cushites." This is traditionally assumed to refer to people from the region south of Egypt, i.e., Nubia or northern Sudan, referred to as "Ethiopia" by classical authors (not the more recent Abyssinia).

Charles Feinberg - Ethiopia (Cush) is south of the First Cataract of the Nile and ruled Egypt from about 720 to 654 BC (Cp. Is 11:11 and 18:1.) A fulfillment of this prophecy has been seen in Nebuchadnezzar's invasion and conquest of Egypt. The fortunes of **Ethiopia** were bound up with those of Egypt, which was subject to Ethiopic dynasties. (Note Jer 46:9 and Eze 30:5, 9.) There is reason to believe that Egypt itself is meant under the term Ethiopians. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

John Walton - Cushites in late seventh century. It is unclear what prompted this oracle against Ethiopia. The Cushites had not ruled Egypt since the supplanting of their dynasty in 664 by the Saite dynast Psammetichus I. While this native Egyptian pharaoh did ally himself with the Assyrians after 616, no specific event or campaign in Palestine is referenced in his or his successors' inscriptions prior to the 609 campaign of Necho II. There has been some suggestion that this reference to Cush should be understood in relation to Mesopotamia (as is possible in Gen 10:8), since it precedes the oracle on Assyria. ([page 795 IVP Bible Background Commentary: OT](#))

EXCURSUS ON THE SWORD OF THE LORD

Charles Feinberg writes "Much is said in the prophetic books of the Old Testament concerning the **sword of the Lord**, and it is a subject which will repay study." ([The Minor Prophets](#))

The phrase "**the sword of the Lord**" is a powerful biblical image that conveys both God's judgment and His authority to act decisively in human history. Throughout Scripture, the sword symbolizes divine justice, the execution of God's will, and the power of His Word. It is not merely a weapon of destruction but also an instrument of purification and truth.

In the Old Testament, the "sword of the Lord" often represents God's judgment against sin and rebellion. In Judges 7:20, when Gideon's men cry out, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" (ESV), the phrase signifies that the victory belongs to God, not to human strength. The sword here is a symbol of divine intervention—God Himself fighting for His people. Similarly, in Isaiah 34:5–6, the prophet declares, "For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction. The Lord has a sword; it is sated with blood." This passage portrays the sword as an extension of God's holiness and justice, executing vengeance upon nations that oppose Him.

The sword also appears as a metaphor for the Word of God itself. Hebrews 4:12 (ESV) teaches, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Here, the sword is not a physical weapon but the penetrating truth of God's revelation, which exposes sin and brings conviction. This same imagery is carried into the New Testament's description of spiritual warfare. In Ephesians 6:17 (ESV), Paul instructs believers to "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." As CompellingTruth.org explains, this sword is the only offensive weapon in the armor of God, representing the believer's ability to confront lies, temptation, and spiritual opposition through the truth of Scripture.

The "sword of the Lord" also appears in eschatological contexts, pointing to the final judgment. Revelation 19:15 (ESV) describes Christ's return: "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron." The sword proceeding from Christ's mouth symbolizes His Word—His divine authority to judge and to conquer evil. This is not a literal blade but the irresistible power of His command. When Christ speaks, His Word accomplishes what it declares (Isaiah 55:11).

In light of this, the sword of the Lord reveals both His mercy and His justice. It cuts down the wicked but also cuts away sin from the repentant heart. Lamentations 1:20 (ESV) captures the anguish of divine judgment: "Look, O Lord, for I am in distress; my stomach churns; my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death." This verse shows that the sword of the Lord is not arbitrary violence—it is the righteous consequence of rebellion against God. Yet even in judgment, God's purpose is redemptive, calling His people to repentance and restoration.

Ultimately, the sword of the Lord points us to Jesus Christ, the living Word (John 1:1–14). His Word brings both conviction and comfort, judgment and grace. For those who reject Him, the sword represents condemnation; for those who believe, it represents deliverance and truth. The same Word that will one day judge the nations is the Word that now offers salvation to all who repent and trust in Him. Thus, the sword of the Lord is both a warning and a promise—an emblem of divine authority that calls every heart to submit to the righteous rule of God.

Sword ([02719](#)) **hereb/chereb** - The Hebrew word for "**sword**" is חֶרֶב (**hereb / chereb**), a feminine noun that occurs over 400 times in the Old Testament and is the most frequently mentioned weapon in the Hebrew Bible. It is a broad, flexible term, not a technical label for one precise kind of blade. Biblical Hebrew does not sharply distinguish (NO "SWORD PUN" INTENDED!) between the

various forms of bladed weapons, so **ḥereb** can refer to a short dagger, a straight thrusting sword, a curved slashing sword, and in some contexts even a knife, razor, or chisel-like cutting tool. Its cognates in other Semitic languages confirm its antiquity and wide circulation in the ancient Near East. Thus, the basic idea of **ḥereb** is that of a sharp cutting implement, though in most contexts it refers specifically to a weapon of war.

Historically, the term covers more than one kind of weapon. In the earlier periods of the ancient Near East, the most common sword forms were short bronze swords and curved sickle-shaped slashing swords. Later, especially with Philistine influence, the longer iron sword became more prominent, capable of both cutting and thrusting. Because Hebrew uses **ḥereb** for all these types, the exact weapon must usually be determined from the context rather than from the word itself. Thus Ehud's weapon in Judges 3:16 is a short, two-edged dagger, while Goliath's massive weapon in 1 Samuel 17:51 is a larger battlefield sword. The same general term embraces both. This breadth explains why lexicons define **ḥereb** not narrowly as one sort of sword, but more generally as sword, dagger, knife, or cutting blade.

In literal usage, **ḥereb** is the ordinary weapon of combat and appears alongside the bow and shield as part of standard military equipment. Warriors are described as men who draw the sword, armies slay their enemies with the sword, and conquered peoples fall by the sword. The Hebrew idioms surrounding the word are vivid and concrete. One of the most common is פִּי-חֶרֶב (pī-ḥereb), literally "the mouth of the sword," meaning the edge of the sword. This striking expression reflects the Hebrew tendency to personify the weapon as something that devours. Related to this is the phrase "a sword of mouths" or "double-mouthed sword," which refers to a two-edged sword (cf. Ps. 149:6; Prov. 5:4). Likewise, to "pour out the sword" means to draw or unsheathe it for action. The language is dramatic because in biblical thought the sword is not merely an object; it is an instrument that cuts, consumes, and leaves death behind it.

The physical details surrounding the sword also emerge in the Old Testament. It had a hilt and blade, could be sharpened, whetted, or polished, and was kept in a sheath, usually attached to a belt or girdle. It was commonly worn on the left side, though Ehud, being left-handed, concealed his dagger on the right side so as to escape suspicion. The sword could be drawn, grasped, brandished, wielded, sheathed again, or even fallen upon in suicide, as in Saul's case. Such details show that **ḥereb** belongs not merely to poetic language but to the actual military and social world of ancient Israel.

Yet **ḥereb** is not limited to battlefield use. In a number of passages it refers to other sharp instruments. In Joshua 5:2–3 it denotes the flint knives used in circumcision. In Exodus 20:25 it refers to a tool or chisel used for hewing stone. In Ezekiel 5:1 it is used for a blade functioning like a razor. These usages show that the core notion is not simply "sword" in the modern military sense, but rather a blade used for cutting. Still, the martial meaning remains primary, and even these secondary uses often preserve the associations of sharpness, severity, and danger.

From literal usage the word expands into a metonymy for war, violence, military invasion, and national calamity. In many passages **ḥereb** no longer refers merely to a physical blade in someone's hand, but to the larger reality of armed conflict. Thus the sword can come upon a land, pass through a nation, or be brought by the LORD against a people. It may signify all the terrors of war—battle, siege, slaughter, and conquest. This is especially evident in texts where the sword appears in the familiar judgment triad "sword, famine, and pestilence." There **ḥereb** represents the external catastrophe of war, often followed by starvation and disease within a besieged city. In this way the word becomes a compact symbol for devastation under divine judgment.

This metonymic usage is especially important in covenant theology. In passages such as Leviticus 26, obedience brings peace so that the sword will not pass through the land, while disobedience brings covenant curse so that the LORD will bring the sword upon His people. Thus **ḥereb** becomes one of the chief emblems of divine chastening. Nathan's word to David, "the sword shall never depart from your house" (2 Sam. 12:10), does not mean merely that a literal blade will always be present, but that violence, bloodshed, and internal strife will characterize David's household as a consequence of sin. Here the sword stands for an ongoing condition of judgment.

***The human sword is only the historical means;
the real sword is God's righteous judgment moving through history.***

One of the most significant theological developments of **ḥereb** in the Old Testament is its use in the expression "**the sword of the LORD**." In these texts the sword is no longer merely a human weapon; it is the instrument of God's own judicial action. The flaming sword at Eden (Gen. 3:24) guards the way to the tree of life and symbolizes God's holiness, exclusion, and judgment after the fall. Later prophetic texts intensify this

theme. In Isaiah 34, Jeremiah 12, and especially Ezekiel 21, the sword of Yahweh is portrayed as unsheathed, sharpened, polished, and ready to strike. Although Babylon or another invading army may wield the visible weapon, the prophets insist that the true actor behind the judgment is the LORD Himself. The human sword is only the historical means; the real sword is God's righteous judgment moving through history.

Ezekiel 21 is especially vivid in this regard. There the sword is almost personified. It is summoned, polished, brandished, and spoken to as though it were alive. This literary vividness underscores the terrifying certainty of judgment. The sword is not random violence; it is a divinely directed instrument. In this prophetic usage, **hereb** is both military and judicial. It punishes rebellion, executes sentence, and manifests the holiness of God against sin. This helps explain why in some contexts the sword overlaps with the idea of execution or the sword of justice, not merely warfare.

At the same time, Scripture also uses **hereb** metaphorically for things that wound like a sword. The most common metaphor is for speech. The wicked have tongues like sharp swords (Ps. 57:4; 64:3). Rash words are like sword thrusts (Prov. 12:18). False witness and slander cut, pierce, and destroy like a blade. In these texts, the metaphor highlights not only sharpness but also violence, cruelty, and deadly effect. Words can become weapons. Proverbs 5:4 adds another striking image: the end of the adulteress is "sharp as a two-edged sword," meaning that association with her brings inevitable pain and destruction. Thus **hereb** can portray any force that cuts deeply—whether literal steel, national war, divine judgment, or destructive speech.

The imagery of the sword as something that devours is also important. Scripture can speak of the sword eating its victims, which fits naturally with the idiom "mouth of the sword." This personification gives the weapon a monstrous, almost animate quality. It consumes life, swallows up armies, and leaves the land desolate. This imagery heightens the horror of war and judgment. The sword is not a neutral tool; it becomes a vivid emblem of death on the move.

Theologically, then, **hereb** occupies a major place in biblical thought because it stands at the intersection of human violence and divine sovereignty. Men wield swords in pride, conquest, vengeance, and murder, yet Scripture repeatedly insists that the ultimate issue is whether the LORD has given, restrained, or commissioned the sword. Israel is warned not to trust in its own sword, for victory comes from the LORD, not from human weaponry (cf. Ps. 44:3, 6). At times God delivers His people from the sword; at other times He sends the sword against them because of covenant unfaithfulness. In this sense, **hereb** becomes a theological symbol of the truth that life and death, war and peace, judgment and deliverance all remain under God's rule.

Hereb is an instrument of cutting, destruction, and decisive power, whether in the hand of man or, supremely, under the sovereign direction of God.

In summary, **חֶרֶב** (**hereb**) is a richly textured Hebrew word whose meaning extends far beyond the simple gloss "sword." Literally, it denotes a wide range of blades, from dagger to long sword, and occasionally knife, razor, or chisel. Idiomatically, it appears in expressions such as "mouth of the sword" for its edge and "double-mouthed sword" for a two-edged blade. Metonymically, it stands for war, violence, invasion, and covenant judgment. Theologically, it becomes the **sword of the LORD**, the instrument of divine justice in history. Metaphorically, it depicts speech that wounds and destroys. Across all these usages, the central idea remains the same: **hereb** is an instrument of cutting, destruction, and decisive power, whether in the hand of man or, supremely, under the sovereign direction of God.

HEREB/CHEREB - 403X/372V - axes(1), knives(2), sword(390), swords(18), swordsmen*(1), tool(1).

Gen. 3:24; Gen. 27:40; Gen. 31:26; Gen. 34:25; Gen. 34:26; Gen. 48:22; Exod. 5:3; Exod. 5:21; Exod. 15:9; Exod. 17:13; Exod. 18:4; Exod. 20:25; Exod. 22:24; Exod. 32:27; Lev. 26:6; Lev. 26:7; Lev. 26:8; Lev. 26:25; Lev. 26:33; Lev. 26:36; Lev. 26:37; Num. 14:3; Num. 14:43; Num. 19:16; Num. 20:18; Num. 21:24; Num. 22:23; Num. 22:29; Num. 22:31; Num. 31:8; Deut. 13:15; Deut. 20:13; Deut. 28:22; Deut. 32:25; Deut. 32:41; Deut. 32:42; Deut. 33:29; Jos. 5:2; Jos. 5:3; Jos. 5:13; Jos. 6:21; Jos. 8:24; Jos. 10:11; Jos. 10:28; Jos. 10:30; Jos. 10:32; Jos. 10:35; Jos. 10:37; Jos. 10:39; Jos. 11:10; Jos. 11:11; Jos. 11:12; Jos. 11:14; Jos. 13:22; Jos. 19:47; Jos. 24:12; Jdg. 1:8; Jdg. 1:25; Jdg. 3:16; Jdg. 3:21; Jdg. 3:22; Jdg. 4:15; Jdg. 4:16; Jdg. 7:14; Jdg. 7:22; Jdg. 8:10; Jdg. 8:20; Jdg. 9:54; Jdg. 18:27; Jdg. 20:2; Jdg. 20:15; Jdg. 20:17; Jdg. 20:25; Jdg. 20:35; Jdg. 20:37; Jdg. 20:46; Jdg. 20:48; Jdg. 21:10; 1 Sam. 13:19; 1 Sam. 13:22; 1 Sam. 14:20; 1 Sam. 15:8; 1 Sam. 15:33; 1 Sam. 17:39; 1 Sam. 17:45; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Sam. 17:50; 1 Sam. 17:51; 1 Sam. 18:4; 1 Sam. 21:8; 1 Sam. 21:9; 1 Sam. 22:10; 1 Sam. 22:13; 1 Sam. 22:19; 1 Sam. 25:13; 1 Sam. 31:4; 1 Sam. 31:5; 2 Sam. 1:12; 2 Sam. 1:22; 2 Sam. 2:16; 2 Sam. 2:26; 2 Sam. 3:29; 2 Sam. 11:25; 2 Sam. 12:9; 2 Sam. 12:10; 2 Sam. 15:14; 2 Sam. 18:8; 2 Sam. 20:8; 2 Sam. 20:10; 2 Sam. 23:10; 2 Sam. 24:9; 1 Ki. 1:51; 1 Ki. 2:8; 1 Ki. 2:32; 1 Ki. 3:24; 1 Ki. 18:28; 1 Ki. 19:1; 1 Ki. 19:10; 1 Ki. 19:14; 1 Ki. 19:17; 2 Ki. 3:26; 2 Ki. 6:22; 2 Ki. 8:12; 2 Ki. 10:25; 2 Ki. 11:15; 2 Ki. 11:20; 2 Ki. 19:7; 2 Ki. 19:37; 1 Chr. 5:18; 1 Chr. 10:4; 1 Chr. 10:5; 1 Chr. 21:5; 1 Chr. 21:12; 1 Chr. 21:16; 1 Chr. 21:27; 1 Chr. 21:30; 2 Chr. 20:9; 2 Chr. 21:4; 2 Chr. 23:14; 2 Chr. 23:21; 2 Chr. 29:9; 2 Chr. 32:21; 2 Chr. 36:17; 2 Chr. 36:20; Ezr. 9:7; Neh. 4:13; Neh. 4:18; Est. 9:5; Job 1:15; Job 5:15; Job 5:20; Job 15:22; Job 19:29; Job 27:14; Job 36:12; Job 39:22; Job 40:19; Job 41:26; Ps. 7:12; Ps. 17:13; Ps. 22:20; Ps. 37:14; Ps. 37:15; Ps. 44:3; Ps. 44:6; Ps. 45:3; Ps. 57:4; Ps. 59:7; Ps. 63:10; Ps. 64:3; Ps. 76:3; Ps. 78:62; Ps. 78:64; Ps. 89:43; Ps. 144:10; Ps. 149:6; Prov. 5:4; Prov. 12:18; Prov. 25:18; Prov. 30:14; Cant. 3:8; Isa. 1:20; Isa. 2:4; Isa. 3:25; Isa. 13:15; Isa. 14:19; Isa. 21:15; Isa. 22:2; Isa. 27:1; Isa. 31:8; Isa. 34:5; Isa. 34:6; Isa. 37:7; Isa. 37:38; Isa. 41:2; Isa. 49:2; Isa. 51:19; Isa. 65:12; Isa. 66:16; Jer. 2:30; Jer. 4:10; Jer. 5:12; Jer. 5:17; Jer. 6:25; Jer. 9:16; Jer. 11:22; Jer. 12:12; Jer. 14:12; Jer. 14:13; Jer. 14:15; Jer. 14:16; Jer. 14:18; Jer. 15:2; Jer. 15:3; Jer. 15:9; Jer. 16:4; Jer. 18:21; Jer. 19:7; Jer. 20:4; Jer. 21:7; Jer. 21:9; Jer. 24:10; Jer. 25:16; Jer. 25:27; Jer. 25:29; Jer. 25:31; Jer. 26:23; Jer. 27:8; Jer. 27:13; Jer. 29:17; Jer. 29:18; Jer. 31:2; Jer. 32:24; Jer. 32:36; Jer. 33:4; Jer. 34:4; Jer. 34:17; Jer. 38:2; Jer. 39:18; Jer. 41:2; Jer. 42:16; Jer. 42:17; Jer. 42:22; Jer. 43:11; Jer. 44:12; Jer. 44:13; Jer. 44:18; Jer. 44:27; Jer. 44:28; Jer. 46:10; Jer. 46:14; Jer. 46:16; Jer. 47:6; Jer. 48:2; Jer. 48:10; Jer. 49:37; Jer. 50:16; Jer. 50:35; Jer. 50:36; Jer. 50:37; Jer. 51:50; Lam. 1:20; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 4:9; Lam. 5:9; Ezek. 5:1; Ezek. 5:2; Ezek. 5:12; Ezek. 5:17; Ezek. 6:3; Ezek. 6:8; Ezek. 6:11; Ezek. 6:12; Ezek. 6:15; Ezek. 11:8; Ezek. 11:10; Ezek. 12:16; Ezek. 12:16; Ezek. 14:17; Ezek. 14:21; Ezek. 16:40; Ezek. 17:21; Ezek. 21:3; Ezek. 21:4; Ezek. 21:5; Ezek. 21:9; Ezek. 21:11; Ezek. 21:12; Ezek. 21:14; Ezek. 21:15; Ezek. 21:19; Ezek. 21:20; Ezek. 21:28; Ezek. 23:10; Ezek. 23:25; Ezek. 23:47; Ezek. 24:21; Ezek. 25:13; Ezek. 26:6; Ezek. 26:8; Ezek. 26:9; Ezek. 26:11; Ezek. 28:7; Ezek. 28:23; Ezek.

29:8; Ezek. 30:4; Ezek. 30:5; Ezek. 30:6; Ezek. 30:11; Ezek. 30:17; Ezek. 30:21; Ezek. 30:22; Ezek. 30:24; Ezek. 30:25; Ezek. 31:17; Ezek. 31:18; Ezek. 32:10; Ezek. 32:11; Ezek. 32:12; Ezek. 32:20; Ezek. 32:21; Ezek. 32:22; Ezek. 32:23; Ezek. 32:24; Ezek. 32:25; Ezek. 32:26; Ezek. 32:27; Ezek. 32:28; Ezek. 32:29; Ezek. 32:30; Ezek. 32:31; Ezek. 32:32; Ezek. 33:2; Ezek. 33:3; Ezek. 33:4; Ezek. 33:6; Ezek. 33:26; Ezek. 33:27; Ezek. 35:5; Ezek. 35:8; Ezek. 38:4; Ezek. 38:8; Ezek. 38:21; Ezek. 39:23; Dan. 11:33; Hos. 1:7; Hos. 2:18; Hos. 7:16; Hos. 11:6; Hos. 13:16; Joel 3:10; Amos 1:11; Amos 4:10; Amos 7:9; Amos 7:11; Amos 7:17; Amos 9:1; Amos 9:4; Amos 9:10; Mic. 4:3; Mic. 5:6; Mic. 6:14; Nah. 2:13; Nah. 3:3; Nah. 3:15; Zeph. 2:12; Hag. 2:22; Zech. 9:13; Zech. 11:17; Zech. 13:7

Zephaniah 2:13 And He will stretch out His hand against the north And destroy Assyria, And He will make Nineveh a desolation, Parched like the wilderness.

KJV And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.

BGT κα κτενε τ ν χε ρα α το π βορρ ν κα πολε τ ν σσ ριον κα θ σει τ ν Νινευη ε ς φανισμ ν νυδρον ς ρημον

LXE And he shall stretch forth his hand against the north and destroy the Assyrian, and make Nineve a dry wilderness, even as a desert.

NET The LORD will attack the north and destroy Assyria. He will make Nineveh a heap of ruins; it will be as barren as the desert.

CSB He will also stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria; He will make Nineveh a desolate ruin, dry as the desert.

ESV And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert.

NIV He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as the desert.

NLT And the LORD will strike the lands of the north with his fist, destroying the land of Assyria. He will make its great capital, Nineveh, a desolate wasteland, parched like a desert.

NRS And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert.

NJB He will raise his hand against the north and bring Assyria down in ruins; he will make Nineveh a waste, as dry as a desert.

NAB He will stretch out his hand against the north, to destroy Assyria; He will make Nineveh a waste, dry as the desert.

YLT And He stretcheth His hand against the north, And doth destroy Asshur, And he setteth Nineveh for a desolation, A dry land like a wilderness.

- **He will stretch out His hand against the north** Ps 83:8,9 Isa 10:12,16 11:11 Eze 31:3-18
- **He will make Nineveh a desolation** Na 1:1 2:10,11 3:7,15,18,19 Zec 10:10,11

Related Passages:

Exodus 7:5 “The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.”

Isaiah 5:25 On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people, And He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, But His hand is still stretched out.

Nahum 3:7 “And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, ‘Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her?’ Where will I seek comforters for you?”

Nahum 1:8 But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, And will pursue His enemies into darkness.

Daniel 2:21 “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

GOD'S JUDGMENT AGAINST ASSYRIA & NINEVEH

After announcing judgment on nations **west** (Philistia), **east** (Moab and Ammon), and **south** (Cush), Zephaniah now turns **north** to declare the downfall of the mighty Assyria and its capital, Nineveh. The verse shows that even the most powerful empire in the world cannot escape God's judgment. Note that these nations are representative of God's judgment on all Gentile nations, for these nations correspond to the four points of the compass! No nation will get a pass in the great Day of the LORD for all will taste His righteous wrath and judgment! The LORD is sovereign over every nation. In short, Our God Reigns ([play this old spiritual song](#))!

And He will stretch out His hand ([yad](#) ~ power. An anthropomorphism - cf Zep 1:4+) **against the north** **And destroy** ([abad](#); LXX - [apollumi](#)) **Assyria** - His **sword** against Ethiopia, and His Hand () against Assyria. The phrase “**stretch out His hand**” is a common biblical expression for God actively intervening in judgment or power. Zephaniah is declaring that God Himself will directly act to overthrow Assyria. From the perspective of Judah, the great Assyrian capital Nineveh lay to the north-east, so prophets often simply called that region “the north.” This prophecy is striking because Assyria was the superpower of the world in Zephaniah's day.

STRETCH OUT HIS HAND RELATED TO GOD (anthropomorphism) - Ex 3:20, Ex 7:5, Ex 24:11, Ps 138:7, Ps 144:7, Isa 31:3, Jer 6:12, Jer 15:6 (against Judah), Jer 51:25 (against Babylon), Ezek 6:14 (against Judah), Ezek 14:9 Ezek 14:13 Ezek 25:13 Ezek 25:16 Ezek 35:3 Zep 1:4 Zep 2:13

Charles Feinberg - At the time of this prophecy the nation had not fallen. The recital of woe and judgment climaxes with Assyria, which was the strongest political factor of the day. For a fuller treatment of the doom of Assyria, the reader is referred to the prophecy of Nahum. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

The Assyrian empire had already destroyed Samaria in 722 BC (2 Kings 17) and devastated much of Judah during the campaign of Sennacherib in 701 BC (2 Kings 18–19). Yet Zephaniah declares that this terrifying empire would itself be destroyed. Historically this occurred in 612 BC, when Babylonians and Medes captured and destroyed Nineveh, ending Assyrian supremacy.



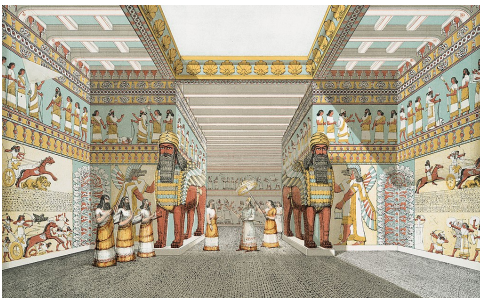
Assyrian Palaces in Nineveh

And He will make Nineveh a desolation ([shemamah](#)), **Parched like the wilderness** - Nineveh was one of the largest and most magnificent cities in the ancient world, the proud capital of Assyria. Its walls, palaces, and military power made it appear unconquerable. Nineveh symbolized Assyrian pride and cruelty. Zephaniah emphasizes that the once-magnificent city would become “**a desolation**” a ruined, abandoned place. Nineveh had been a lush city on the Tigris River, surrounded by fertile lands and irrigation systems. Yet God declares it would become dry and empty like a desert, a total reversal of its prosperity.

Charles Feinberg on parched like the wilderness - This is all the more remarkable when we realize that at the very time of the prophet's prediction, the plentiful irrigation of the mighty city was its great boast and joy. ([The Minor Prophets](#))

***Empires which seem as firm as mountains melt like snow
before the Lord when He arises to judgment.***

Life Application Study Bible - To predict the destruction of Nineveh 10 years before it happened would be equivalent to predicting the destruction of London, Tokyo, Paris, or New York. Nineveh was the ancient Near Eastern center for culture, technology, and beauty. It had great libraries, buildings, and an advanced irrigation system that created lush gardens in the city. The city wall was 60 miles long, 100 feet high, and over 30 feet wide and was fortified with 1,500 towers. Yet the entire city was destroyed so completely that its very existence was questioned until it was discovered, with great difficulty, by 19th-century archaeologists. Nineveh had indeed become as desolate and dry as the desert.



Inside Palace at Nineveh

John Walton - Assyria in late seventh century. After the death of Ashurbanipal in 627, the disputes among his heirs and potential successors so weakened the Assyrian empire that it swiftly fell apart. This collapse was hastened by two factors. First were the harsh administrative policies. The hatred generated against the Assyrians was further compounded by their use of extreme terror tactics in warfare (see the sidebar on the siege of Lachish in 2 Chron 32:9). The emergence of a Babylonian-Median coalition provided a match for Assyria's army, and by 612 the Assyrian capital at Nineveh had been captured and destroyed (see the comment on Is 13:1). The final step in completely eliminating all vestiges of Assyrian power came at the Battle of Carchemish in 605. Its empire fell to the Egyptians and Neo-Babylonians to divide (see the comment on Is 31:8). ([page 795 IVP Bible Background Commentary: OT](#))

Zephaniah 2:14 Flocks will lie down in her midst, All beasts which range in herds; Both the pelican and the hedgehog Will lodge in the tops of her pillars; Birds will sing in the window, Desolation will be on the threshold; For He has laid bare the cedar work.

KJV And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.

BGT κα νεμ σονται ν μ σ α τ ς πο μ νια κα π ντα τ θη ρ α τ ς γ ς κα χαμαιλ οντες κα χ νοι ν το ς φατν μασιν α τ ς κοιτασθ σονται κα θη ρ α φων σει ν το ς διο ρ γμασιν α τ ς κ ρακες ν το ς πυλ σιν α τ ς δι τι κ δ ρος τ ν στημα α τ ς

LXE And flocks, and all the wild beasts of the land, and chameleons shall feed in the midst thereof: and hedgehogs shall lodge in the ceilings thereof; and wild beasts shall cry in the breaches thereof, and ravens in her porches, whereas her loftiness was as as cedar.

NET Flocks and herds will lie down in the middle of it, as well as every kind of wild animal. Owls will sleep in the tops of its support pillars; they will hoot through the windows. Rubble will cover the thresholds; even the cedar work will be exposed to the elements.

CSB Herds will lie down in the middle of it, every kind of wild animal. Both the desert owl and the screech owl will roost in the capitals of its pillars. Their calls will sound from the window, but devastation will be on the threshold, for He will expose the cedar work.

ESV Herds shall lie down in her midst, all kinds of beasts; even the owl and the hedgehog shall lodge in her capitals; a voice shall hoot in the window; devastation will be on the threshold; for her cedar work will be laid bare.

NIV Flocks and herds will lie down there, creatures of every kind. The desert owl and the screech owl will roost on her columns. Their calls will echo through the windows, rubble will be in the doorways, the beams of cedar will be exposed.

NLT The proud city will become a pasture for flocks and herds, and all sorts of wild animals will settle there. The desert owl and screech owl will roost on its ruined columns, their calls echoing through the gaping windows. Rubble will block all the doorways, and the cedar paneling will be exposed to the weather.

NRS Herds shall lie down in it, every wild animal; the desert owl and the screech owl shall lodge on its capitals; the owl shall hoot at the window, the raven croak on the threshold; for its cedar work will be laid bare.

NJB Flocks will rest inside there, so will wild animals; pelican and porcupine will nest round her cornices at night; the owl will hoot at the window and the raven croak on the doorstep -- for the cedar has been torn down.

NAB In her midst shall settle in droves all the wild life of the hollows; The screech owl and the desert owl shall roost in her columns; Their call shall resound from the window, the raven's croak from the doorway.

YLT And crouched in her midst have droves, Every beast of the nation, Both pelican and hedge-hog in her knobs lodge, A voice doth sing at the window, 'Destruction is at the threshold, For the cedar-work is exposed.'

- **flocks:** Zep 2:6 Isa 13:19-22 34:11-17 Rev 18:2
- **in the tops of her pillars** Am 9:1
- **the cedar:** Jer 22:14

Related Passages:

Isaiah 34:11+ But pelican and hedgehog will possess it, And owl and raven will dwell in it; And He will stretch over it the line of desolation And the plumb line of emptiness.

THE DESOLATION OF NINEVEH

The verse paints a dramatic picture of how thoroughly the proud city will be reduced to ruin.

Flocks will lie down in her midst All beasts which range in herds- Where crowds once filled the streets and royal processions moved through the city, animals will now roam freely. The presence of flocks in the middle of the city shows that human habitation and civilization have disappeared. And these would not be "the ordinary city-dwelling pigeons!" (Kaiser) The bustling capital has become open pastureland and wilderness.

Both the pelican and the hedgehog Will lodge in the tops of her pillars- The **pelican** (or desert bird) and the **hedgehog**/porcupine represent animals that thrive in desolate or abandoned places. The detail that they rest on **the tops of pillars** suggests that the once-grand palaces and temples of Nineveh will be broken and exposed, leaving only ruined columns where birds and animals perch. The imagery emphasizes that structures once associated with wealth and luxury will become habitats for wilderness creatures.

Birds will sing in the window- Where nobles once looked out from ornate palace windows, birds will now nest and chirp. The sound that once filled the city—voices, commerce, and celebration—will be replaced by the cries of birds echoing through empty ruins. The picture is not peaceful but eerily desolate, highlighting the absence of human life.

Desolation will be on the threshold; For He has laid bare the cedar work- The **threshold** represents the entrance to homes and palaces. Instead of activity and hospitality, the entrances of the city will display abandonment and ruin. The city that once welcomed ambassadors and armies will now stand empty. Nineveh's buildings were decorated with expensive **cedar** wood paneling, a symbol of wealth and royal luxury in the ancient Near East. The phrase means that God will strip away these coverings, exposing and destroying the structures. The palaces that once displayed opulence will be torn open and left in ruin.

This is much like the description Isaiah prophesied against Babylon writing "And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there. Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers And jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come And her days will not be prolonged." (Isaiah 13:19-22+)

NET NOTE - Heb "flocks." The Hebrew word can refer to both flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

NET NOTE on **pelican** - The Hebrew text reads here גַּמְקָאֵת גַּמְקִיפּוֹד (gam-qa'at gam-qippod). The term גַּמְקָאֵת refers to some type of bird (see Lev 11:18; Deut 14:17) that was typically found near ruins (Isa 34:11); one of the most common translations is "owl" (cf. NEB "horned owl"; NIV, NRSV "desert owl"; contra NASB "pelican"). The term גַּמְקִיפּוֹד may also refer to a type of bird (cf. NEB "ruffed bustard"; NIV, NRSV "screech owl"). Some suggest a rodent may be in view (cf. NASB "hedgehog"); this is not unreasonable, for a rodent or some other small animal would be able to sleep in the tops of pillars which would be lying in the ruins of the fallen buildings.

Zephaniah 2:15 This is the exultant city Which dwells securely, Who says in her heart, “I am, and there is no one besides me.” How she has become a desolation, A resting place for beasts! Everyone who passes by her will hiss And wave his hand in contempt.

KJV This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

BGT α τη π λ ι ς φ α υ λ σ τ ρ ι α κ α τ ο ι κ ο σ α π λ π δ ι λ γ ο υ σ α ν κ α ρ δ α τ ς γ ε μ ι κ α ο κ σ τ ι ν μ ε τ μ π ι π ς γ ε ν θ η ε ς φ α ν ι σ μ ν ο μ θ η ρ ω ν π ς δ ι α π ο ρ ε υ μ ε ν ο ς δ ι α τ ς σ υ ρ ι ε κ α κ ι ν σ ε ι τ ς χ ε ρ α ς α τ ο

LXE This is the scornful city that dwells securely, that says in her heart, I am, and there is no longer any to be after me: how is she become desolate, a habitation of wild beasts! every one that passes through her shall hiss, and shake his hands.

NET This is how the once-proud city will end up— the city that was so secure. She thought to herself, "I am unique! No one can compare to me!" What a heap of ruins she has become, a place where wild animals live! Everyone who passes by her taunts her and shakes his fist.

CSB This is the self-assured city that lives in security, that thinks to herself: I exist, and there is no one else. What a desolation she has become, a place for wild animals to lie down! Everyone who passes by her jeers and shakes his fist.

ESV This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart, "I am, and there is no one else." What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist.

NIV This is the carefree city that lived in safety. She said to herself, "I am, and there is none besides me." What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts! All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists.

NLT This is the boisterous city, once so secure. "I am the greatest!" it boasted. "No other city can compare with me!" But now, look how it has become an utter ruin, a haven for wild animals. Everyone passing by will laugh in derision and shake a defiant fist.

NRS Is this the exultant city that lived secure, that said to itself, "I am, and there is no one else"? What a desolation it has become, a lair for wild animals! Everyone who passes by it hisses and shakes the fist.

NJB This is what the city will be like, once living happy and carefree and thinking to itself, 'I have no rival -- not I!' And what will it be now? A ruin, a lair for wild beasts to rest in, and everyone who passes by will whistle and throw up his hands.

NAB Is this the exultant city that dwelt secure; That told herself, "There is no other than I!" How has she become a waste, a lair for wild beasts? Whoever passes by her hisses, and shakes his fist!

YLT This is the exulting city that is dwelling confidently, That is saying in her heart, 'I am, and beside me there is none,' How hath she been for a desolation, A crouching-place for beasts, Every one passing by her doth hiss, He doth shake his hand!

- **the exultant city:** Isa 10:12-14 22:2 47:7 Rev 18:7-10
- **I am:** Isa 47:8 Eze 28:2,9 29:3
- **how she:** Isa 14:4,5 La 1:1 2:1 Rev 18:10-19
- **Everyone :** 1Ki 9:7,8 Job 27:23 Ps 52:6,7 La 2:15 Eze 27:36 Na 3:19 Mt 27:39



"Secure" Walls of Nineveh

PRIDE ALWAYS LEADS TO DESTRUCTION

This is the exultant city - Nineveh is described as **exultant**, meaning a city that boasted in its power, wealth, and glory. Assyria dominated the ancient Near East for centuries, conquering nations and ruling through military strength. The city celebrated its own greatness, believing itself unstoppable and superior to all others.

Which dwells securely - Nineveh believed it was completely secure. Its massive walls, strong army, and enormous wealth created the illusion that no enemy could overthrow it. Historically, Nineveh's walls were legendary for their strength, and the empire appeared invincible. Yet Zephaniah exposes the danger of false security rooted in human strength rather than dependence on God.

Who says in her heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me" - This expresses extreme pride and self-exaltation. The city claimed unique supremacy, as though no rival or authority existed. Significantly, the expression "**I am, and there is no one besides me**" echoes language that rightly belongs only to God. In Isaiah 45:5 Yahweh says "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God." By using this language about itself, Nineveh was essentially placing itself in the position of ultimate authority, a form of national arrogance and self-deification.

Walter Kaiser - So successful had Assyria become that she believed in her own self-deification. Self-worship cannot be more arrogant than this. It showed itself in the Assyrian field commander's speech against King Hezekiah and Judah in Isaiah 36:4-10, 13-20. (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

Charles Feinberg on there is no one besides me - In her godless self-sufficient boasting, she had claimed that there was none beside her. This was the claim of Babylon also, as recorded in Isaiah 47:8. (See Laodicea in Rev 3:17.) Such self-sufficiency is the very attribute of God (Is 45:21-22). For this arrogance she is brought down to the basest desolation, a place for beasts only. The magnitude and suddenness of her destruction will make her the object of the scorn and contempt of all that pass by. They will wag their hand, implying that she has brought her judgment on herself. When the Greek Xenophon passed the site of Nineveh in 401 BC, he was able to find out only that a great city had once stood on the site and had been destroyed because Zeus had deprived her people of their wits. What folly and insanity for puny man to arrogate (to claim or seize something for yourself without having the right to it) to himself divine prerogatives and attributes! ([The Minor Prophets](#))

How she has become a desolation ([sammah/shammah](#)) - The prophet now contrasts Nineveh's former pride with its final state. The once-glorious capital would become a desolate ruin. This prophecy was dramatically fulfilled when Nineveh fell to the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC, ending the Assyrian empire.

A resting place for beasts! - Instead of humans filling its streets, animals would occupy the ruins. This image reinforces the total collapse of the once-powerful city. Where emperors once ruled, wild creatures would now wander freely.

Everyone who passes by her will hiss ([sharaq](#)) And wave his hand in contempt - These gestures express mockery and astonishment. Travelers passing the ruins of Nineveh would shake their heads in disbelief, amazed that such a mighty city had fallen. The hissing sound was often used in the ancient world to express shock, scorn, or derision toward something that had become a tragic ruin.

Walter Kaiser on hiss - the ultimate disgrace for an oriental. The people could handle everything but the hissing, for hissing was tantamount to an attack on their person. (See [all three excellent chapters - Preacher's Commentary](#))

HCSB - God will judge each self-assured city (Assyria, v. 15; Babylon, Isa 47:8-10) that makes God-like claims such as I exist, and there is no one else (cp. Isa 45:5,6,19,21).

Warren Wiersbe - Since the predictions about the destruction of these nations have all come true, isn't it reasonable to assume that Zephaniah's other predictions will also be fulfilled? Each of these local invasions and conquests was a precursor of the end times Day of the LORD, which will come upon the whole world. But when the Day of the LORD has run its course, Israel will be delivered, and the Lord will establish His glorious kingdom on the earth. In the last chapter of his prophecy, Zephaniah explains how the Day of the LORD will relate to this promised kingdom.

Before we leave Zephaniah 1 and 2, we must note some practical truths that apply to believers today.

First, God judges His people when they deliberately disobey His law. His people are to be different from the other nations and not imitate their ways or worship their gods (Num. 23:9; Ex. 33:16; Deut. 32:8). "Be not conformed to this world" is an admonition for all believers today (Ro 12:2+; see 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1+).

Second, God's promise to Abraham still stands: Those who bless Israel, God will bless; those who curse

Israel, God will curse (Gen. 12:1-3). The nations that have sinned against God by mistreating the Jews can expect Him to judge them.

Finally, God's Word is true and will be fulfilled in its time. God's people can claim His promises and know that their God will be faithful, and God's enemies can be sure that His words of warning carry costly penalties. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31+). ([Bible Exposition Commentary-OT](#))

Desolation (horror) ([08047](#)) [sammah/shammah](#) = שָׁמָּה) The Hebrew noun שָׁמָּה (shammāh) is a feminine noun meaning "desolation," "ruin," "waste," "horror," or "appalling spectacle." It occurs about thirty-nine times in the Old Testament and belongs to a word group built on the root שָׁמַם (shāmam), a verb meaning "to be desolate, devastated, appalled, or astonished." The basic idea behind the word is the ruin or wasting produced by catastrophic destruction, most often the result of divine judgment against sin. In many passages the word describes cities, lands, houses, or nations laid waste, but the term also carries a strong emotional component—the stunned reaction of observers who witness such devastation. Thus shammāh does not merely denote ruin; it often conveys the shock, dread, and horror produced by the sight of ruin. Scripture therefore uses the word to depict both the objective destruction itself and the overwhelming reaction it provokes among those who behold it.

A helpful distinction is often made between the related nouns שְׁמָמָה (shemāmā) and שָׁמָּה (shammāh). While both refer to devastation, shemāmā tends to emphasize the state of desolation itself—the ruined condition of land or cities, whereas shammāh emphasizes the spectacle of that devastation and the horrified response it evokes. In other words, shemāmā focuses on the physical condition of wasteland, while shammāh stresses the public shock and shame produced by the devastation. This distinction explains why shammāh frequently appears alongside terms such as "curse," "reproach," "hissing," "byword," or "derision." The destroyed nation becomes a terrifying example and warning to others. For instance, Moses warned Israel that disobedience would result in becoming "an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD drives you" (Deuteronomy 28:37, NASB), highlighting the humiliating spectacle their judgment would become before the nations.

The word also describes the destruction of wicked individuals and their households, showing that God's judgment extends not only to nations but also to persons who persist in evil. Psalm 73 illustrates this vividly when the psalmist reflects on the sudden downfall of the wicked: "How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!" (Psalm 73:19). Likewise Isaiah declares that judgment would bring devastation upon prosperous houses and estates: "Surely many houses shall become desolate, even great and fine ones, without occupants" (Isaiah 5:9). In these contexts shammāh highlights the swift and shocking collapse of apparent security, emphasizing that divine justice can reduce even the most impressive structures of human prosperity to shocking ruin.

More commonly, however, shammāh describes lands and cities devastated because of the wickedness of their inhabitants. Jeremiah repeatedly uses the word to portray the consequences of Israel's rebellion and the invasions that would follow. For example, he declares, "The lions have roared at him... they have made his land a waste; his cities have been destroyed, without inhabitant" (Jeremiah 2:15). Similarly, Zephaniah announces the fate of proud Nineveh: "This is the exultant city which dwells securely... How she has become a desolation, a resting place for beasts!" (Zephaniah 2:15). In such passages the word paints a vivid picture of once-thriving civilizations reduced to silent ruins, demonstrating the devastating consequences of persistent sin and arrogance before God.

Another important dimension of shammāh is its description of the emotional shock and horror experienced by those who witness devastation. The sight of judgment leaves observers stunned, appalled, and filled with dread. Jeremiah captures this sense of overwhelming anguish when he laments the suffering of his people: "For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me" (Jeremiah 8:21). Here the word conveys not merely the destruction itself but the paralyzing emotional impact of seeing that destruction unfold. The devastation is so terrible that it produces collective astonishment and grief among those who behold it.

The prophets also frequently combine shammāh with the term שֶׁרָקָה (shereqāh), meaning "hissing" or "derision." This pairing appears several times (e.g., 2 Chronicles 29:8; Jeremiah 19:8; 25:9, 18; 29:18; 51:37; Micah 6:16) and emphasizes that a devastated city becomes an object of scorn and mockery among surrounding nations. Travelers passing the ruins would "hiss" in astonishment and contempt, recognizing the visible evidence of divine judgment. Thus the ruined city becomes both a monument to judgment and a warning sign to others of the consequences of rebellion against God.

The Septuagint sometimes translates shammāh with the Greek word φανισμός ([aphanismos](#)), meaning “destruction,” “disappearance,” or “annihilation.” The term describes something so devastated that it effectively disappears from sight, emphasizing the thoroughness of the destruction. This concept appears in Micah 6:16 and echoes the biblical theme that God’s judgment can reduce even powerful nations to complete ruin and historical obscurity. The same idea appears in the New Testament where Hebrews states that what becomes obsolete is “ready to disappear” (Hebrews 8:13).

Ultimately, the theological significance of shammāh lies in its portrayal of God’s sovereignty over history and His righteous judgment against sin. The word reminds readers that sin inevitably leads to devastation—both moral and physical. Nations such as Israel, Judah, Babylon, and others experienced this reality when they abandoned God and embraced idolatry. Yet the concept also serves as a warning and moral lesson, demonstrating that divine judgment is not random but the just response of a holy God to persistent rebellion. As Jeremiah’s prophecy shows, God even used one nation to judge another, only to later judge the instrument of punishment itself: “Babylon will become a heap of ruins... an object of horror and hissing, without inhabitants” (Jeremiah 51:37).

In summary, shammāh is a powerful biblical term describing devastation so complete that it produces shock, horror, and public disgrace. It portrays the ruin brought by divine judgment, the astonishment of those who witness the destruction, and the lasting warning such devastation provides to future generations. The word vividly reminds readers that human pride, idolatry, and rebellion ultimately lead to waste, horror, and appalling ruin, while obedience to God remains the only path to enduring stability and blessing.

Hiss (08319) [sharaq](#) means to hiss, whistle. "This group of words most often describes the reaction displayed by those who pass by the ruins of a once great city or power, either a hiss or a whistle. Since it is used to describe the piping of a shepherd for his sheep (Judges 5:16), it must be understood to be a clearly audible sound. KB suggests that a form of whistling was practiced as a protection from the demons of destruction, but most see it as a sign of either shock, since it is so often found together with shammā "horror," or amazement (Jerusalem Bible), or derision (NEB, 1 Kings 9:8; Jeremiah 19:8; Jeremiah 18:16 etc.). Derision and joy at Jerusalem's discomfiture is seen in Lament. 2:15-16 and Micah 6:16. In Isaiah 5:26 and Isaiah 7:18, God whistles for the nations to gather to destroy Israel, but in Zech. 10:8 the whistling is God's signal to Israel, inviting them to return to enjoy God's blessing in the land of promise. These last passages can be construed as piping with a shepherd's pipe. (J Hermann - online [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

An onomatopoeic root, **shāraq** occurs twelve times in the OT and is found only in the Qal (simple) stem. The verb is attested in Jewish Aramaic, Syriac and Biblical Aramaic.

In all but one instance (Zech. 10:8), shāraq has a negative connotation. With the exceptions of Isa. 5:26; 7:18; and Zech. 10:8, the term is best understood as a "whistling sound" (perhaps with a "huff" or "brief release of air"). Shāraq indicates expressed emotions of astonishment, disgust or malicious delight at an enemy's fate. These are often accompanied with physical gestures, such as handclapping (Job 27:23; Lam. 2:15), a wagging of the head (v. 15), the gnashing of teeth (v. 16) or the shaking of a fist (Zeph. 2:15). The setting is generally the stark desolation in the aftermath of a city's destruction (often symbolic of a nation's desolation).

Solomon noted in his dedicatory prayer that if the worship and service of Yahweh were neglected the magnificent temple which seemed so imposing would become a ruin and object of scorn (1 Ki. 9:8). Where there was commerce, there would exist derision by former merchants (Ezek. 27:36). The Lord would "whistle," summoning the nations to come against the land: "In that day, that the Lord will [whistle] for the fly... of Egypt, and for the bee... in the land of Assyria" (Isa. 7:18; cf. 5:26).

While Judah's destruction was seen and ridiculed (Jer. 19:8), Yahweh also had a day for the nations. Edom's desolation would be noticed by all (49:17). People would pass by and "hiss" at the extensive ruins of Babylon (50:13). At Nineveh's fall, people were depicted as hissing and shaking their fists at the hated city (Zeph. 2:15). Individuals, like nations, who think themselves self-sufficient, will ultimately come to ruin. Calamity whistles at them and claps its hands (Job 27:23).

Although the nations were summoned against Israel (Isa. 5:26; 7:18), Yahweh intended good, not evil, for his people: "I will [signal] for them, and gather them" (Zech. 10:8). He whistled for them to come and return to covenant blessings. In this verse, the picture presented may be like that of a shepherd piping to his sheep.

SHARAQ - 12V - hiss(9), whistle(3). 1 Ki. 9:8; Job 27:23; Isa. 5:26; Isa. 7:18; Jer. 19:8; Jer. 49:17; Jer. 50:13; Lam. 2:15; Lam. 2:16; Ezek. 27:36; Zeph. 2:15; Zech. 10:8

