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"Wait for Me": Appreciating the Curious Juxtaposition of Zephaniah 3:8 and 9

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"WAIT FOR ME":
APPRECIATING THE CURIOUS JUXTAPOSITION OF ZEPHANIAH 3:8 AND 9

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PREFACE

When I started doctoral work, I had no intention of doing anything in the Latter Prophets. Perhaps it is my earlier accounting training, but wrestling with the details of the historical books and mining them for theological insights has always had my interest. The Latter Prophets involved the difficulties of understanding Hebrew poetry, searching for referents, and trying to make sense of a message that was delivered in a context to which I am barely connected.

Unfortunately, one day I found myself without a dissertation topic (a previous topic idea proved to be unworkable). In the mercies of God, Dr. Paul Raabe, my *Doktorvater*, did not just send me to the library to start working on another topic. Rather he suggested a problem that he had noticed in Zephaniah scholarship: their handling of the juxtaposition of the complete destruction of the world in 3:8 and the conversion of the world in 3:9. He suggested that I look at this book and see what I could come up with.

I was grateful for his suggestion, especially since he did not suggest something in Isaiah. I found that Zephaniah is studied well enough that there was sufficient secondary literature off of which to bounce ideas. However, I discovered that, despite all these works, only a couple even seemed to notice the juxtaposition or deal with it. Further, those attempts fell well short of what I felt was an acceptable solution.

Part of being a student of Dr. Raabe means that you will pay extremely close attention to the lexical and grammatical details of the text. I examined every word of 2:1–3:13 and asked myself if there was meaning in each grammatical construction. I took no one's word, but ran down everything that I could until I was satisfied. I hope that even if those who read my thesis do not accept my conclusion, at least my attention to detail will make it defensible.

Trying to solve the problem is in itself a contribution to scholarship. What has made the project even more interesting and fulfilling was following Dr. Raabe's suggestion to see what speech-act theory might contribute. When I started working with it, I thought that maybe it would help confirm what I would discover through detailed exegesis. When I began to apply it in chapter 6, however, I was elated to discover how much it contributed to the interpretation itself. It seems to me that one of the contributions of this dissertation is the demonstration that simply asking about illocutionary and perlocutionary forces can be a real asset in interpreting biblical texts.

Zephaniah has been my constant companion for the last two years. I am grateful for his message of constancy in the face of opposing forces and pray that I can rise to the level of one of his ideal hearers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As anyone who has attempted it can testify, a dissertation is never truly the product of a single individual. There are many people who, directly or indirectly, contribute to its completion and success. Though I could name a lot of people—friends, classmates, professors, fellow ministers—there are three who stand out in my case.

My wife Tina has been my best friend and greatest encouragement even before we were married in 1981. My love for her and her love for me keep me going at moments when I want to quit. She made no contributions to my understanding of Zephaniah, but she made great contributions to my will to continue.

My *Doktovater*, Paul Raabe, Ph.D., Professor of Exegetical Theology and Chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology, ran me through his version of the scholar's boot camp. Besides suggesting the topic idea, he forced me time and again to focus on the small details that I too often brush over. He challenged every assumption and unproved assertion until I either could prove it or recognized that I had gone wrong. I feel that this dissertation may be better than just passing and, if it is, Dr. Raabe is the reason for that.

Jeannine Liebmann, MA, LPC, came into my life at a time when I could have washed out. Her counsel and coaching helped me understand where ADHD made my task difficult and helped me work out coping strategies. I hope that her future includes a vehicle to assist other students in situations similar to mine to succeed. I also hope that, as I begin my teaching career, I will be able to use the insights I gained from her to assist students who come under my care.

COPYRIGHT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANE	Ancient Near East
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
ATAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
ATD	Alte Testament Deutsch
AUM	Andrews University Monographs
AUSTR	American University Studies Theology and Religion
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BasBi	Basic Bible Commentary
BDB	Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver and Charles Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BHK^{1}, *BHK*^{3}	Rudolph Kittel, ed. Biblia Hebraica. Sttutgart, 1905–06 (1st ed.); 1937 (3rd ed.)
BHS	Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.* 5th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BibS(F)	Biblische Studien
BiLiSe	Bible and Literature Series
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series

BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BR	*Biblical Research*
BSC	Bible Study Commentary
BT	*The Bible Translator*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCS.OT	Communicator's Commentary Series, Old Testament
CeB	Century Bible
CPNC	College Press NIV Commentary
CurBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
DCH	David J. A. Clines. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 6 volumes. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–.
DSB.OT	Daily Study Bible (Old Testament)
EBC	Everyman's Bible Commentary
EDB	*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000.
EstBib	*Estudios Biblicos*
ESV	English Standard Version
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
ExBC	*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*
FF	Foundations and Facets
FocBi	Focus on the Bible Commentary
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

FTS	Freiburger Theologische Studien
GKC	Wilhelm Gesenius. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by E. Kautsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2d English ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910. Translation of *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebraeische Grammatik voellig umberab. von E. Kautsch*. 28th ed. Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1909.
HAL	Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm. *Hebräisches und Aramäishes Lexikon zum Alten Testament*. 3d ed. 5 vols. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967–1995.
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited by M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
HB	Hebrew Bible
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HolOTC	Holman Old Testament Commentary
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IB	*Interpreter's Bible*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ITC	International Theological Commentary
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. 2 vols. New York: Title Publishing Company, 1943.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JOTT	*Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*
JPS	*Tanakh*. Jewish Publication Society
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*

JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
LHCS	Layman's Handy Commentary Series
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
NAB	New American Bible
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NHWB	Jacob Levy. *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch Über die Talmudim und Midraschim*. 4 vols. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1876.
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible*
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplement
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OAN	Oracle against the Nations
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library

OTM	Old Testament Message
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PC	Pulpit Commentary
ResQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
SB	Sources bibliques
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutic Series
SN	Shepherd's Notes
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
TDOT	G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by John T. Willis, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, David E. Green, and Douglas W. Stott. 15 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974–2006.
Tg. Neb.	Alexander Sperber. *The Latter Prophets According to Targum Jonathan*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962.
Tg. Onq.	Alexander Sperber. *The Pentateuch According to Targum Onkelos*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959.
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TWOT	R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody, 1980.
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
Vulg.	Vulgate
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WEC	Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
WStB	Wuppertaler Studienbibel

ZBK	Zücher Bibelkommentare

ABSTRACT

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Zephaniah 3:8 presents the complete destruction of the entire earth while 3:9 depicts the conversion of peoples from other nations. There is no consensus in Biblical scholarship as to the meaning of these two verses and of the curious juxtaposition.

The masculine plural imperative addressees of 2:3, "the humble of the land who do Yahweh's judgment," remain the addressees of all second person masculine plural verbs and pronouns through the rest of the book. They are encouraged to wait hopefully upon Yahweh. The prophet gives them motivation to wait: Yahweh will destroy the wicked of the earth and Yahweh will be glorified when he converts the peoples.

A threefold method produces this conclusion: (1) Philology—close examination of the use of words and grammatical constructions; (2) Literary structure—derived from both philological clues (such as connective particles) and content; (3) Speech-act semantics—examining the illocutionary forces intended in the text.

Therefore, "wait for me" is a directive command to the faithful. Its propositional content conditions are contained in two commissive כִּי clauses. The promise of Yahweh both to pour out judgment upon the wicked earth and to be glorified through all the earth serving him provides powerful motivation for the faithful to wait upon Yahweh through coming difficult times.

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Two verses in the book of Zephaniah—a mere forty Hebrew words—have consistently resisted consensus by scholars as to their interpretation and force. There is such diversity that it would be only mildly hyperbolic to say that no pair of verses in all the HB yield as many interpretations as this pair does.

In his relatively short book, Zephaniah indicts both foreign nations and the corrupt leaders of Judah for their sins. He announces that Yahweh is going to bring destruction upon all of them in due time. He reaches his climax in 3:8–9. First, he speaks in no uncertain terms about the fate of the nations.

> "Therefore wait for me," the utterance of Yahweh, "for the day of my arising for prey. For my judgment is to assemble nations, to gather kingdoms, to pour out on them my indignation—all the heat of my wrath; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth will be consumed."

Immediately, without qualification or explanation, the prophet announces the conversion of those same nations.

> "For then I will turn upon the peoples a pure lip, that all of them would call upon the name of Yahweh, that they serve Him with one shoulder."

Complete destruction and conversion back-to-back. Just what is going on here? This question has puzzled commentators for years, and there is no more consensus today on the meaning of this odd juxtaposition than there has ever been.

Possible Answers to the Problem Caused by These Two Verses

When Zeph 3:8–9 is read without emendation, with the most ordinary meaning of each word, and taking the identification of the characters at face value, the reader is faced with a dilemma: Every person in every nation on earth is going to be wiped out in the wrath of Yahweh and all peoples on earth are going to be converted by the power of Yahweh. Both cannot literally be true. If everyone is destroyed, no one is left to be converted. If everyone is converted, then why do they need to be destroyed? Here are some possible answers, each of which has support among scholars (and which will be seen in chapter 6).

1. 3:9 is a later addition, completely out of character with what precedes and which represents the agenda of a subsequent redactor. Therefore, the juxtaposition is a result of the editorial process. Disparate thoughts were just allowed to exist side by side.

2. 3:9 begins a new oracle. Therefore, the juxtaposition is only apparent and not real. Though it begins with a connective word, the phrase כִּי־אָז is not connective, but emphatic, signaling a new section.

3. The prophet is speaking hyperbolically. Only some of the earth will be destroyed and only some of the nations will be converted.

4. The pouring out of Yahweh's wrath over the entire earth should not be understood as complete destruction but as purifying judgment. He will wipe out some people and nations and convert others. Destruction purifies in that most evil elements are removed and the rest are converted as they witness Yahweh's terrible power. The result is that only purified people will remain.

5. Though the verses seem to refer to the nations, it is really Judah who is being referenced. The wicked of Judah will be eliminated and the faithful will be further purified.

6. The wicked nations will be devastated but only Judah will be restored. The *peoples* of 3:9 are Yahweh's people.

7. The juxtaposition is literary, not historical. How this works in real life is not the issue for Zephaniah. Rather, he has a rhetorical purpose for putting the two seemingly irreconcilable statements together.

The Elusive Solution

In subsequent chapters, I will demonstrate that scholarship has not come to consensus on a solution. However, the problem is solvable by doing careful philological work, recognizing a structure based on grammatical clues as well as content, and applying speech-act theory to determine illocutionary forces. Then the curious juxtaposition will not only make sense but will emerge as the key to understanding the message of the entire book of Zephaniah.

PART ONE

PROLOGOMENA

As alluded to in the Introduction, Zeph 3:8–9 has produced a wide array of interpretations in Biblical scholarship. Chapter 1 will survey those interpretations along with the methods used to produce them. Chapter 2 will then lay out the method that I propose to deal with these verses.

CHAPTER ONE

SURVEY OF ZEPHANIAH SCHOLARSHIP

Zephaniah has never been the popular choice for scholarly attention.[1] It is not quoted in the NT. It is cited much less frequently than other books by Jewish and Christian writers of the first several centuries C.E. It continued to suffer lack of attention through the Reformation and into the twentieth century. Ehud Ben Zvi speculates that this neglect is because Zephaniah "shows few 'new ideas,' i.e., the book, or the prophet echoes ideas found elsewhere in the prophetic literature."[2]

While Zephaniah was covered in all the major commentary sets of the early to mid-twentieth century, there were but a handful of works devoted solely to it.[3] Beginning in the 1970s, however, Zephaniah began to get his due with the production of dozens of monographs, commentaries, and journal articles.

As in the past, recent commentary series include Zephaniah. Often, however, it was assigned to the same author as two or three or even eleven other books of the Minor Prophets.

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[1] Any sizeable commentary or introduction will confirm the historical situation. The best survey is found in Ehud Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* (BZAW 198; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 21–38. Much of this section is in debt to Ben Zvi. Also see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Zephaniah: A Paradigm for the Study of the Prophetic Books," *CurBS* 7 (1999): 119–45, who surveys modern approaches, especially the historical critical.

[2] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 29.

[3] This is not just my own searching for commentaries. If one combs the bibliographies of major modern commentaries, few early works are noted. Some notable works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are Laur Reinke, *Der Prophet Zephanja* (Münster: Wilhelm Niemann, 1868); Joseph Lippl, *Das Buch des Propheten Sophonias* (BibS[F] 15.3; Berlin: Herder, 1910); Heinrich Oscar Kühner, *Zephanja* (Zurich: Zwinglig Verlag, 1943).

These commentaries, with a couple of notable exceptions, are short and exhibit little depth of research. Fortunately, there are major works on all or part of Zephaniah.[4]

Overall Approaches to Zephaniah

When earlier generations of commentators turned their attention to the Minor Prophets, they used the standard critical methods of the day.[5] Likewise, recent Zephaniah commentaries mirror trends in the larger schema of commentaries on the Latter Prophets, including historical critical approaches,[6] literary critical examinations,[7] and rhetorical critical analyses.[8]

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[4] These would include Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986); Ivan J. Ball, Jr., *Zephaniah: A Rhetorical Study* (Berkeley, Calif.: Bibal Press, 1988); Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*; Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah*: *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25a; New York: Doubleday, 1994),; Rainer Edler, *Das Kerygma des Propheten Zefanja* (FTS; Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1984); Karl Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten II: Die Propheten Nahum, Habakuk, Zephanja, Hagai, Sacharja, Maleachi* (ATD 25; Göttingen, Germany: Bandenboeck & Ruprecht, 1963); Mária Eszenyei Széles, *Wrath and Mercy: A Commentary on the Books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (tr. George A. F. Knight; ITC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987); Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets* (FOTL 22; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000); Paul R. House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama* (BiLiSe 16; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988); Arvid Schou Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah: Morphology and Ideas* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975); Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Twelve Minor Prophets* (2 vols.; trans. James Martin; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1949); Greg A. King, "The Theological Coherence of the Book of Zephaniah" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1996); Klaus Koch, *The Prophets Volume 1: The Assyrian Period* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Lippl, *Das Buch des Propheten Sophonias*; Reinke, *Der Prophet Zephanja*; B. Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum* (SB; Paris: Gabalda, 1987); J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990); Wilhelm Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja* (KAT vol. 13/3; Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1975); Daniel Hojoon Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations: A Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Zephaniah 2:1–3:8* (BibInt 13; Leiden: Brill, 1995); Liudger Sabottka, *Zephanja: Versuch einer Neuoοübersetzung mit Philologischem Kommentar* (BibOr 25; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972); Klaus Seybold, *Nahum, Habakuk, Zephanja* (ZBK AT 24.2; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991); Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi* (WBC 32; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1984); Marvin A. Sweeney, *Zephaniah* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Johannes Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah* (trans. John Vriend; HCOT; Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1999).

[5] "While a number of able historical scholars completed the work on the Twelve, there is very little variation in their approach to the books. Textual, historical and stylistic concerns are covered, and exegetical comments are made. Once more there is a great emphasis on 'authentic' and 'spurious' oracles. After breaking the text into pieces there is no attempt, however, to unite the fragments." Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve* (BiLiSe 27; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 12.

[6] For example, Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.*

[7] For example, Berlin, *Zephaniah*.

[8] For example, Ball, *Rhetorical Study*.

The Holistic Trend

Marvin Sweeney notes the trend—also present in other works on the HB—of using holistic literary analysis. "Scholars are turning increasingly to holistic models of exegesis that attempt to consider the literary character and interpretation of the final form of the book of Zephaniah as a whole, or at least its major components."[9]

Adele Berlin, for example, takes issue with atomistic critics. "I often object to certain analyses that fragment the book into its presumed original constituents, for by breaking up the text in this manner, a critic trivializes the units and may totally miss the overarching literary interpretation of a pericope."[10] She has particularly pointed criticism of J. J. M. Roberts' view that the alleged sources produce an inconsistent work.

> I find this difficult to accept because most if not all compilers, ancient and modern, have a purpose and seek to make their compilations coherent. And most readers, despite Roberts' opposition to this practice, read as though the compilers did. By rejecting the claim that the juxtaposition of units affects their meaning, Roberts denies his readers a powerful interpretive device—the use of immediate context to make sense of an oracle. What Roberts is really telling us is to look only to the original context of the oracle, the prophet's first utterance of it, and to discount its present context in the prophetic book. But the original context is lost to us; we do not know exactly when, where, and why the prophet delivered a particular oracle. The only context we have is in the book. The secondary context may impart a secondary meaning to the oracle (for a thing may mean one thing in one context and another thing in another), but in the final analysis it is the context of the book that shapes and preserves the prophetic message. Moreover, the primary task of the exegete is to explain the *book*, not only its pieces. The exegete will therefore assume coherence (as readers do for all texts), until all attempts to find it fail.[11]

She does not deny that it is possible that Zephaniah is a compilation of multiple sources by multiple redactors, only that it does not matter. She proposes three key arguments for its unity: (1) "It exists now as a whole"; (2) "There is no manuscript evidence that it ever existed

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[9] Sweeney, "Zephaniah: A Paradigm," 130.

[10] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 20–21.

[11] Ibid., 22.

otherwise"; (3) "*Viewing it as a whole yields an interpretation much more interesting and compelling than viewing it as a collection of separate parts*."[12]

This trend has hardly eliminated historical critical commentaries on Zephaniah. While most European scholars focus on which verses are authentic and on the motives of the redactor, recent English speaking commentators set these issues aside and treat the text in its final form.

Take, for example, the work of Ben Zvi. He posits three levels of development: pre-compositional material (perhaps from the actual prophet Zephaniah), a compositional level (during the post-monarchal period), and a few post-compositional additions.[13] However, when he comments on a particular text, he discusses the final form. So although he does not believe the existing book came from a single author, he interprets the text as if it does. In contrast to European scholars—Guy Langohr refuses to exegete what he considers added material[14] and Wilhelm Rudolph takes great pains to point out which ideas come from which layers[15]— Ben Zvi treats every phrase in every verse as important to the interpretation.[16]

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[12] Ibid., 22–23, emphasis hers.

[13] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 347–58.

[14] "Contrairement aux deux premiers chapitres, So., III est en grande part inauthentique et la critique laisse subsister plusieurs incertitudes." Guy Langohr, "Le Livre de Sophonie et la Critique d'Authenticitê," *ETL* 52 (1976): 18.

[15] "Ungangbar ist auch der Ausweg, Daß mit den Völkern hier *alle* Völker mit Einschluß Judas gemeint seien (so Procksch, Smit, Deden, Sellin, Horst), eben weil im jetztigen Zusammenhang kein Anlaß vorhanden war, die Heidenvölker in das Gericht einzubeziehen. Die Änderung eines einzigen Buchstabens behebt die Schwiergkeit: Statt עליהם ist עליכם zu lessen. Der Text wurde geändert, um den göttlichen Zorn von dem auserwählter Volk auf die Heidenwelt abzuleiten, zumal da deren Vernichtung im eschatologischen Gericht dem Späteren Judentum bei Zephanja nicht deutlich genug ausgesprochen erschien." Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 290.

[16] For example, see his treatment of 3:9, considered by some critics to be a late addition: "The first unit (Zeph 3:9–10) is linked to the concluding phrase of the preceding announcement of judgment by the similar and recurrent use of and by the explicit, 'then, at that time.' As a result, the universal announcement of judgment in Zeph 3:9 turns out to be the first act of the divine action that leads to universal salvation." Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 320.

The Book of the Twelve

The most recent redaction critical trend is to read Zephaniah as a constituent part of the corpus of Minor Prophets, that is, one component of the so-called Book of the Twelve.[17] An earlier generation of scholars maintained that the Minor Prophets were grouped together merely because they were of a similar genre and would fit on a single scroll.[18] James Nogalski disagrees. "The size of the individual writings allows them all to be copied onto one scroll, but their preservation does not necessitate that they must be."[19]

Nogalski assigns great weight to early canon lists which listed the twelve prophets as a single book. "Archaeological data from Qumran reinforces evidence that the *unity* of the Book of the Twelve was already established."[20] He further cites the scribal instructions given in the Babylonian Talmud, where copyists are told to leave four blank lines between other books, but only three blank lines between those of the twelve. This demonstrates to him that the *book* status of The Twelve is different.[21]

Nogalski makes an unwarranted move from the existence as a collection to a single book. The fit-on-a-single-scroll theory adequately accounts for the data. Ben Zvi comments,

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[17] See, among others, Barry Alan Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Study in Text and Canon* (SBLDS 149; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); James D. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 218; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993); Edgar W. Conrad, "Forming the Twelve and Forming Canon," *SBL Seminar Papers, 2002* (SBLSP 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2002), 234–45; House, *The Unity of the Twelve.*

[18] "On the completion of the canon these twelve writings were put together so as to form one prophetic book. This was done 'lest one or other of them should be lost on account of its size, if they are all kept separate,' as Kimchi observes in his *Praef. Comm. In Ps*., according to a rabbinical tradition." Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Twelve Minor Prophets* (2 vols.; trans. James Martin; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1949), 1:1.

[19] James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 4.

[20] Ibid., 2 (emphasis mine).

[21] Cited by Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 3. However, any number of blank lines can also be evidence that they considered them separate books, not chapters in a single work. See Ehud Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books or 'The Twelve': A Few Preliminary Considerations," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 132.

> Even if, for the sake of argument, one were to grant that the twelve prophetic books or their precursors were produced in the form of a single scroll,…it does not follow that they *had* to be (re)read as a unified literary unit, in other words, as a work in which several prophetic books are integrated far beyond what may be expected from a collection or anthology of separate, independent works that share only a certain type of discourse among themselves and that belong to a common repertoire. In other words, one scroll does not necessarily mean one single, literary unit that was (or must have been) (re)read as such.[22]

Nogalski places his emphasis on literary analysis. Key to his analysis are the common catchwords in what he calls the *seams* between the individual books. To find these catchwords he compares the final section of one book with the opening section of the next. If the same words (allowing for synonyms) occur in each section, he claims that a redactor added them in an attempt to link the two books together, and consequently all of the books to the whole.[23]

Following are his common words between Habakkuk and Zephaniah.

Table 1. Nogalski's catchwords between Habakkuk and Zephaniah

Hebrew Word	English Equivalent	Habakkuk Reference	Zephaniah Reference
אֶרֶץ	"earth" "land"	3:3, 6, 7, 9, 12	1:18
אֲדָמָה	"land" "ground"		1:2, 3
עֶבְרָה	"fury"	3:8	1:15, 18
גִּבְעָה	"hills"	3:6	1:10
יָם	"sea"	3:8, 15	1:3
קוֹל	"voice" "sound"	3:10, 16	1:10, 14
רָשָׁע	"evil"	3:13	1:3
יוֹם צָרָה	"day of trouble"	3:16	1:15
בָּקָר	"cattle"	3:17	
בְּהֵמָה	"beast"		1:3

Source: James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 45–49.

[22] Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books or 'The Twelve,'" 131.

[23] Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 20.

Several of these words (רָשָׁע, קוֹל, יָם, אֲדָמָה, אֶרֶץ) are so common that they can hardly be considered evidence of a redactor reworking the two passages. Nogalski is even forced to use synonyms to represent *cattle*. More impressive is the phrase יוֹם צָרָה, "day of trouble." However, this phrase appears thirteen other times in the HB (Gen 35:3; 2 Kgs 19:3; Ps 20:2; 50:15; 77:3; 86:7; Prov 24:10; 25:19; Isa 37:3; Jer 16:19; Obad 1:12; 1:14; Nah 1:7).

Less impressive are the connections he draws between Zephaniah and Haggai.

Table 2. Nogalski's catchwords between Zephaniah and Haggai

Hebrew Word	English Equivalent	Zephaniah Reference	Haggai Reference
עֵת	"time"	3:19, 20 (2x)	1:2 (2x), 4
עַם	"people"	3:20	1:2
בּוֹא	(hiphil) "bring"	3:20	1:6

Source: James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 49–51.

עֵת appears in a stereotypical statement בָּעֵת הַהִיא, "at that time," in Zeph 3:19 and 20. A second occurrence is in Zeph 3:20, וּבָעֵת קַבְּצִי אֶתְכֶם, "and in the time of my gathering you." Hag 1:2, 3 uses עֵת three times as a definite statement, "the time is not yet come" and "is it time?"

עַם is one of the more common words in the HB, so its discovery in both sections is no surprise. What is more, each author uses it differently. In Zeph 3:20 the plural refers to humanity in general, whereas a specific group, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, is cited in Hag 1:2. The contexts of the incredibly common בּוֹא are so different that it is hard to imagine that there is any intentional linking.

The appearance of catchwords—at least in relation to Zephaniah—is not persuasive. Barry Jones, though a proponent of the unity of the Book of the Twelve, is critical. "Although many of his examples are convincing, many other words occur far too frequently within the HB to

conclude that their presence within the seams of the Book of the Twelve is the result of intentional redaction."[24] Furthermore, he accuses Nogalski of seeing what he wants to see.

> Although Nogalski seeks to give a balanced treatment of the question of whether verbal parallels between texts were the result of redactional insertion, or whether the catchwords were already present in the texts when the various books were joined together, which was the general conclusion of Schneider, Nogalski's conclusions are almost without exception that the catchwords are the result of redactional activity.[25]

David Peterson points out that the individual books in the collection differ enough from each other as to make a single reading strategy for them impossible.

> Even though there are significant ways in which these twelve books may be read together, the simple fact that they occur as individual books also enables them to be treated separately. Moreover, each of these books elicits its own interpretive strategies. For example, the rich poetry of Hosea has regularly generated literary studies. By contrast, Amos' hard-hitting rhetoric has led to analysis of the social world that he addresses. As one moves through these twelve books, one or another method or combination of methods will be appropriate.[26]

Ben Zvi points out the implication of reading any prophet as part of the Book of the Twelve.

> J.D. Nogalski claims that: 'These imitations [those of Amos 9:1–15 in Obadiah] serve two functions: First, they provide a judgment against Edom which both parallels and heightens the judgment against Israel in Amos 9.1–10. Second, they introduce the motif of a Jerusalem-centered repossession of the Davidic monarchy.' Even if for the sake of the argument one were to accept that there were such imitations—a position against which I have written at length elsewhere—the issue is whether these presumed imitations may have served the mentioned function. Significantly, as long as Obadiah is read (or was read by its intended audience) as an integral part of a unified Book of the Twelve and as a section closely attached to Amos, Nogalski's claims might stand. But, if Obadiah is read (or was read) on its own, in other words, as a separate book, then it is noteworthy that there is no reference there to judgment

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[24] Jones, *Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, 38.

[25] Ibid., 37. Jones bases his approach on canonical lists and the translational activity of the LXX.

[26] David L. Peterson, "The Book of the Twelve/The Minor Prophets," in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues* (ed. Steven L. McKenzie and M. Patrick Graham; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 102.

> against the House of Jacob/Israel in Obadiah, nor any reference to the Davidic monarchy at all.[27]

His comments about Obadiah apply equally well to Zephaniah. Chapter 7 will demonstrate that Zephaniah has a purpose that is not found in other books of the Minor Prophets. If Zephaniah is read only within the Book of the Twelve, this distinction is missed. Rather than a focus on intertexuality, it is better to give priority to the structure and inner workings of the book as it stands. Regardless of when one thinks the final form was created, since the superscription of the book invites the reader to read it with the time of Josiah as its backdrop, modern readers can profitably do so.

Many other contemporary commentators rightly try to interpret Zephaniah holistically. Though the Book of the Twelve theory currently has many advocates, I find it unconvincing and the fit-on-a-single-scroll still compelling. Therefore, this dissertation will examine Zephaniah as a single, self contained work and not part of a larger corpus.

Approaches to Structure

Zephaniah is so small (only about 750 words—two and one-half double-spaced pages in modern manuscripts) that it might well be expected to contain but a single thought.[28] In attempting to follow Zephaniah's flow of thought, however, scholars attempt to discover his structural outline as an aid in interpretation of the details. Unfortunately, there is little consensus on what that outline looks like.

Berlin finds little agreement between the structural divisions of Jewish manuscripts, modern English translations, and Zephaniah commentaries. This leads her to comment,

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[27] Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books or 'The Twelve,'" 129.

[28] "Its fifty-three verses could conceivably constitute one long chapter, yet they were divided into three chapters in the Middle Ages when the chapter divisions were made." Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 17.

The lack of agreement in dividing so small a body of text is truly amazing. The locus of greatest agreement is in the chapter divisions, which correlate with the masoretic *pisqot* (although there are more of the latter). The chapter divisions seem to have influenced many, though not all, of the divisions made by modern interpreters. The masoretic *pisqot* are, as far as we can tell, apparently based on contents and often coincide with recurring structural or formal features; phrases like "and it will be on that day" and "woe" open *pisqot*. Modern divisions are usually based on contents and/or structural or form-critical considerations. Thus form and contents have served as the basis for ancient and modern subdivisions, though the way in which these are perceived may vary considerably.[29]

Following is a chart of scholars' suggested structural divisions.

[29] Ibid., 19.

Table 3. Zephaniah Structure According to Different Scholars[30]

Scholar Name									
D. Baker[31]	1:1–6	1:7	1:8–18	2:1–3	2:4–3:8			3:9–20	
R. Smith[32]	1:1–6		1:7–2:3		2:4–15	3:1–5	3:6–8	3:9–13	3:14–20
P. House[33]	1:1–7		1:8–2:11		2:12–3:5		3:6–13		3:14–20
A. Berlin[34]	1:1–9		1:10–18	2:1–4	2:5–15	3:1–13			3:14–20
C. Pilcher[35]	1:1–13		1:14–18	2:1–3	2:4–15	3:1–13			3:14–20
P. Craigie[36]	1:1–13		1:14–2:3		2:4–15	3:1–7		3:8–13	3:14–20
A. Aglen[37]	1:1–18			2:1–3	2:4–15	3:1–7		3:8–20	
A. Maillot[38]	1:1–18			2:1–3	2:4–15	3:1–5	3:6–7	3:8–13	3:14–20
W. Rudolph[39]	1:1–18			2:1–3	2:4–15	3:1–7	3:8	3:9–10	3:11–20
G. King[40] R. Mason[41]	1:1–18			2:1–3	2:4–15	3:1–8		3:9–13	3:14–20
R. Chisholm[42]	1:1–18			2:1–3	2:4–3:7		3:8a	3:8b–20	
M. Sweeney[43]	1:1–18			2:1–4	2:5–15	3:1–20			
M. Holland[44]	1:1–18			2:1–15		3:1–5	3:6–20		
C. Feinberg[45] O.P.Robertson[46] K. Seybold[47] C. Taylor[48] Wendland & Clark[49]	1:1–18			2:1–15		3:1–20			
S. R. Driver[50] Hahlen & Ham[51]	1:1–18			2:1–3:7				3:8–20	
M. Floyd[52]	1:1–18			2:1–3:7				3:8–13	3:14–20
J. H. Eaton[53] Deane[54] Irsigler[55] Keil & Delitsch[56] J. Lippl[57] J. Mackay[58] B. Renaud[59] D. Ryou[60]	1:1–18			2:1–3:8				3:9–20	
F. Tatford[61]	1:1–2:3				2:4–15	3:1–7		3:8–20	
T. M. Bennett[62] A. George[63]	1:1–2:3				2:4–15	3:1–8		3:9–20	
L. Hinton[64]	1:1–2:3				2:4–15	3:1–13			3:14–20
Barker & Bailey[65] L. Boadt[66] J. J. M. Roberts[67] L. Sabottka[68]	1:1–2:3				2:4–15	3:1–20			

E.Achtemeier[69] B. Childs[70] M. Eszenyei Széles[71] W. Kaiser[72] J. A. Motyer[73]	1:1–2:3				2:4–3:8			3:9–20	
R. Patterson[74]	1:1–2:3				2:4–3:20				
R. Bennett[75]	1:1–2:4				2:5–3:8			3:9–20	
C. Barber[76] A. Deissler[77] H. Freeman[78] S. Miller[79] P. Wright[80]	1:1–3:8							3:9–20	
J. D. W. Watts[81]	1:1–3:10							3:11–20	

Source: Multiple commentaries; see footnotes.

Though twenty-six different combinations are listed here, most are just small variations of each other. These differences can be summarized by six questions.

1. What is the relationship of 2:1–3 (or 2:1–4) to its literary context? Does it complete the thought of Zeph 1, start a new section, or stand on its own?

2. Does 2:4 go with what precedes or with what follows?

3. How does Zeph 3 (at least the earlier part) connect with Zeph 2? Is it an integral part of the argument of Zeph 2 (or at least of 2:5–15) or does it begin a new thought?

4. What is the relationship between the harsh tone of 3:1–7 (or 3:1–8) and the hopeful note of 3:9–13?

5. Does 3:8 complete the previous section, start a new one, or link what precedes with what follows?

6. Does 3:14–20 stand alone or is it tied into 3:9–13?

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[30] Most everyone separates out 1:1 from what follows as a superscription. For convenience, I have included this verse with the first section in the chart.

[31] David W. Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 105.

[32] R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 124.

[33] House, *Prophetic Drama*, 126.

[34] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 17–20. She follows this arrangement simply because it is the arrangement of the Leningrad Codex.

[35] Charles Venn Pilcher, *Three Hebrew Prophets and the Passing of the Empires* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1931), 151.

[36] Peter C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets Volume 2: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (DSB.OT; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 105–32.

[37] Archdeacon Aglen, S. L. Warren, A. C. Jennings, *The Minor Prophets Volume II: Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (ed. Charles John Ellicott; LHCS; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1960), 108.

[38] Alphonse Maillot, *Jonas, Sophonie* (Paris: Delachaux and Niestlé, 1977), 101.

[39] Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 255.

[40] Greg A. King, "Theological Coherence," 183–84.

[41] Rex Mason, *Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel* (OTG; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 19–25.

[42] Robert B. Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 444.

[43] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 9–10.

[44] Martin Holland, *Die Propheten Nahum, Habakuk und Zephanja* (WStB; Wuppertal, Germany: R. Brockhaus, 1986).

[45] Charles Lee Feinberg, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi* (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1951).

[46] Robertson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 29.

[47] Seybold, *Nahum, Habakuk, Zephanja*, 124.

[48] Charles T. Taylor, "The Book of Zephaniah," in *IB* (ed. George Arthur Butterick, *et al*; 12 vols.; New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 6:1009.

[49] Ernst R. Wendland and David J. Clark, "Zephaniah: Anatomy and Physiology of a Dramatic Prophetic Text," *JOTT* 16 (2003): 5.

[50] Samuel Rolles Driver, *The Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (CeB; Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1906), 104.

[51] Mark Allen Hahlen and Clay Alan Ham, *Minor Prophets Volume 2: Nahum–Malachi* (CPNC; Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 2006), 187.

[52] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:165–66.

[53] J. H. Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah: Introduction and Commentary* (TBC; London: SCM Press, 1961), 121–59.

[54] W. J. Deane, *Zephaniah* (PC; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1913), 1, 25, 50.

[55] Hubert Irsigler, *Zefanja* (HTKAT; Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 2002), 8–11.

[56] Keil and Delitzsch, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:121.

[57] Lippl, *Das Buch des Propheten Sophonias*.

[58] John L. Mackay, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (FocBi; Fearn, England: Christian Focus Publications, 1998), 242.

[59] Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 177.

[60] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 282.

[61] Frederick A Tatford, *Prophet of Royal Blood: An Exposition of the Prophecy of Zephaniah* (Eastbourne, Sussex: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, 1973), 16.

[62] T. Miles Bennett, *The Books of Nahum and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1968).

[63] Augustin George, *Michée, Sohponie, Nahum* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1952).

[64] Linda B. Hinton, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (BasBi; Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1988).

[65] Kenneth L. Barker, and Waylon Bailey *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (NAC 20; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 403.

[66] Lawrence Boadt, *Jeremiah 26–52, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Nahum* (OTM 10; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazer, 1982), 204.

[67] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 162–63.

[68] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, ix–xv.

[69] Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 61–62.

[70] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 458.

[71] Eszenyei Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, 64.

[72] Walter C. Kaiser, *Micah–Malachi* (CCS.OT 21; Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 212.

[73] J. Alec Motyer, "Zephaniah," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 902.

[74] Richard D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (WEC; Chicago: Moody, 1991), 281–82.

[75] Robert A. Bennett, "Zephaniah," in *NIB* (ed. Leander E. Keck, *et al*.; 12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 7:669.

[76] Cyril J. Barber, *Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (EBC; Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 84.

[77] Alfons Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten III: Zefanja, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi* (NEchtB; Würzburg, Germany: Echter, 1988), 238–49.

[78] Hobart E. Freeman, *Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk: Minor Prophets of the Seventh Century* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 54–55.

[79] Stephen R. Miller, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (HolOTC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 92.

[80] Paul Wright, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (SN; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 79.

[81] John D. W. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 153–85.

These structural questions hover over every interpretive decision regarding 3:8–9. To identify the characters in 3:8 or determine the force of "wait for me," it is critical to have some understanding of how the prophet's argument flows.

Impact of Structural Outline upon Interpretation

How a commentator sees the outline of the book will affect interpretation of individual parts. For example, Mária Eszenyei Széles' structure is as follows: Judgment of the day of the Lord's wrath (1:1–2:3); judgment on foreign nations and Judah (2:4–3:8); prophecies of universal salvation (3:9–20).[82] This structure is built solely on content and ignores philological clues. Consequently, when she gets to 3:8, Judah (the subject of 3:1–8 in her reckoning) will be wiped out along with the nations. Therefore "wait for me" must be menacing.[83]

While there should be a type of hermeneutical circle at work here—the details influence the interpretation of the whole and the whole helps with difficult passages—the philological details of the text should contribute to constructing the outline. The real problem is not that scholars use the structure to interpret the detail, but that because the detail was not consulted in making the outline, the resulting structure is questionable.

Chapter 4 will present the reasons that scholars give for their outlines, a method for determining structure that gives greater weight to philological clues over content, and a structure that makes sense of both those clues and the content. Only then will I be prepared to discuss what Zephaniah means in 3:8–9.

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[82] Eszenyei Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, 64.

[83] Ibid., 107.

Interpretations of Zephaniah 3:8–9

There are key questions that impact the interpretation of these two verses. (1) Is חַכּוּ־לִי "wait for me" in 3:8 menacing or hopeful? (2) Who are the addressees of 3:8: Jerusalem in general or the righteous of Jerusalem? (3) Who is going to be punished in 3:8: the nations, Jerusalem, or both? (4) Who is going to be restored/converted in 3:9: The nations, Jerusalem, or both?

Theoretically, there could be eighteen combinations of the answers to these questions, but in the end, only eight possibilities suggest themselves to the various commentators. They will be detailed and critiqued in chapter 5.

1. All Jerusalem is addressed, only Jerusalem will be destroyed, only Jerusalem will be restored.

2. All Jerusalem is addressed, only foreign nations will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored.

3. All Jerusalem is addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored.

4. All Jerusalem is addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, only Jerusalem will be restored.

5. All Jerusalem is addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be restored.

6. Only the righteous of Jerusalem are addressed, only Jerusalem will be destroyed, only Jerusalem will be restored.

7. Only the righteous of Jerusalem are addressed, only foreign nations will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored.

8. Only the righteous of Jerusalem are addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored.

If the addressee is the same as the group destroyed—as in options 1, 3, 4, and 5—then "*ait* is considered menacing. If the addressee is a different group—as in options 2, 6, 7, and 8—then *wait* is taken as hopeful. This is quite a range of opinions on these two verses. What is more, as these two verses seem to be in a climactic position, the differences are significant for understanding the entire book of Zephaniah.

Discussion of Juxtaposition

Few commentators focus on the striking juxtaposition that is the theme of this dissertation. In part, this is often due to the relatively small number of pages given to the task. Although there have been many more works devoted to Zephaniah in the last thirty years or so, the number of works that are of sufficient length or depth to adequately address a question like this is small.

Reasons for Juxtaposition

Most commentators do not explicitly give a reason for the juxtaposition of these verses. Of those I consulted, only Peter Craigie, J. H. Eaton, and O. Palmer Robertson take notice of the issue and attempt reasons for it.[84] Other commentators, however, comment on the sequence of events. Their interpretation amounts to an answer to our question, even if they do not explicitly mention the question. I will address these in full in chapter 6. Here is a summary.

1. Mercy always follows judgment.
2. Yahweh's judgment is a purifying act that produces restored people.
3. Yahweh's judgment is a purifying act in that only faithful believers remain.
4. The two events are listed back to back, but not really connected.

[84] Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, 129; Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 151; Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 327.

5. There is an unresolved tension that the prophet may or may not understand, but remains a mystery to us.
6. Complete destruction is merely hyperbole and needs not be pressed.
7. Zephaniah was a liturgical book that made more sense in that setting than in a modern setting.
8. Both events provide motivation for the faithful to remain so.

The first six answers on this list attempt a historical answer to the question, that is, grounding each statement in a historical reality to see how they fit together. They ignore the literary form and fail to address Zephaniah's purpose in making his statements.

Summary

There is a wide variety of opinions as to the basic interpretation of 3:8 and 3:9. Further, there is very little attention given to the unusual juxtaposition of universal destruction and universal conversion and the attention that is given to it falls short of seeing the literary or rhetorical impact that these verses would have on the hearer. Much of the lack of consensus stems from the fact that most Zephaniah works are too short to adequately deal with it. Those works that are more substantial tend to ignore important philological issues. Further, no one treats the illocutionary forces of the verses. This dissertation will hopefully fill this gap in a convincing way.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Barriers to a Solution

There are three areas of disagreement that have prevented reaching accord on these verses: (1) coherence, (2) identification, and (3) purpose.

Coherence

Not all scholars agree that Zephaniah presents a single, coherent message. The jarring change from judgment to restoration invites speculation that these verses, in whole or part, are the product of a later hand. This is not the only reason that source and redaction critics assert multiple authors but a difficult juxtaposition certainly provides powerful evidence. The belief that the book is an amalgamation of disparate authors and viewpoints blunts any attempt to discover a meaning for the verses under study.

Johannes Vlaardingerbroek, for example, combines every element of other redaction critics. For him 3:8d ("For by the fire of my jealousy all the earth will be consumed") is a late addition, as it is "superfluous and even ill-fitting, inasmuch as the intention of vs. 8, after all, is not to announce judgment upon the whole earth but to offer argumentation in support of vs. 7: Judah and Jerusalem must not think they can escape judgment."[1] The original meaning of 3:8 is found in the condemnation of Judah motif that is the subject of 3:1–8.[2] The redactor changed a

[1] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 179–80.

[2] Ibid., 180.

supposed *upon you* to *upon them*; therefore Vlaardingerbroek changes it back.[3] 3:9 is also added by a later editor.[4] The fact that this added material opens with כִּי is admittedly a problem, but dismissed. "Its force is hard to pin down; without a preceding clause, it is hard to ascribe an adversative meaning to it."[5] He emends "peoples" in 3:9 to "my people."[6] Since he sees no coherence—either in the book as a whole or in this section—then the juxtaposition is not connected to the original prophecy. Meaning is only found in the *Sitz im Leben* of the final redactor.

Commentators who reject the source critical approach take one of two tacks: (1) that of Ivan Ball who tries to prove coherence by showing a consistency of key words and themes;[7] (2) or that of Berlin who assumes coherence in the final form of the book and shows how the resulting interpretation is consistent.[8] While both are helpful, I intend to demonstrate coherence through an analysis of the literary structure and flow of the book.

Proving coherence will provide many of the clues to both the identification of the characters and the purpose for writing. This will lead to a solution to the juxtaposition.

Identification of Parties Involved

Agreement on coherence does not, by itself, lead to a solution. Even among those scholars who accept coherence, there is still no consensus on identification of the referents. In 3:8–9 Yahweh speaks a command to one group of people because of his judgment on a second group

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[3] Ibid., 187.

[4] Ibid., 10.

[5] Ibid., 196.

[6] Ibid., 196.

[7] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*.

[8] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 20–23.

and his restoration of a third. Are these three distinct groups or two different groups (combining either the first and third or second and third) or one single group? And who are they?

The addressees have been seen as: (1) the faithful ones in Jerusalem or (2) everyone in Jerusalem and Judah. Candidates for those receiving punishment are: (1) Jerusalem, (2) other nations, or (3) both. Those converted have been described as (1) Jerusalem, (2) other nations, or (3) both.

This leads to different combinations that affect the interpretation. In one example, since all of Jerusalem is addressed (and therefore only Jerusalem will be judged and restored) then any mention of the nations is due to redactional activity.[9] In another version, only the righteous of Jerusalem are addressed, both Jerusalem and the nations will be judged, and only the nations are restored.[10]

Obviously, if commentators cannot even agree on the identity of the characters, it is not surprising that there is no consensus on the meaning of these verses or of their interpretation.

Purpose

Identification of the referents alone will not answer the question. Sometimes identification leads naturally to a particular interpretation. For example, most who view the addressees as the faithful contend that the force of "wait for me" is hopeful. On the other hand, those who maintain that the addressees are all of Jerusalem are split on whether "wait for me" is hopeful or menacing.[11]

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[9] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 57.

[10] J. N. Boo Heflin, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai* (BSC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Lamplighter Books, 1985), 148.

[11] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 179–84, is one who sees all Jerusalem as being addressed, but yet believes it is a hopeful message. Kaiser, *Micah–Malachi*, 235, however, sees this address to Jerusalem as menacing.

Solving the question involves finding the purpose of these verses, which is related to the purpose of the entire book. Is Zephaniah a call to repentance, a declaration of judgment or a message of encouragement to the faithful? Once again there is no consensus.

What a commentator sees as the overall purpose impacts the interpretation of 3:8–9. For example, Michael Floyd views the 2:1–3:13 section as an exhortation to repent and seek Yahweh. This leads him to interpret "wait for me" as hopeful.[12] Conversely, David Baker sees 2:4–3:8 as specific scenarios of judgment—first on the nations, then on Judah; therefore "wait for me" is menacing.[13]

Again, if scholars cannot come to agreement on the overall purpose of the book or its sections, consensus on the questions of these verses will continue to elude them.

I propose a three part method that will remove these barriers and lead to solving the issues of Zeph 3:8–9: (1) philology, (2) analysis of structure, and (3) speech-act analysis.

Synchronic vs. Diachronic Approaches

Underlying this method is the decision to treat Zephaniah synchronically. Among scholars, both source and redaction critics treat the final form of the text as a combination of original sources compiled, embellished and redacted on at least one occasion subsequent to the original material. Since they believe that the book under study has been constructed over time, these scholars take a diachronic approach to the text. Source critics mostly interpret blocks of material according to their supposed original contexts while redaction critics focus on the interpretation of the various hypothesized redactors. Obviously, both disciplines overlap a great deal.

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[12] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:202–3, 234–36.

[13] Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 114–15.

For most using diachronic methods, the original pre-exilic prophecy, which included most of 3:8, was against Jerusalem only. In exilic times, a redactor included the nations by changing עֲלֵיהֶם to עֲלֵיכֶם and adding 3:8d, borrowing it from 1:18.[14] Later another redactor added 3:9–10. Some posit a two stage addition—the original was a prophecy of Judah's restoration; then another redactor transformed the focus to the conversion of the nations by changing אֶל-עַמִּי to אֶל-עַמִּים.[15] Chapter 5 will present these in detail.

A synchronic approach deals with the text at a single point in time. Though a commentator may believe that the text went through some level of redaction, only the final form of the text is important for interpretation. It was noted in chapter 1 that the trend—especially among English speaking scholarship—has moved toward holistic literary analysis. This naturally requires a synchronic approach to the text.

Not all who read Zephaniah synchronically come up with the same interpretation, however. There is a wide range of interpretations—often overlapping those of the diachronic.

For example, Charles Taylor takes a diachronic reading. He believes that "wait for me" is a hopeful address to the pious in Jerusalem.[16] Conversely, Eszenyei Széles, also treating the text diachronically, sees "wait for me" as a threat to Judah and Jerusalem.[17] On the synchronic side, Walter Kaiser, like Eszenyei Széles, believes that "wait for me" is menacing.[18] Alec Motyer, however, like Taylor, but unlike Kaiser, believes "wait for me" is a hopeful message.[19]

Daniel Ryou combines synchronic and diachronic approaches.

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[14] See Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 77, among others.

[15] Again see Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 79, among others.

[16] Taylor, "The Book of Zephaniah," 6:1030.

[17] Eszenyei Széles, *Wrath and* Mercy, 104–5;

[18] Kaiser, *Micah–Malachi*, 235.

[19] Motyer, "Zephaniah," 3:948.

> In this study we will show that both approaches have different purposes in the reading of the text and are to be seen as complementary to each other. The text is read first as an unified whole in an attempt to establish the overall structure of meaning of the text by paying attention to how the constituent parts of the text contribute to the overall structure and total meaning of the text. After this synchronic reading comes the diachronic question of whether all the constituent parts of the text point to the same origin in terms of time and historical situation. Here we assume the "operational priority" of synchronic analysis over the diachronic one.[20]

His final point is borne out in the space devoted to each in his work. Ryou devotes 280 pages to synchronic analysis, 54 to diachronic, and 16 to a synthesis of the two. In the end, I fail to see how his approach is an improvement. Despite his protest to the contrary ("However, this operational priority does not necessarily diminish the importance of the diachronic method."[21]), the synchronic method yields an interpretation that overwhelms any diachronic contributions. He seems to limit the value of diachronic results to providing insights on how modern preachers can contextualize the text to fit their situations.[22]

Following the reasons laid out by Berlin listed in chapter 1, this dissertation will take a synchronic approach to Zephaniah. This is the only text we have to work with and it will be shown to flow together logically when considered this way.

Philology

Ostensibly, all scholars do their own translation, looking up words and wrestling with grammatical constructions as they go. As already noted, the relatively small size of most Zephaniah commentaries does not allow them to show their work, making evaluation of their philological work difficult. In fact, when reading most commentaries, I am struck again and

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[20] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 3–4.

[21] Ibid., 358.

[22] Ibid., 359.

again at how many decisions seem to be based on constructing logical units while mostly ignoring word studies and the grammar of the Hebrew text.

Lexical Semantics

Although the sentence is the basic unit of communication, it is made up of words. Like any prophetic book, Zephaniah contains words that are difficult to define, whether because they are *hapax legomena* or because they seem to be used outside of their more common narrative meaning. For example, 2:1 twice uses the root קשׁשׁ, which appears only six other times in the HB. In its other instances, its takes a direct object of sticks or straw; Zephaniah applies it to people, and in different stems than it occurs otherwise. What does this do to its meaning?

With other words, there is no problem with the basic definition, but the question is one of force. The translation of the key word in 3:8, חכה, is easy. The difficulty lies in whether it is used hopefully or menacingly. Before jumping to an argument based on context, it will be important to first see what the possibilities of the word are from its other appearances in the HB. מִשְׁפָּט is an important word that will likewise need study.

Moisés Silva's application of linguistic theory to biblical studies is quite helpful. He points out both the importance and pitfalls of word studies. Most helpful is his application of C. K. Ogden-Richards' triangle, which relates the *sign* or *symbol* or *signifier* (the word itself) with the *sense* or *conceptual signified* (the mental concept that the word conjures up). This is a necessary step that allows us to move to the *referent* (the actual and specific thing or concept to which the speaker refers).[23]

[23] Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 102–3. Different authors use different terms for the three points of the triangle.

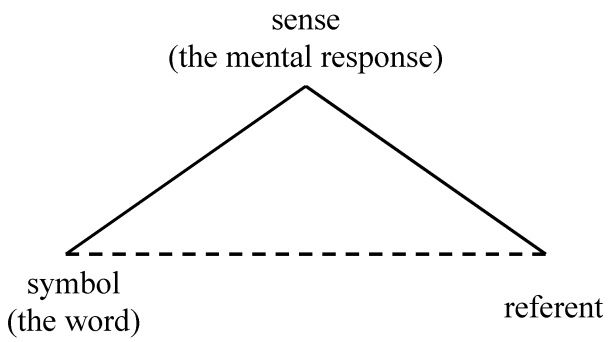

Figure 1. Ogden-Richards triangle.

By itself, a word is merely a *symbol*: marks on a page, sounds vocalized by a speaker. When uttered or written, it conjures up a mental response in the recipient. If speaker and hearer share a common language, they should both have the same *sense* or *meaning* for the word itself. When the speaker uses the word, however, he often has a particular *referent* for that word. If he says, "Cut down the tree," he might be thinking of the larger of two oak trees in the front yard. Context, further instructions, or shared experience will inform the hearer which tree needs to be cut down. It must be noted that, in this example, the word *tree* does not *mean* the larger of two oak trees in the front yard. To the speaker and hearer *tree means* "a woody perennial plant having a single main stem." In this context, its *referent* is a specific tree.

The same process applies to metaphorical uses of words. If the speaker instead says, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," the word *tree* is the same *symbol* with the same basic *meaning*. Its *referent*, however, is not one of the trees in the front yard or, for that matter, any actual woody plant. In this metaphor, *tree* stands in for a parent whose child has similar talents or behaviors as the parent. *Tree* here does not *mean* parent; it still *means* "a woody perennial plant having a single main stem." Its *referent* is a parent, which in context is probably a particular individual.

There are several points where I believe that scholars have confused *meaning* (contained in the *sense*) and *referent*. One example is 2:7 where Zephaniah says, וְשָׁב שְׁבוּתָם, which could be translated as either "and he will restore their fortunes" or "and he will return their captivity." In many uses of שְׁבוּת in the HB, the context indicates that the *referent* is Israel's or Judah's captivity, that is, exile from their land. Some scholars then make the unwarranted leap that the word *means* "captivity". I will demonstrate that it does not and should not be translated as such in this verse.

Agreeing mostly with James Barr, Silva points out that it is improper to bring forward some sense of the word that may have been present in it at one time when interpreting its occurrence elsewhere. Following the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Silva maintains that only a synchronic approach to words is correct. "We must accept the obvious fact that the speakers of a language simply know next to nothing about its development; and this certainly was the case with the writers and immediate readers of Scripture two millennia ago."[24]

Employment of a word in other contexts may help determine its basic meaning. When examining a word in a specific context, however, priority must always be given to its use in that context. Even a child learns that a large percentage of words have multiple meanings or at least some range. B. Siertsema describes how readers naturally decide which of the possible meanings of a word are intended in a particular context.

> That this plurality of aspects of meaning and possible applications of a word does not cause too much misunderstanding in linguistic communication is due to the fact that a word is mostly used in a larger whole as part of a longer utterance which in its turn is embedded in a concrete situation. Word group, phrase, sentence and the wider context, as well as the situation, limit and restrict the many possible interpretations of a word at a certain moment. If this were not so, there would be great confusion and no communication would be possible.

[24] Ibid., 38.

…Words cannot be translated; sentences can.[25]

Siertsema's larger point is that meaning is not found in the word itself, but rather in the sentence or even larger contexts. Barr made this point in his famous critique of the lexical mistakes of the Biblical Theology Movement. "The linguistic bearer of the theological statement is usually the sentence and the still larger literary complex and not the word or the morphological and syntactical mechanisms."[26]

Grammatical Construction

Barr's final point that syntactical mechanisms are not the source of meaning is well taken. However, the grammatical construction of a sentence or paragraph can be of assistance since it frames the context. This dissertation will especially focus on two grammatical features, as these have been often overlooked: (1) the connecting particles; their use has to be clearly understood and applied; and (2) verb and pronoun person and number; paying attention to changes here will be a great help in determining referents.

Existing Works

Several works that do a comprehensive job of philology still provide unsatisfactory interpretations. Ball focuses his study on the rhetorical features of the text. He falls short in two areas, however. First, he examines the text in micro detail but makes too few connections to the overall context or structure. For example, when discussing חַכוּ־לִי, he makes no notice of the person and number of this imperative as an aid to determine the addressee; rather he makes a

[25] B. Siertsema, "Language and World View (Semantics for Theologians)" *BT* 20 (1969): 9.

[26] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 234.

logical content decision.[27] Second, he makes few interpretive decisions at all; he mostly just notes rhetorical features.

Ryou's work is painstaking in its detail and I will cite it regularly, but there are problems. First, he suffers the same micro-focus that Ball does. Second, he makes questionable decisions based on his proposed "syntactic hierarchy."[28] For one example, the word לָכֵן appears twice, in 2:9 and 3:8. Although this word typically connects what follows with what precedes, Ryou assigns it a function as a "macro-syntactic marker." In other words, it indicates the beginning of new sections or subsections. I will argue in chapter 4 that 3:8 begins a climactic subsection. However, it does not do so because of the presence of לָכֵן, as Ryou claims, but for other reasons. In fact, the presence of לָכֵן indicates that this cannot be a major section break, since the word must connect what follows to what precedes. Its presence at 2:9 does not occur at any kind of logical break, but records the result of the actions of Moab and Ammon listed in 2:8.

Third, he is not always consistent. For example, he argues for a strong connective force for the two כִּי clauses in 3:8.[29] However he rejects its connective force in 3:9; instead he claims that the larger phrase כִּי־אָז is a macro-syntactic marker that starts a completely new subject, but cites no examples in the HB.[30] Working through the ten other occurrences of this phrase shows that the presence of אָז never changes the meaning or connective function of כִּי. כִּי־אָז never marks the beginning of a new section; it even appears in 3:11 in the middle of a sentence.[31]

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[27] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 231.

[28] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 77–87.

[29] Ibid., 278.

[30] Ibid., 140.

[31] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 183, recognizes this problem: "Second, the particle combination כִּי־אָז, 'for then,' does not therefore mark the beginning of a new redactional unit; indeed, this argument actually depends on the *alleged thematic shift* in the passage" (emphasis mine).

Analysis of Structure

Chapter 1 demonstrates the wide range of how scholars structure Zephaniah. Those decisions have been based largely on the interpreter's analysis of the content of each section. The resulting structures greatly impact the interpretations of the book, especially 3:8–9.

I will use the results of the philological analysis in combination with content to determine the structure. Philology brings some measure of control to content analysis. Understanding the function of connective particles and determining proper referents of verbs and pronouns will also provide information to determine structure.

Constructing such a structure implies the unity of the book. Treating Zephaniah in this way falls within acceptable norms of modern interpretation and coincides with what the majority of scholars have done in the last twenty years.

Speech-Act Analysis

Doing good philological and structural work will move very far along toward a solution, but in the end, may still come up a little short of answering the question. This is where speech-act theory helps.

The Origins of Speech-Act

The term was first coined by J. L. Austin in the 1950s. Austin was primarily interested in performative speech, which is speech that, in and of itself, performed an action. "A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true of false'; and B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as 'just', saying something."[32]

[32] John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (2d ed; edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 5.

Examples of this type of speech include: "(E. *a*) 'I do (sc. Take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)'—as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony. (E. *b*) 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth'—as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem. (E. *c*) 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother'—as occurring in a will."[33]

In later development by others, his speech focus would be labeled *declarative*. What makes Austin so valuable is that, though he limited himself to one type of speech-act, the analysis he brought to this small corner of the way people talk provided the foundation for examining all types of speech.

In fact, Austin ventured beyond just the performative when describing the different components of speech-act. "Thus we distinguished the locutionary act (and with it the phonetic, the phatic, and the rhetic acts) which has a *meaning*; the illocutionary act which has a certain *force* in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is *the achieving of* certain *effects* by saying something."[34]

Austin believed speech-act to be natural language and thought it resistant to formulas or much more than general descriptions.[35] Those who followed thought otherwise. John Searle developed an elaborate system of categorizing illocutionary forces, complete with complex mathematical equations for describing them. He states, "Whenever a speaker utters a sentence in an appropriate context with certain intentions, he performs one or more illocutionary speech acts."[36]

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[33] Ibid., 5.

[34] Ibid., 121.

[35] And, in fact, Austin did not even write a book on the subject. All of the books that list him as author were published posthumously. *How to Do Things with Words* were taken from his notes delivered in a series of lectures in 1955. See the editors' preface to *How to Do Things with Words*, v–viii.

[36] John R. Searle and Daniel Vanderveken. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1.

Like Austin, Searle wants to make a sharp distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects.

> Correlated with the notion of illocutionary acts is the notion of the consequences or *effects* such acts have on the actions, thoughts, or beliefs, etc., of hearers. For example, by arguing I may *persuade* or *convince* someone, by warning him I may *scare* or *alarm* him, by making a request I may *get him to do something*, by informing him I may *convince him* (*enlighten*, *edify*, *inspire him*, *get him to realize*). The italicized expressions above denote perlocutionary acts.[37]

Searle's Contribution to the Study

Seven Components of Illocutionary Force. Searle's terminology is probably the best known in the field. This summary is simply an overview.[38]

(1) Illocutionary point. There are five (Searle emphasizes "and only five") potential points or purposes to each speech-act. Each of these points also corresponds to one of four "directions of fit," that is, the relationship of the statement to the world it inhabits.

(a) Assertive illocutionary forces. These are statements that describe the way things are. "The world is round." "Apples are normally red or green." They have a word-to-world direction of fit. This means that for the statement to be successful, the words are made to correspond to the reality as it exists outside the statement.

(b) Commissive illocutionary points. These are basically commitments or promises made by the speaker to a certain course of action. "I will be there." "If it does not rain, I will go." They have a world-to-word direction of fit in that the speaker declares that his future actions will be made to match his statement.

(c) Directive illocutionary points. These are statements intended to produce a course of action in the hearer. They run the range from meek request to authoritative command. "Please

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[37] John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 25.

[38] This summary is derived from Searle and Vanderveken. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic.*

help me." "I command you to stop." They also have a world-to-word direction of fit in that the speaker intends for his statement to produce matching actions by the hearer.

(d) Declarative illocutionary points. These are the statements that so interested Austin originally. They are the performative statements that in their very speaking make something happen. "I now pronounce you man and wife." "This meeting is adjourned." There is a double-direction of fit. Both the words and reality are made to match by the declaration.

(e) Expressive illocutionary points. These are statements about the speaker's attitude, opinions, or feelings about a matter. "I am sad." "Your actions please me." "I apologize." They have a null-direction of fit. There is no matching of the statement to reality.

When two statements of the same illocutionary point are combined, they often indicate one general action. The statement "Go to the door and let her in" involves two separate directives, but together accomplish a single purpose. At other times, however, it is possible to have more than one illocutionary force operating within the same sentence or general utterance. "Come with me and I will buy you dinner," unites a directive and a commissive. When combined like this, the different types of statements work together in a different type of relationship. This type of construction will be important when looking at Zeph 3:8–9.

(2) The mode of achievement. A speaker in a position of authority achieves a successful result of his directive statement in a different manner than a person not in authority. The former commands, the latter begs.

(3) The degree of strength. Begging is stronger than asking. Requesting is weaker than commanding. Promising is stronger than "perhaps".

(4) Propositional content conditions. Sometimes conditions are attached to the statement. "If it is not raining, I will come." "If I whistle, then pull the handle." For the apodosis to be true—the main illocutionary statement—the condition must first be met.

It seems to me that Searle is too limited here and misses other reasons for the main illocutionary statement to become true. He does not consider motivation. When discussing the combination of statements with different illocutionary points above, I used the statement, “Come with me and I’ll buy you dinner.” If the speaker is not in authority and needs to persuade the hearer to agree to the action, then the statement could be thought of as a conditional in which the *if…then* has been elided: “If you will come with me, then I will buy you dinner.” In this case, the protasis might not be considered a directive at all, but merely the propositional content condition for the commissive apodosis.

If, however, the speaker is someone in authority over the hearer, then there is no true conditional relationship between the two statements. The speaker directs the hearer to come with him. At the same time, however, he gives a reason or motivation for the hearer to follow the directive—there is a reward in obeying.

Now change the sentence to, “Come with me or you’re fired.” Assuming again that a superior is speaking, the directive is made without condition. Still, motivation is provided in that the hearer knows the consequence of not obeying.

Searle has no explicit category to describe this relationship. To me, it is somewhat analogous to the conditional in that one statement is based upon the other being true. In a true conditional construct, the apodosis is expected to be true only if the protasis is also a true statement. But when a superior says, “Come with me and I will buy you dinner,” though the directive is not conditioned upon the commissive, the hearer may well act or be motivated to act because the promise is made. Combined with the preparatory condition (discussed next), the expected truth of the commissive moves the hearer to follow the directive.

(5) Preparatory conditions. To adjourn the meeting the speaker must have the authority to do so. To make a command the hearer must recognize the speaker’s authority.

(6) Sincerity conditions. A directive may be made that the speaker does not want carried out. “Go ahead and go if you want,” may not be the true desire of the speaker. “I promise I will come,” is an unsuccessful statement in the speaker has no intention of keeping his promise.

(7) The degree of sincerity conditions. This is the strength with which sincerity is introduced into a statement. “I promise to…” is stronger than a simple, “I will.”

Recognition of Illocutionary Forces. The weakness of Searle’s formula based presentation is that he provides little help in recognizing each of the conditions. In most of the examples that he and Austin give, key words are used in the statement to direct the hearer to the correct illocutionary point. The form of a commissive is “I promise…” or of a directive is “I order….” Searle includes a chapter that lists key verbs that indicate one of the illocutionary points.[39] In everyday speech, however, directives do not ordinarily contain the words *order*, *urge*, or *beg*. Neither do many commissives include *swear* or *promise*.

H. P. Grice noticed that many statements within conversations seemed, on the surface, to not follow logically. For example, if one person says, “Smith doesn’t seem to have a girlfriend these days,” and the second responds, “He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately,” it initially seems as if the second person has not addressed the content spoken by the first. He does not explicitly say whether or not he agrees with the statement or express a feeling about it. Rather, he makes what seems to be an unrelated comment. In actuality, he has expressed an opinion about Smith’s lack of a girlfriend. He *implicates* that Smith might indeed have a girlfriend, but that they have not seen her because she lives in New York.[40]

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[39] Searle and Vanderveken. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, 179–216.

[40] H. P. Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” in *Syntax and Semantics Vol. 3: Speech Acts* (ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan; New York: Academic Press, 1975), 51.

Grice's interest is in the meaning that is implied by an utterance. Seale goes further to discuss the potential change in illocutionary force behind implicature. Putting aside irony, metaphor and the like, he examines situations "in which the speaker utters a sentence, means what he says, but also means something more."[41] He calls them "indirect speech acts."

Searle then gives the example of one student remarking, "Let's go to the movies tonight." His roommate replies, "I have to study for an exam."[42] Searle then shows one step at a time (while admitting that no one actually consciously goes through these steps) how "I have to study for an exam" is probably a rejection of the proposal. He calls the literal meaning ("I have to study") the secondary illocution. The primary illocution is what the second student actually intends for the first student to understand ("No").[43]

Expanding on what Searle does, it seems that the difference between primary and secondary illocutions could extend to the categorization of illocutionary points. David Gordon and George Lakoff demonstrate the possibility.

> In everyday speech, we very often use one sentence to convey the meaning of another. For example, if the Duke of Bardello says to his butler, *It's cold in here*, he may be giving an order to close the window. This does not mean that the meaning of *It's cold in here* is the same as the meaning of *Close the window*. It only means that, under certain circumstances, saying one thing may entail the communication of another. What we would like to say about such a case is that *It's cold in here* has its usual literal meaning. In such a situation, it is an expression of discomfort and is said by a person in authority to a person whose job it is, in part, to relieve the discomforts of his employer as far as possible. If, in a context, the most obvious way to relieve the discomfort cited is to close the window, then an order to do that is what is being communicated.[44]

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[41] John R. Searle, "Indirect Speech Acts," in *Syntax and Semantics Vol. 3: Speech Acts* (ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan; New York: Academic Press, 1975), 59.

[42] Ibid., 61–64.

[43] Searle acknowledges that there could possibly be a different primary illocution. The second student might mean, "I have to study for an exam, but let's go to the movies anyway" or "I have to study for an exam, but I'll do it when we get back from the movies." Regardless, the primary illocution is different than the secondary or literal one.

[44] David Gordon and George Lakoff, "Conversational Postulates," in *Syntax and Semantics Vol. 3: Speech Acts* (ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan. New York: Academic Press, 1975), 83.

Notice what happens in this example. Though Gordon and Lakoff do not use Searle's terminology, the literal illocutionary force of "it's cold in here" is an expressive—the speaker articulated his feelings about the situation. The butler, because of preparatory conditions, understands that the primary illocutionary force is a directive. Therefore the statement exists in one illocutionary *form* (expressive) but actually expresses another illocutionary *point* (directive).

Even here, Gordon and Lakoff skipped a step. The *form* of "it's cold in here" is not expressive; it is assertive. The speaker merely articulated an observation about the way things were in the world. A true expressive *form* should be more along the lines of "I am cold." So the butler, without knowing anything about speech-act theory, made two jumps. First, he did not think that the duke was merely commenting on the weather, but that it bothered him. Second, he knew that if it bothered the duke, he was being instructed to fix the situation. From assertive to expressive to directive, without thinking about it.

Obviously, certain verbs will not always be the key to identifying the illocutionary point of a statement. Other clues will need to be examined.

From Sentence Type to Illocutionary Point. The type of sentence is one component in determining illocution. There are four sentence types in English: *declarative* (not to be confused with the speech-act use of the term), *interrogative*, *exclamatory*, and *imperative*. For the most part, imperative sentences have directive illocutionary force, at least in their literal illocution. Interrogative sentences are a bit more complicated and will be set aside since there are no questions in Zephaniah. Exclamatory sentences would often be thought to be expressive, but could fit other categories depending on content and intent.

It is the simple declarative sentence that exhibits the most range. Though a declarative sentence will never express a directive in its literal illocution (it could do so by implicature as demonstrated above), the other four are possibilities. It seems to me that almost any declarative

sentence could, at first glance, have assertive illocution, as some information is communicated. However, something else about the sentence or context can quickly direct the hearer to one of the other points. I will limit this discussion to the commissive since that will have application to Zeph 3:8–9 in chapter 6.

Most commissives are in the form of a declarative sentence. What signals the reader that something other than information is in view? Searle devotes an entire chapter to picking apart promises. It is much too complex to summarize here, but a couple of points have relevance for this question.

His first point in describing the form of the sentence is "In expressing that *p*, *S* predicts a future act *A* of *S*" (where *p* is the propositional content, *S* is the speaker and *A* is the future act).[45] The next point is "*H* would prefer that *S*'s doing *A* to his not doing *A*, and *S* believes *H* would prefer his doing *A* to his not doing *A*," (where *H* represents the hearer).[46] Searle expands this point by highlighting the difference between a true promise and a threat in the guise of a promise ("If you don't hand in your paper on time I promise I will give you a failing grade in this course"), the latter not being a promise at all. He states, "If a purported promise is to be non-defective, the thing promised must be something the hearer wants done, or considers to be in his interest."[47]

The final point relevant to this discussion is his contention that "it is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *S* will do *A* in the normal course of events."[48] Therefore a statement like "I will go to work tomorrow" is not a promise if both speaker and hearer already expect that to be the case.

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[45] Searle, *Speech Acts*, 57.

[46] Ibid., 58.

[47] Ibid., 58.

[48] Ibid., 59.

It seems to me that the essential qualities to recognize a commissive illocutionary form could be simplified thusly: It is a declarative sentence which contains (1) a first person future grammatical structure, *S*; and either (2a) words of commitment, such as *promise*, *assure*, or *commit*, *C*; or (2b) some content that indicates benefit to the hearer, *B*. If a sentence meets this requirement it is commissive in form. Consider the following examples, where + means the condition explicitly exists, 0 means it does not, and ? means that it is uncertain.

1. I will quit drinking (*S*+ *C*0 *B*?)
2. I commit to quit drinking. (*S*+ *C*+ *B*?)
3. I commit to quit drinking for your sake. (*S*+ *C*+ *B*+)
4. I will quit drinking for your sake. (*S*+ *C*0 *B*+)
5. I will help you move. (*S*+ *C*0 *B*+)
6. I promise to help you move. (*S*+ *C*+ *B*+)
7. I will go to the store later. (*S*+ *C*0 *B*?)
8. I assure you that I will go to the store. (*S*+ *C*+ *B*?)
9. I will go to the store to pick up your medicine. (*S*+ *C*0 *B*+)
10. I assure you that I will go to the store to pick up your medicine. (*S*+ *C*+ *B*+)

Though statements 2 and 8 do not make any benefit explicit, the appearance of words of promise undoubtedly indicate that the hearer would benefit. Though the condition for a commissive is already meant, we could probably state that when *C*+, then automatically *B*+, whether or not it is explicit.

Statements 1 and 7 have neither an explicit commitment nor demonstration of benefit. Therefore no commitment may be inferred from the form of the sentence. Statement 1 may be spoken in the context of a man with friends who might mean no more than, “I really need to quit drinking.” The illocutionary form of the sentence is assertive. To become commissive, the hearer would need to benefit and more information is needed for that. Likewise, sentence 7 could be spoken in the context of a woman simply informing her husband of her plans for the rest of the day.

William Alston expands Searle’s definition by stating that for a statement to be commissive, “in uttering S, U placed himself under an obligation to do A,” where S is a

statement, U is the one making the utterance, and A is an act.[49] What the above discussion attempts to do is develop a method for determining obligation.

This distinction between the illocutionary form (Searle's secondary illocution) and the illocutionary intention (Searle's primary illocution) will be significant later when examining Zeph 3:8–9.

From Everyday Speech to Literature

The origins and development of speech-act theory by Austin and Searle concentrate on spoken communication. Their examples do not include written texts. Other linguistic scholars, however, see the potential impact of speech-act upon literary studies and seek to apply it.

Richard Ohmann used speech-act to make a distinction between ordinary conversation and literary fiction. "A literary work is a discourse whose sentences lack the illocutionary forces that would normally attach to them. Its illocutionary force is mimetic."[50] His particular emphasis on distinguishing between ordinary language and literature is not relevant to this discussion (and in fact his distinction was roundly criticized[51]), but it is noteworthy that he, and those who followed him, saw speech-act as a valid tool to study texts.

Mary Louise Pratt has a particularly concise summary of how speech-act theory described oral communication.

> In sum, speech act theory provides a way of talking about utterances not only in terms of their surface grammatical properties but also in terms of the context in which they are made, the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between participants, and generally, the unspoken rules and

[49] William P. Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 81.

[50] Richard Ohmann, "Speech Acts and the Definition of Literature," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4 (1971): 14.

[51] Stanley Fish, "How Ordinary Is Ordinary Language?" *New Literary History* 5 (1971): 41–54; Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1977), 87–99.

> conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received.[52]

She then makes the connection with literary texts.

> There are enormous advantages to talking about literature in this way, too, for literary works, like all our communicative activities, are context-dependent. Literature itself is a speech context. And as with any utterance, the way people produce and understand literary works depends enormously on unspoken, culturally-shared knowledge of the rules, conventions, and expectations that are in play when language is used in that context.[53]

A number of scholars have applied speech-act theory to English literature, especially to drama. One example is Keir Elam's analysis of Shakespeare.[54] As he deals with narrative with multiple character and interactions, he is just as interested in the perlocutionary effects of statements as their illocutionary force. He demonstrates its value in examining the first meeting between Isabella and Angelo in *Measure for Measure*. After analyzing the individual statements, he notes,

> Isabella's attempted persuasion and Angelo's albeit brief gesture of opposition, like his later attempt at counter-persuasion against Isabella's vows of chastity, are exemplary speech events rather than instances of decorative lexical dressing. And it is this very exchange, of course, that generates the main plot (Aristotle's *mythos*) of the comedy as a whole.[55]

At the same time, he does not claim that this analysis is valuable throughout.

> But just as there will be episodes of linguistic interaction…that do not unfold in so neat a 'micro'-illocutionary fashion, so there will larger stretches of discourse…whose illocutionary definition is problematic…or otherwise tautological and banal.[56]

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[52] Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, 86.

[53] Ibid., 86.

[54] Keir Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). He lists other works which take a similar approach (6).

[55] Ibid., 7.

[56] Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse*, 8–9.

Though not equally applicable to the analysis of every text, speech-act theory has shown to be helpful in English literature. Now it is time to turn to its application on the Bible.

Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Studies

General Proposals. Speech-act theory, along with other literary and rhetorical approaches, has been proposed as a hermeneutical method in Biblical studies.[57] Kevin Vanhoozer offers a reason.

> On one level, speech-act philosophy corresponds admirably with the missional model of communication as intentional action. Indeed, the very title of J. L. Austin's seminal lectures, *How to Do Things with Words*, conveys his intention to move us beyond the picture of language as essentially a vehicle for transferring information (the 'FedEx' model of communication). Speech acts, as Austin and others have pointed out, have other agendas than transmitting information.[58]

Nicholas Wolterstorff sees it as able to bridge the gap between what he calls "textual-sense interpretation", "authorial-intention interpretation", and "performance interpretation."[59]

Though there are voices advocating speech-act rhetoric in exegesis, where are the speech-act commentaries? In his 2001 survey, Richard Briggs (himself somewhat skeptical of the value of speech-act theory) noted, "Despite a slow trickle of articles over the past 25 years, there have

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[57] See Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001); David Clark, "Beyond Inerrancy: Speech Acts and an Evangelical View of Scripture," in *For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology* (ed. James K. Beilby; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 113–31; Roy F. Melugin, "Language and the Reshaping of Life: Speech-Act Theory and the Use of the Bible as Scripture," in *Renewing Tradition: Studies in Texts and Contexts in Honor of James W. Thompson* (ed. Mark W. Hamilton, Thomas H. Olbricht and Jeffrey Peterson; Princeton Theological Monograph Series; Eugene, Or.: Pickwick, 2007), 249–63; Daniel Patte, "Speech Act Theory and Biblical Exegesis" *Semeia* 41 (1988): 85–102; Dan R. Stiver, "Ricoeur, Speech-act Theory and the Gospels as History," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene and Karl Möller; Scripture and Hermeneutic Series 2; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), 50–72; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of Covenant," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene and Karl Möller; SHS 2. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), 1–49; Hugh Clayton White, "The Value of Speech Act Theory for Old Testament Hermeneutics" *Semeia* 41 (1988): 41–63; and Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene and Karl Möller; SHS 2; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), 73–90.

[58] Vanhoozer, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts," 15.

[59] Wolterstorff, "The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation," 82–85.

only been a handful of extensive works making exegetical use of speech act insights."[60] He surveys "the relatively few works to have made use of it."[61] Both his and Hugh White's bibliographies list more works promoting speech-act theory than those which actually apply it. The next section, however, will highlight a couple of works using speech-act analysis to demonstrate its value.

In response to Briggs, I doubt that there will ever be a true speech-act commentary. The value that this rhetorical subset adds to interpretation occurs too infrequently to be the main focus of a commentary. Those that make somewhat extensive use of it do so only *after* their other work on the text—translation, structure, historical background, etc. Speech-act is never the starting point.

Recall that Austin claimed that speech-acts were still just natural language. If this is true, then most illocutionary forces are easily recognized and understood by ordinary people without any knowledge of the discipline at all. Therefore, though one could examine every single statement in a book to determine everything about its force, there would be no point to the exercise. Stanley Fish makes this point in his speech-act analysis of *Coriolanus*.

> It follows that while a speech-act analysis of such texts will always be possible, it will also be trivial (a mere list of the occurrence or distribution of kinds of acts), because while it is the conditions of intelligibility that make all texts possible, not all texts are *about* those conditions.[62]

Perhaps speech-act analysis should be more of a tool that a commentator applies to texts where illocutionary force seems to be in view and is helpful to the interpretation.

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[60] Richard S. Briggs, "The Uses of Speech-Act Theory in Biblical Interpretation" *CurBS* 9 (2001): 230.

[61] Ibid., 230.

[62] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in the Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 245.

Examples of Application of Speech-Acts

The term *illocutionary* is found in many works which do not extensively use a developed speech-act rhetoric. Briggs notes that "Finally there is a considerable body of literature in biblical studies which make passing mention of the basic ideas of speech-act theory without being in any particular way concerned to 'reconceptualize' the task of exegesis, and indeed without seeking to do much more than label correctly a performative utterance."[63]

Christopher Mitchell, in his monograph on the Hebrew root בָּרַךְ, lists speech-act analysis as one important tool in his study. "Speech-act semantics concentrates on what utterances do, rather than on their propositional content."[64] His concern is to counter the tendency of tradition criticism which posits that the ancients believed that words of blessing had power in their speaking.

Mitchell uses Austin's definition of illocution to examine what a blessing is intended to accomplish. For example, when God spoke to creation with the blessing "Be fruitful and multiply," he was not bestowing upon plants and animals the ability to reproduce; they possessed that already. Rather, "the formula is an illocutionary utterance equivalent in meaning to God saying: 'I hereby declare my desire for you to reproduce and so fill the earth.'"[65]

Though he notes other types of illocutionary speech, he limits his use of it to Austin's performative speech (Searle's declarative). He does not apply the more detailed analysis of Searle or others. Though his work is convincing, it would be greatly strengthened by discussing features such as preparatory conditions and propositional content conditions.

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[63] Briggs, "The Uses of Speech-Act Theory in Biblical Interpretation," 262.

[64] Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of* BRK *"To Bless" in the Old Testament* (SBLDS 95; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 7.

[65] Ibid., 62.

There are those works which make more extensive use of speech-act rhetoric, however.[66] While performative speech still seems to garner most of the attention, I will highlight two works which go well beyond Austin and apply Searle.

Extensive Speech-Act Works. Eugene Botha examines every statement made by the narrator, Jesus, the Samaritan woman, and his disciples in John 4:1–42.[67] Going beyond mere illocutionary labeling of each statement, he then looks for clues as to their perlocutionary effect both upon the other characters in the story (actual effect) and upon the reader (intended effect). Consider his comments on John 4:10.

> v 10: ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Εἰ ᾔδεις τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίς ἐστιν ὁ λέγων σοι, Δός μοι πεῖν, σὺ ἂν ᾔτησας αὐτὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν ἄν σοι ὕδωρ ζῶν.
>
> *form*: statement
> *type of illocution*: constative (assertive)
> *perlocution*: The character Jesus intends the woman to change her initial evaluation of him, wants her to recognize his superior position. The author intends the readers again to perceive Jesus positively.[68]

Botha brings out an entire toolbox of literary analysis to come to his conclusions—such as irony and metaphor—of which speech-act is only one tool. Though his actual analysis of the illocutionary points is lighter than I intend to use in Zephaniah, he points out the important reason that this tool needs to be used: intended effect upon the audience. At the same time, in the

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[66] Jo-Ann A. Brant, "Infelicitous Oaths in the Gospel of Matthew," *JSNT* 63 (1996): 3–20; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (FF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Bridget Gifillan Upton, *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech-Act Theory* (BibInt 79. Leiden: Brill, 2006); Dietmar Neufeld, "Acts of Admonition and Rebuke: A Speech-Act Approach to 1 Corinthians 6:1–11," *BibInt* 8 (2000): 375–99; Dietmar Neufeld, *Reconceiving Texts as Speech Acts: An Analysis of 1 John* (BibInt 7; Leiden: Brill, 1994); Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 151; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Hugh Clayton White, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[67] J. Eugene Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman; A Speech Act Reading of John 4:1–42* (NovTSup 65; Leiden: Brill, 1991).

[68] Ibid., 136.

style of what Fish earlier condemned, some of his examples are trivial in that the identification of illocutionary force does nothing to aid his interpretation.

Another example is Anthony Thiselton's commentary on 1 Corinthians.[69] Much of the modern study of this book uses Greek or Roman rhetorical categories. Thiselton likewise employs this strategy, but also makes a major commitment to speech-act analysis. "For thirty years I have consistently argued for the importance of speech-act theory as one of the many ways of understanding the language of the New Testament."[70]

In his discussion of 1 Cor 1:10 ("I ask you, brothers and sisters, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all take the same side, and that there are no splits among you, but that you be knitted together again with the same mind-set and with the same consent."[71]), Thiselton notes that the differences between commentators on this text stem from "the difference between *illocutionary* speech-acts (on the basis of apostleship or friendship) and *perlocutionary* speech-acts (on the basis of rhetorical persuasion)."[72]

Thiselton focuses on the illocutionary and notes that "the operative effect of these utterances as acts depends not on rhetoric or persuasion, but on whether the speaker has the authority, status, or self-commitment to perform an illocutionary speech-act, e.g., to make a promise to confer a name, to appoint to office."[73] Therefore, this statement is a directive under Searle's categories; Paul desires a world-to-word fit.

Where he goes beyond others who use speech-act is in his deeper examination of the illocutionary act. The phrase "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" for Thiselton "does not

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[69] Anthony C. Thistelton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1999).

[70] Ibid., 51.

[71] Ibid., 109.

[72] Ibid., 112.

[73] Ibid., 112.

initiate *causal* force, as some theories about primitive word magic seem to imply, but *illocutionary authorization*."[74] He thus identifies (here I am using Searle's terminology) the mode of achievement (request), degree of strength (nearly begging, appealing to their shared allegiance to the authority of Christ), and preparatory conditions (his commissioning to speak for Christ). With this analysis, he presents a plausible interpretation for this verse.

Overall Application to the Latter Prophets. Walter Houston examines the Latter Prophets by speech-act theory.[75] He claims that since the prophets were believed to be delivering a message from God, then prophecy "should have been seen in quite a different way from ordinary human words."[76] This is not because any magic was present in the speaking of the words, but because prophetic statements naturally have illocutionary force due to their ultimately divine source.

While the prophetic message of destruction has, on its face, the look of an assertive statement (the speaker states how things are, or will be), Houston maintains that these statements are, in fact, declarative "for the essence of a declarative utterance is that precisely in the appropriate circumstances the speaking of the utterance itself is held to bring a state of affairs into being. More precisely, I wish to suggest that it has the declarative force of a judicial sentence."[77] In other words, Yahweh has spoken, and his speaking brings it to pass.

Houston acknowledges that some might view these prophetic pronouncements as commissive. "All alike announce Yahweh's intended action, and therefore would appear to be in

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[74] Ibid., 115.

[75] Walter Houston, "What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing? Speech Acts and Prophetic Discourse in the Old Testament" *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993): 167–88.

[76] Ibid., 175.

[77] Ibid., 180. Houston, 179–80, draws on the work of Wolterstorff to show that parallels to legal language are not necessary for Yahweh to speak a judgment.

the commissive rather than the declarative field."[78] However, since he views the intended perlocutionary effect of the oracle of doom to be repentance, he maintains that this result is achieved only through the declarative sentence of judgment. There is much to be said for Houston's approach. However, I think his application is too broad. He does not allow that a statement of judgment could have any intended perlocutionary effect other than repentance. Since he does not deal with Zephaniah at all, I need to pursue this a little further.

In isolation, Zeph 1 fits Houston's model. A sentence of judgment is imposed upon the whole earth and Jerusalem in particular. It is more than a mere prediction of the future; it is a declaration of what Yahweh has decided and what he will bring to pass. The OAN section, 2:5–3:7, also has the feel of a declaration of guilt and judgment. However, it will be shown in chapter 6 that this assertion breaks down in 3:8–9.

When viewing prophecy in general, or Zephaniah in particular, Houston rightly reminds us that the prophets believed they were speaking Yahweh's message (note the presence of נְאֻם יְהוָה in Zeph 1:2, 3, 10; 2:9; 3:8) and that someone thought it was true enough to preserve their writings. This should prove to be helpful when determining illocutionary force.

Perlocutions. In prophetic texts without an accompanying narrative, we have little or no access to the results of the prophecy. Therefore, while there should be enough data to determine the author's illocutionary force, its perlocutionary force—as defined as the result that an illocutionary act actually has upon its hearers—can probably not be determined. If, however, a distinction is made between the perlocutionary *intent* of the author and the actual perlocutionary *effect*, then the former might be determinable even if the latter is not. James Voelz comments on this distinction when discussing the forces in 1 Thessalonians. "This analysis is well aware that the perceived purpose and the actual result—the actual perlocutionary act of any application of

[78] Ibid., 181.

God's law—may very well not correspond to its original intent."[79] Even so, the benefit of speech-act analysis in Zeph 3:8–9 is in its illocution.

Speech-Act Theory and Zephaniah 3:8–9. The record seems to indicate that speech-act analysis has been applied sporadically in biblical scholarship. It has reached a level of general acceptance, but wider than its actual use. It has not, however, been applied to the book of Zephaniah or to our specific verses. Giving attention to the illocutionary aspect of 3:8–9 will both confirm the results gained from philological and structural analyses and help answer the difficult juxtaposition question.

Framework of Dissertation

The different methods used to construct this dissertation—philology, structure, and speech-act—form a three pronged approach to address the question. This is how the rest of the work proceeds.

Part 2 Locution

As noted earlier in this chapter, the basic meaning and identification of characters must be solved before attempting to answer the juxtaposition question. These chapters address these concerns.

Chapter 3 Translation and Notes Zephaniah 2:1–3:13. Since Zeph 3:8–9 cannot be examined in isolation, but must be placed in its larger context, a translation of the larger context is offered.

Chapter 4 Structure of Zephaniah. Some philological clues, found in both 3:8–9 and the rest of the book, are combined with Zephaniah's particular literary features and analysis of his

[79] James W. Voelz, *What Does This Mean? Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 285.

content to construct the structure of the book. From that outline we will learn: (1) the addressees in 3:8–9; (2) the overall message of Zephaniah, especially 2:1–3:13; and (3) the structural flow of Zephaniah's message.

Chapter 5 Zephaniah 3:8–9 Interpreted in its Context. Philological analysis of 3:8–9 is combined with the three results of the structural analysis to determine the identification of all the characters in the verses. All of this then combines to yield a basic interpretation.

Part 3 Illocution

Only after solving the locutionary aspects of the basic meaning of the text can the real question of the dissertation be addressed. The solution is found in Zephaniah's illocutionary purposes.

Chapter 6 The Meaning of the Juxtaposition of Zephaniah 3:8–9. The basic interpretation of 3:8–9 is subjected to speech-act analysis to discover the illocutionary reason for the juxtaposition.

Chapter 7 The Nations in Zephaniah. What Zephaniah has to say about the nations is compared with other prophetic books to discover where he is consistent with them and how he is unique. The uniqueness confirms the illocutionary forces behind the juxtaposition discovered in Chapter 6.

Methods Not Used

Various Diachronic Methods

As noted earlier in this chapter, Ryou argues for both synchronic and diachronic analyses of Zephaniah.[80] He first treats philological and literary issues in a synchronic way; then he

[80] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*.

applies redaction criticism to each block of material to attempt to analyze it in its supposed historical setting. Ben Zvi makes an impassioned argument for not abandoning historical critical methods.[81] Rudolph, B. Renaud, Karl Elliger, Liudger Sabottka, and Hubert Irsigler all follow classical diachronic analysis.[82]

These methods have their place, but I am not using them. Previous diachronic works fail to come to an acceptable answer to our juxtaposition dilemma. As already discussed, there is no need to apologize for taking a holistic approach to the text. If, by philological, structural, and literary analyses, I can show coherence and an adequate interpretation of the text, then there is no need to resort to these other methods.

Overly Historicizing Attempts

For purposes of this study, there is little value in speculating about the exact time that 3:8–9 was composed. Since the superscription wants the audience to read the prophecy against the background of Josiah's time, it is necessary to know something of this era. However, other than the naming of four nearby nations, there are no other specific references to a historical era anywhere in the book. Perhaps this is intentional as the exact background is not critical to Zephaniah's message.

Scholars have long looked for historical events which might form the background of the anticipated Day of Yahweh.[83] Some have tried to show that the book is to be dated early in the reign of Josiah by positing that Zephaniah was written in light of the seventh-century Scythian invasion recorded by Herodotus. Against this theory is the fact that the Scythians are nowhere

[81] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*.

[82] Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*; Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*; Sabottka, *Zephanja*; Irsigler, *Zefanja*.

[83] A concise summary can be found in R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 121–23.

explicitly mentioned in the HB. Further, scholars do not agree that the Scythians even ventured into Palestine or exactly when they would have done so.

Others choose to date Zephaniah after the death of Josiah by assuming the foreign power behind the Day of Yahweh is Babylon. While destruction is the main theme of Yahweh's judgment, there is no mention of the Babylonian Exile or of anything that looks like it, unlike the book of Jeremiah, which is filled with references to it.

Historical References. Though in one sense the four individual nations of 2:5–15 stand in for the entire earth, they are still real life contemporary entities that were a concern to those in Jerusalem. The charges leveled against Moab and Ammon, and Nineveh are specific to them. Enough detail is given that Zephaniah's audience would be motivated to watch them as signs of what would happen to the rest of the earth.

Throughout the HB, Philistia was an enemy of Israel. Israel had not been able to conquer or dislodge them in the conquest.[84] They often had the upper hand in battles with Israel until David finally brought them under subjection. Philistia had been a vassal of Assyria beginning in 734 and continuing through most of the seventh century. As was true with Israel, Assyria exercised greater and lesser control at times, depending on their strength.

There are no references in Assyrian or Egyptian chronicles after Ashurbanipal's conquest of Egypt in 663.[85] It is often speculated that, as Assyrian power waned late in the seventh century, Egypt began to dominate Philistia.[86] Herodotus (Book 2.157) claims that Psammetichus took twenty-nine years to besiege and capture Ashdod. As he began his reign in 664, this would

[84] For the history of Philistia, especially in the eighth–sixth centuries, see H. J. Katzenstein, "Philistines," *ABD*, 5:326–33; John Bright, *A History of Israel* (3d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 326–27; Lawrence A. Sinclair, "Philistines," *EDB*, 1050–51; Hayam Tadmor, "Philistia Under Assyrian Rule" *BA* 29 (1966): 86–102.

[85] Tadmor, "Philistia Under Assyrian Rule," 100–1.

[86] See, for example, Katzenstein, "Philistines," 328.

place the capture of Ashdod after 635. If Egypt did, in fact, take Philistia, it is interesting that the cities listed in 2:4 run from south to north, the natural route of an Egyptian force. In 604, the Babylonians finally drove Egypt from the Levant capturing Philistia and deporting its population. Over several campaigns in the succeeding years, its major cities were leveled and Philistia ceased to be a nation.

At the time of the setting of Zephaniah's prophecy, the picture described in 2:5–7 had not yet taken place. Within a few years, however, many in Zephaniah's audience would have seen these events take place.

Moab and Ammon are often presented together in the HB.[87] They were nations of Trans-Jordan, with Ammon on the north of the Dead Sea and Moab alongside and south of it. Both Numbers and Deuteronomy record that these nations opposed Israel on her approach to Canaan. That permanent animosity was created is evidenced by the declaration in Deut 23:3 [MT 23:4] that no one from either nation were to ever be admitted to Yahweh's people. Over the centuries several wars were fought between Judah and/or Israel and Moab and Ammon. Like Judah, they were made Assyrian vassals from late in the eighth century until the Babylonian conquest. As Assyrian power waned in the late seventh century, it appears that they gained a measure of freedom. It is during this period that Zephaniah is probably giving his prophecy. There is no record that they made any advances against Judah during this time, but they are known to have participated with the Babylonians against Judah in 601. Jer 27:3 refers to an attempt by Zedekiah to build a coalition with Moab and Ammon against Babylon, but it seems to have come to nothing. Both nations were conquered by Babylon. They were known to exist in some form during the Persian period. Eventually they were absorbed into other nations and disappeared.

[87] For these nations, see Jean-Michel de Tarragon, "Ammon," *ABD*, 1:195; Donald H. Wimmer, "Ammonites," *EDB*, 53–54; Gerald L. Mattingly, "Moab" *EDB*, 909–11.

Even if there had been no known attempts by Moab and Ammon against Judah's territory in the time of Zephaniah, prior hostilities prepared his audience to be fearful of their designs against their territory. Their destruction would come much later than the time of Josiah, however.

The mention of Cush puzzles some scholars as it is not mentioned in the HB as having a great deal of contact with Israel or Judah, being to the south of Egypt.[88] However, Cush was part of an Egyptian alliance that attacked Judah in 925. The Egyptian attack against the Assyrians in Palestine in 701 was led by a Cushite dynasty. 2 Chr 14 lists an unsuccessful attack against Judah by Cush.

There are quite a few references to Cush in the HB where it is paired with Egypt (Isa 11:11; 20:3–5; 43:3; 45:14; Ezek 30:4–9; Ps 68:32; Dan 11:43). The nations in the OAN in Zephaniah were seen to also stand in for all nations as they fell on compass points. Perhaps Cush is the southern referent who also represents Egypt. When the supplicants come to Jerusalem in 3:10, they are from beyond the rivers of Cush which mean the White Nile or Blue Nile. This may be another reference to the ends of the earth as anything this deep into Africa was unknown territory to the Judahites.

Robert Haak proposes that Cush does not refer to the land of Ethiopia which is south of Egypt. Rather it refers to a region which bordered Judah on the south called Cush which may have been populated by Ethiopians. This would make the phrase in 3:10, "from beyond the rivers of Cush," to mean Egypt, the next region south of Cush.[89] While his theory is novel and solves perceived difficulties in Zephaniah, he presents no real evidence that such a political group existed. Further, where would he locate the Cush whose king led the Egyptian army against

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[88] Robert Houston Smith, "Ethiopia," *ABD*, 2:665–67.

[89] Robert D. Haak, "'Cush' in Zephaniah," in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström* (ed. Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy; JSOTSup 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 238–51.

Assyria in 701? Non-biblical sources identify this dynasty with Nubia. Haak's theory fails to convince.

Though Assyria existed as a significant nation to the northeast of Israel for many centuries, they had no significant contact until the decline of Aram, which was between them, during the ninth and eighth centuries.[90] Eventually Israel became a vassal state of Assyria. When it rebelled, the Assyrians captured it, razing Samaria in 722 and deporting much of its population. During this same period Judah was also under pressure from Assyria. Though Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 was unsuccessful, Judah spent most of the seventh century as Assyria's vassal.

Assyria was visibly weakening in the late seventh century and her fate would have been seen as inevitable and potentially instructive to leaders in Josiah's time. Nineveh was taken in 612 and razed to the ground. This event is future tense from Zephaniah's perspective and indicates that his prophecy must be dated before 612.

Zephaniah and the Era of Josiah. The superscription in 1:1 indicates that the final author, be it Zephaniah or someone later, wants the book read with the time of Josiah as its background. As already stated, attempts to pin down the exact time of composition are not provable and ultimately irrelevant to interpretation.

However, some tentative observations can be made regarding its composition. I think that it can be shown that the entire book was actually composed in the time of Josiah. There are two keys: (1) the desire to strengthen the faithful through hard times which have not yet come and (2) the complete lack of a reference to the Babylonian exile.

Other prophets, purporting to write before it happened, spoke of such a scattering. Many modern critics deny the possibility of predictive prophecy and as a result date any reference to

[90] Bright, *A History of Israel*, 316; A. Kirk. Grayson, "Nineveh," *ABD*, 4:1118–19; Mark W. Hamilton, "Assyria," *EDB*, 119–23; Geoff Emberling, "Nineveh," *EDB*, 966.

this exile as after the event. In that case one must ask if Zephaniah is post Josiah, where is the exile? This event figured so prominently in second temple Judaism that its absence in Zephaniah is powerful evidence of pre-exilic composition. Further, Babylon is not mentioned at all, either as a tool of Yahweh (Jer 25:9) or as a nation to be destroyed.

Among those who accept Josianic era authorship, there is still the question as to whether it is early or late in Josiah's reign. The question centers around purpose. If one believes that Zephaniah was written to promote reformation or to support Josiah's reformation, then the date is relatively early. If, however, one sees the reformation as having failed, then late in his reign or just afterward is the preferred choice. According to 2 Kgs 22:3, Josiah's reform began in his eighteenth year, i.e., 622, and was essentially completed in that year. According to 2 Chr 34:3, the reform began in his eighth year, 632, and continued through 622. Many of the key events—finding the book of the Law, inquiring of the prophetess Huldah, celebrating Passover—occurred in 622 in each account.

Reformation and repentance, however, are not the focus of Zephaniah. There is not a single verse calling anyone to change their ways because the Day of Yahweh will unavoidably come. This is in line with Huldah's message in 2 Kgs 22:14–20.

The main appeal section of the book—and hence the entire book—is to encourage the faithful in difficult times. Josiah's reform is not in view as a motivation. Though the books of Kings and Chronicles extol Josiah's reform the writer of Kings indicates that the reform collapsed nearly immediately after the death of Josiah. The narrative portions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel further demonstrate the prevalence of idol worship in Jerusalem subsequent to the first Babylonian invasion of 605 and even following the fall of Jerusalem in 597. It seems that however widespread Josiah's reform was, Zephaniah's description in 3:1–7 could fit nearly any time of his reign before the fall of Nineveh.

While the coming Babylonian invasion and exile might historically be the immediate threat that the faithful must endure, it will not by itself account for the cataclysmic descriptions of Zephaniah. Historically the earth was not destroyed. Though Jerusalem was rebuilt, it could not be said that Zephaniah's description of it being populated by only the faithful or the nations bringing offerings there ever came to pass.

The lack of reference to Babylon calls into question Sweeney's contention that Zephaniah is not describing a future condition. He claims that an eschatological interpretation assumes composition after the Exile. For him the book is an appeal to repent during the time of Josiah and that the fate of four nearby nations (which do not represent the entire earth) adds credibility to his message as his audience watches those nations fall. He restricts the completeness of future destruction to the immediate area during the Babylonian invasion. He further claims that any positive mention of the nations is only that they return the exiles to Jerusalem.[91]

Granting that the prophet may speak hyperbolically when describing how completely either positive or negative events transpire, Sweeney's contention that the purpose of the book is an appeal to repent is unconvincing. He is further dependent on an interpretation of 3:10 that makes those dispersed in the Babylonian exile the object of the verb and that it is the nations who return them to Jerusalem. Chapter 6 demonstrates that this cannot be maintained.

So although there may be some levels of fulfillment in the immediate short term, the picture painted by Zephaniah has yet to be realized and can still be seen as an event for which the faithful in every generation waits.

Summary. Attempts to historicize the prophecy are improvable dead ends that distract from the theological message of the book. Nothing in the interpretation in this dissertation

[91] Sweeney has made this claim in several places, most notably in Marvin A. Sweeney, *What Was Zephaniah Thinking? The Book of Zephaniah in History and Manuscript* (The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity Occasional Papers 17; Claremont, Ca.: Claremont Graduate University, 2005), 1–14.

depends on identifying the exact time of Zephaniah's composition. In theory, its message could fit just as easily into a period early in Josiah's reign, late in his reign, in the reign of Jehoiachin, or even in the post monarchal era. This is because, whatever the exact time of its composition, Zephaniah's message has impact beyond its time.

Rather than attempt to historically ground the composition of the book in a specific time, it is better to understand the general historical background of the reign of Josiah. In this way, the actual reader can become the implied reader that he is invited to be in the superscription. Given the non-specificity of the time reference, however, all that is necessary is for the reader to remember the unsettled times of King Josiah and to hear the message to seek Yahweh and watch for his salvation.

PART TWO

LOCUTION

Chapter 3 will provide an interpretation of the larger context of 2:1–3:13. Chapter 4 will examine Zephaniah's structural message. Finally, chapter 5 will offer a basic interpretation 3:8–9 within its context. These three chapters are mostly working on the locutionary level: the meaning of words and sentences, the propositional content, the flow of thought. After a basic interpretation is discovered, then analysis of illocutionary forces will be brought to the text.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSLATION AND NOTES FOR ZEPHANIAH 2:1–3:13

To properly determine the structure of Zeph 2:1–3:13 and to provide an appropriate context for the interpretation of 3:8–9, a good translation of the entire section is needed. Following is my translation, with notes on significant or disputed words and phrases. Translation notes on 3:8–9 will appear in chapter 5 where these verses will be exegeted in detail. In addition, 2:3 and 3:10, being very important to the interpretation of 3:8–9 will also appear in chapter 5.

Translation

2:1 *Gather yourselves and be gathered (as chaff),*

O nation not desired,

2 *before the bringing forth of the decree*

— like chaff the day passes by—

before it comes upon you

(namely) the heat of the wrath of Yahweh,

before it comes upon you

(namely) the day of the wrath of Yahweh.

3 *Seek Yahweh,*

all you humble of the land

who perform his judgment.

Seek righteousness.

Seek humility.

Perhaps you will be hidden on the day of the wrath of Yahweh.

[4] *For Gaza, will be deserted,*

and Ashkelon (will become) a desolation;

Ashdod, at noon they will drive her out,

and Ekron will be uprooted.

[5] *Woe, you inhabitants of the territory of the sea,*

Nation of the Kerethites,

the word of Yahweh (is) against you.

O Canaan, land of the Philistines.

I will destroy you—without an inhabitant.

[6] *And the territory of the sea will become habitations of*

caves for shepherds

and folds for sheep.

[7] *And the territory will be for the remnant of the house of Judah,*

upon them they will pasture.

In the houses of Ashkelon in the evening they will lie down,

for Yahweh their God will attend them

and he will restore their fortunes.

[8] *I have heard the reproach of Moab*

and the revilings of the Ammonites

who have reproached my people

and magnified themselves against their territory.

[9] *Therefore as I live*

—the utterance of Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel—

Moab will become like Sodom

and the Ammonites like Gomorrah:

a possession of weeds

and a pit of salt

and a devastation forever.

The remnant of my people will plunder them

and the remainder of my nation will possess them.

[10] *This (will be) theirs instead of their pride,*

because they reproached and magnified themselves

against the people of Yahweh of hosts.

[11] *Yahweh is to be feared over them,*

because he will have starved all the gods of the earth.

And they will bow down to him,

each from his own place,

(namely), all the islands of the nations.

[12] *Likewise you, O Cushites:*

They are the ones pierced by my sword.

[13] *And he will stretch out his hand against the north*

and he will destroy Assyria.

And he will make Nineveh into a desolation,

dry like the desert.

[14] *And herds will lie down in her midst,*

every beast of a nation;

both the owl and the hedgehog,

in her capitals they will spend the night.

A voice will continually sing in the window,

devastation on the threshold;

for he will have laid bare the cedar-work.

15 *This is the exultant city,*

the one which dwells in safety,

the one which says in her heart,

"I am, and there is no other."

How she has become a devastation,

a lying-down place for living things.

Everyone who passes by her will hiss,

he will shake his hand.

3:1 *Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted,*

the oppressing city.

2 *She has not hearkened to a voice;*

she has not taken correction.

In Yahweh she has not trusted;

to her God she has not drawn near.

3 *Her officials in her midst are roaring lions;*

her judges are wolves of the evening—

they do not gnaw bones in the morning.

4 *Her prophets are reckless,*

treacherous men,

Her priests pollute what is holy,

they do violence to the law.

[5] *Yahweh is righteous within her,*

he does no unrighteousness.

Morning by morning he gives his judgment into the light,

it does not fail.

But the unrighteous does not know shame.

[6] *I cut off nations,*

their corner towers are desolate.

I made desolate their streets,

with no one to pass through.

Their cities are laid waste—

without a man,

without an inhabitant.

[7] *I said, "Surely you will fear me,*

you will take correction,"

Then her dwelling would not be cut off—

all which I appointed against her.

Rather they rose early, they corrupted all their deeds.

[8] *Therefore, wait for me*

—the utterance of Yahweh—

for the day of my arising for prey.

For my judgment is to assemble nations,

that I would gather kingdoms,

to pour out upon them my indignation,

the heat of my wrath.

For in the fire of my zeal all the earth will be consumed.

[9] *For at that time, I will turn unto the peoples a pure lip,*

that all of them might call upon the name of Yahweh,

that they might serve him with one shoulder.

[10] *From beyond the rivers of Cush*

my supplicants, my daughter dispersed ones will bring my offering.

[11] *On that day*

you will not be ashamed from all your deeds

by which you rebelled against me.

For at that time I will take away from your midst your proudly exultant ones,

and you will no longer exalt yourself on my holy mountain.

[12] *And I will leave in your midst a people humble and low.*

And they will seek refuge in the name of Yahweh.

[13] *The remnant of Israel*

will not do unrighteousness

and they will not speak lies

and a tongue of deceitfulness will not be found in their mouth.

For they will pasture and lie down

and there will be no one to terrify (them).

Notes

הִתְקוֹשְׁשׁוּ וָקוֹשׁוּ **2:1**
הַגּוֹי לֹא נִכְסָף

Gather yourselves and be gathered (as chaff),
O nation not desired,

This first phrase, הִתְקוֹשְׁשׁוּ וְקוֹשָׁשׁוּ, presents a difficulty: the unusual repetition of the same root in two different stems.[1] The repetition combines Hitpolel and Qal masculine plural imperatives, connected by ו. Berlin claims that verbs from the same root juxtaposed with different stems is an emphatic device.[2] Unfortunately, only a few of her examples are in truly close juxtaposition. Her best example is Josh 6:1, וִיְרִיחוֹ סֹגֶרֶת וּמְסֻגֶּרֶת, "now Jericho was closed and shut tight." One verse she does not cite is Hab 1:5, וְהִתַּמְּהוּ תְּמָהוּ, "Be amazed, be astonished," where the Hitpael form (its only occurrence in the HB) has no obviously different meaning from the Qal.

The closest parallel to 2:1 is found in Isa 29:9, הִשְׁתַּעֲשְׁעוּ וְשֹׁעוּ , "blind yourselves and be blind." The Hithpalel creates a condition described by the following Qal. Ben Zvi cites *GKC* to claim that in the case of two imperatives connected by ו "the second verb refers to the fulfillment of the action mentioned by the first one."[3] Though the examples cited in *GKC* involve verbs of different roots, when the same root is involved as here, the same principle should apply.[4] Therefore, "Gather yourselves and be gathered."

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[1] There is some discussion as to whether the root קשׁשׁ has "straw" or "stubble" inherent in its meaning ("gather straw" rather than simply "gather"). Those who see it as "gather straw" include *BDB*, 905; Austin Vanlier Hunter, "Seek the Lord! A Study of the Meaning and Function of the Exhortations in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Zephaniah" (Ph.D. diss. St. Mary's Seminary & University, 1982), 261; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 186; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 17; and Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 114–15. Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 138–39, disagrees. Since the following vocative makes clear how worthless the nation had become, it raises the possibility that the proponents of "gather chaff" are mixing *meaning* and *referent* from other uses. However, this is eliminated when *BDB* rightly points out that this verb is a denominative from קַשׁ, "stubble, chaff". Therefore, it is probably correct to understand this meaning brought forth into the verb. Chaff is not just worthless, but it is also destroyed by fire, a picture painted in Zeph 1:18 and 3:8.

[2] Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 38–40.

[3] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 137.

[4] *GKC*, 325.

The vocative phrase has occasioned a great deal of comment. נִכְסָף is a Niphal masculine singular participle. *BDB* gives "long for" as the definition of כסף inits five other occurrences (but thinks this verse is corrupt).[5] Though appearing in both Niphal and Qal, the Niphal form does not seem to have a passive meaning, but rather a middle (Gen 31:30 and Ps 84:3).

In the other five cases, כסף is always followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with לְ. Perhaps, as Arvid Kapelrud suggests, the Niphal of כסף without the prepositional phrase might take its normal passive force, resulting in "O nation not desired."[6] The purpose of the vocative makes clear that Judah has fallen so far as to be unwanted.

The masculine singular vocative does not match the masculine plural imperative verbs. Throughout the HB the singular גוי, which refers to a group, can take either singular or plural verbs.[7] Here, the plural imperatives indicate that the prophet is not addressing the nation as a collective singular, but all of its people together.

בְּטֶרֶם לֵדֶת חֹק **2:2**
כְּמֹץ עָבַר יוֹם
בְּטֶרֶם לֹא־יָבוֹא עֲלֵיכֶם
חֲרוֹן אַף־יְהוָה
בְּטֶרֶם לֹא־יָבוֹא עֲלֵיכֶם
יוֹם אַף־יְהוָה

[5] *BDB*, 493. Some commentators (Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 290; John Merlin Powis Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Micah, Zephaniah and Nahum* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 211–12; R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 129; Larry Lee Walker, "Zephaniah," in *ExBC* [ed. Frank E. Gabelein; 12 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1985], 550) and most EV (NASB, ESV, NIV, NAB, NRSV) appeal to the Aramaic meaning of כסף, and translate it as "a nation without shame" or "shameless nation". *Tg. Neb*., however, renders it with חמד, "to long".

[6] "This is how Vulg. understood the word, and also Ibn Ezra." Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, 31.

[7] Singular verbs: Josh 10:13; Is 2:4; 26:2; 65:1; 66:8; Jer 2:11; 6:22; 18:8; 27:13; 50:3; plural verbs: Lev 20:23; Josh 3:17; 4:1; 5:8; Judg 2:20; 2 Kgs 17:29; 2 Chr 15:6; Ps 147:20; Isa 55:5; Jer 12:17; 27:8.

before the bringing forth of the decree
— like chaff the day passes by—
before it comes upon you
(namely) the heat of the wrath of Yahweh,
before it comes upon you
(namely) the day of the wrath of Yahweh.

In this context חֹק, "statutes", refers not to a collection of laws, but to a specific decision: the Day of Yahweh in 1:2–18.

Though ילד ordinarily denotes giving birth or of begetting a child, it is also used metaphorically. For example, in Ps 7:15, the evil man וְיָלַד שָׁקֶר, "brings forth lies." It is unnecessary to resort to emendations as *BHS* proposes.[8]

Does עָבַר mean the decree will pass as quickly as chaff is blown away? Or is it the Day that will pass quickly? Or is it perhaps that the nation will blow away like chaff? The ancient versions, LXX, Syriac, and *Tg. Neb.* all understand the latter.[9] עבר can be used in a temporal sense, that is, a time that has passed.[10] As it is a unit of time that *passes by*, this seems to be the focus of this verse. Therefore, the best option is that the decreed Day of Yahweh will come suddenly and devastatingly. It will pass as quickly as chaff which is both scattered quickly in the wind and scattered so completely that it disappears.[11]

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[8] *BHS* proposes replacing חֹק לֶדֶת with לֹא תְדֻחֲקוּ, and repointing עָבַר as a participle, עֹבֵר, while omitting יוֹם. This would make the strophe more parallel with the next two. Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 197, agrees.

[9] See Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 23.

[10] H. F. Fuhs, "עָבַר," *TDOT*, 10:415. See the examples in Gen 50:4; 1 Kgs 18:29; Amos 8:5; Song 2:11.

[11] Ben Zvi, *Zephaniah*, 143; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 24–25. Hunter, "Seek the Lord!" 264, takes יוֹם as an "adverbial accusative," meaning "suddenly": "Like chaff which vanishes in a moment." Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, 105, renders it "Like chaff that drifts away in a day." Michael O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 248, reads כִּ as emphatic and עָבַר as an adjectival participle: "The day will be passing chaff." However, עָבַר is pointed as a Qal perfect third masculine singular and his own grammar lists no uses of כִּי as an emphatic particle. See Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 202–5.

Unique are the second and third occurrences of בְּטֶרֶם, "before". Twice בְּטֶרֶם is followed by לֹא- and an imperfect verb. לֹא ordinarily negates action—"Before the burning anger of Yahweh does not come upon you"—which makes no sense in this context. Perhaps there is a double negative at work. טֶרֶם without the preposition בְּ mostly means "not yet".[12] In some uses with the preposition, it could still carry that meaning. For example, instead of translating Judg 14:18, וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּטֶרֶם יָבֹא הַחַרְסָה, as "And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went (down)," it could be rendered "And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day when the sun had not yet gone (down)."

Wilhelm Gesenius comments on double negatives like this. "Two negatives in the same sentence do not neutralize each other (as in *nonnulli*, *non nemo*), but make the negation the more emphatic (like οὐκ οὐδείς, οὐκ οὐδαμῶς, *nulli non*, *nemo non*)."[13] Both Berlin and Sweeney cite this approvingly.[14]

[On 2:3, see chapter 5.]

2:4 כִּי עַזָּה עֲזוּבָה תִּהְיֶה
וְאַשְׁקְלוֹן לִשְׁמָמָה
אַשְׁדּוֹד בַּצָּהֳרַיִם יְגָרְשׁוּהָ
וְעֶקְרוֹן תֵּעָקֵר

For Gaza will be deserted,
and Ashkelon (will become) a desolation;
Ashdod, at noon they will drive her out,
and Ekron will be uprooted.

That this verse is to be connected with what precedes is evidenced by כִּי. I discuss this in full in chapter 4. 2:4 provides the reason to seek Yahweh: calamity is coming to the region.

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[12] *BDB*, 382.

[13] *GKC*, 483.

[14] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 144; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 117.

הוֹי יֹשְׁבֵי חֶבֶל הַיָּם [2:5]
גּוֹי כְּרֵתִים
דְּבַר־יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם
כְּנַעַן אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים
וְהַאֲבַדְתִּיךְ מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב

Woe, you inhabitants of the territory of the sea,
Nation of the Kerethites,
the word of Yahweh (is) against you.
O Canaan, land of the Philistines,
I will destroy you—without an inhabitant.

Different scholars and EV lineate this verse in a variety of ways. Paying attention to the person and gender of nouns and pronouns clears up the confusion. The verbless clause, דְּבַר־יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם has a second person masculine plural suffix on the preposition עַל. Though the construct chain גּוֹי כְּרֵתִים has a masculine singular head noun, it was already shown at 2:1 that גּוֹי is often linked to a plural verb or pronoun. The next main clause, וְהַאֲבַדְתִּיךְ מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב, has a second person feminine singular pronominal suffix on the verb. אֶרֶץ is also feminine singular and serves as the referent.

Neither *Tg. Neb.* nor Vulg. understand כְּרֵתִים as a proper noun but as a noun from the root כרת. *Tg. Neb.* reads עמא דחייבין לאשתיצאה, "the people who are indebted to be destroyed." Vulg. has *gens perditorum*, "destroyed people". Since the Kerethites and Philistines are considered to be the same people in 1 Sam 30:14 and Ezek 25:16 likewise links them for annihilation, *Kerethites* makes sense. Israel knew the Philistines to be originally from Crete (Deut 2:23; Amos 9:7), and LXX renders כְּרֵתִים as Κρητῶν, "Cretans".[15]

As Canaan receives little attention in the prophets, Gillis Gerleman translates כְּנַעַן by its common meaning "traders" rather than the place name, reflecting Zephaniah's negative attitude

[15] Also see *BDB*, 504.

toward the "kanaanäischen Kultur."[16] Sweeney agrees and calls this a result of "the prophet's penchant for wordplay."[17] Against this is the fact that nowhere in 2:5–15 are classes of people singled out. Only nations are.

וְהָיְתָה חֶבֶל הַיָּם **2:6**
נְוֹת כְּרֹת רֹעִים
וְגִדְרוֹת צֹאן

And it—the territory of the sea—will become
pasturelands of wells for shepherds
and folds for sheep.

As evidenced by the variety of renderings by translations, both ancient and modern, this verse presents some difficulties: (1) the apparent masculine subject (חֶבֶל הַיָּם) with a feminine verb (וְהָיְתָה); (2) the meaning of כְּרֹת; and (3) the relationship of the words in the apparent construct chain נְוֹת כְּרֹת רֹעִים.

חֶבֶל is the subject in the very next verse and takes a masculine verb, so any suggestion that it functions as a feminine here is suspect.[18] The most recent addressee, however, is כְּנַעַן אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים, "Canaan, land of the Philistines," in 2:5, which is feminine. As that verse also show the equivalence of the Philistines' territory with that of the seacoast, it makes a logical subject. Therefore, חֶבֶל הַיָּם, "the territory of the sea," is in apposition to the subject.[19]

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[16] Gillis Gerleman, *Zephanja: Textkritisch und Literarisch Untersucht* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1942), 30. This is how the word is used in as close a context as 1:11.

[17] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 127.

[18] As in Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 103.

[19] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 127, makes the connection with 2:5, but then declares that חֶבֶל הַיָּם functions as a proper name for the land and acquires the feminine gender from אֶרֶץ. The problem is that the same thing would be expected in 2:7. Apposition is easier.

The exact form כְּרֹת appears only two other times in the HB, on both occasions an infinitive of כרת, which would make no sense here and which no one suggests as an option.[20]

LXX translates it as "Crete" and makes it the subject. Among modern versions, NIV, JPS, NLT, NAB all use some form of Crete or Kerethities, either in construct with the subject phrase or in apposition to it. However, as in 2:5, every other reference to this people or their territory uses the gentilic form כְּרֵתִי. However, there may be an intentional play on words here.

Another suggestion is that it is a plural of כַּר, "pasture". However, in its few other appearances, the plural is always masculine, not feminine as it appears to be here.[21]

There is also the possibility that כְּרֹת is derived from כרה, "to dig", making this form "well" or "cistern", that is, "a digging". If a noun, it would be unique in the HB (and MT does not mark the word as such); if a verb, the vowels and final ת suggest an infinitive construct. The weakness of this suggestion is that there is no other like occurrence in the HB. However, the matching of vowels make it the best choice.[22]

Finally, the phrase נְוֹת כְּרֹת רֹעִים seems to be a three noun construct chain, "pasturelands of wells of shepherds." Ryou considers the weak disjunctive accent on נְוֹת as evidence that there are actually three complementary objects—"pasturelands, wells of shepherds, and folds of sheep."[23] Leaving aside the unproven assertion as to whether a disjunctive accent can break a construct chain, there is no ambiguity here as the reduction of *qamets* to *sheva* indicates that נוֹת is in

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[20] Jer 34:8 and Hos 10:4.

[21] See Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 128.

[22] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 104, thinks of these diggings as *caves*, places for the shepherds to sleep which would parallel the folds for the sheep in the next phrase. However, it is more likely that caves would be natural formations, not human diggings. Further, the emphasis of this verse is not a dwelling place for Judah (but is the theme of 2:7), but is rather on the use of the land for their livelihood.

[23] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 103. Also Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 104; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 224; and Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 190.

construct. Perhaps the weak disjunctive accent indicates that the construct is to be read distributively, “pasturelands of wells of shepherds and pasturelands of folds of sheep.” Either way the overall meaning is the same.[24]

וְהָיָה חֶבֶל לִשְׁאֵרִית בֵּית יְהוּדָה **2:7**
עֲלֵיהֶם יִרְעוּן
בְּבָתֵּי אַשְׁקְלוֹן בָּעֶרֶב יִרְבָּצוּן
כִּי יִפְקְדֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם
וְשָׁב שְׁבוּתָם

And the territory will be for the remnant of the house of Judah,
upon them they will pasture.
In the houses of Ashkelon in the evening they will lie down,
for Yahweh their God will attend them
and he will restore their fortunes.

Zephaniah employs the feminine singular noun שְׁאֵרִית, “remnant” or “rest”, three times. The significance of this term is addressed in the exegesis of 2:3 in chapter 5. In this verse it is the subject of two masculine plural verbs, יִרְעוּן and יִרְבָּצוּן, and the referent of the third person masculine plural pronominal suffixes in יִפְקְדֵם, אֱלֹהֵיהֶם, and שְׁבוּתָם. In 2:9 it serves as the subject of יִבָּזוּם, a masculine plural verb. In 3:13 it is the subject of three masculine plural verbs, יַעֲשׂוּ, יִרְעוּ, (along with וְרָבְצוּ, a third person common plural perfect), and the referent for the independent personal pronoun הֵמָּה and the pronominal suffix in בְּפִיהֶם.

Though the ת ending ordinarily marks a word as a feminine singular, שְׁאֵרִית is not consistently treated as such in the HB. It is used in sixty-three different verses apart from Zephaniah. In nineteen of those verses, it functions as either the subject of a verb or as the clear referent to a verb, independent pronoun, or pronominal suffix. In fourteen of those twenty the

[24] Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (tr. and rev. Takamitsu Muraoka; 2 vols ; Subsidia Biblica 14 ; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute 2000) ; trans. of *Grammaire de l’Hebreu biblique* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1923), 465.

verb or pronoun for which it is the referent is masculine plural.[25] Therefore, Zephaniah is in line with common usage in the HB when he uses masculine plural nouns and pronouns with שְׁאֵרִית. Zephaniah views the *remnant* as people. Though he does not define who they are in this verse, in the future, they will inhabit the territory of the Philistines.

The plural prepositional phrase עֲלֵיהֶם is unmatched grammatically with anything that precedes. Gesenius cites several other examples where a plural pronominal suffix has a collective singular noun as its referent.[26] Here it refers to the territory that has been referred to by a variety of terms, masculine and feminine, singular and plural.

To have Yahweh פקד, "visit", often results in judgment in the HB but on some occasions it is pleasant. Context normally makes this clear. G. André translates this pleasant visitation as "taking an interest."[27]

שְׁבוּתָם presents some difficulty, variously translated "their captives", as in those returning from exile, or "their fortunes." Two apparently different nouns, שְׁבוּת and שְׁבִית, appear in the HB, as evidenced by the three times that שְׁבִית is the Qere of שְׁבוּת and the eight times that שְׁבוּת is the Qere of שְׁבִית in the MT.[28] Earlier commentators attempted to define these words (even it they thought them to be one word) by their etymology. Both שׁבה, "take captive", and שׁוב, "turn", are

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[25] 2 Kgs 21:14; 1 Chr 4:43; 2 Chr 36:20; Isa 46:3; Jer 8:3; 15:9; 23:3; 24:8; 40:11; 42:15; 42:19; 44:12; 44:14; 44:28. Masculine singular verbs are used in Mic 2:12; 5:6; and 5:7. Jer 40:15 and 47:5 use the expected feminine singular verbs. There are five third person common plural perfect verbs and one first person common plural perfect verb mixed in here. Further, note that Jer 44:12 has three third person masculine plural imperfect verbs and a third person masculine plural pronominal suffix relating to the referent along with the one third person common plural perfect verb.

[26] *GKC*, 441.

[27] G. André, "פָּקַד," *TDOT*, 12:54–59.

[28] שְׁבִית as the Qere of שְׁבוּת: Ps 85:2: 126:4; Zeph 2:7. שְׁבוּת as the Qere of שְׁבִית: Job 42:10; Jer 29:14; 49:39; Lam 2:14; Ezek 16:53 (3x); 39:25.

suggested as possible roots.[29] There seems to be agreement that שְׁבִית means "captives"; the question is what שְׁבוּת denotes.

Citing Barr's warning regarding unwarranted appeals to etymology, John Bracke dismisses the etymological discussion entirely and focuses on the use of the phrase שׁוּב שְׁבוּת in its contexts (approximately thirty-five).[30] He concludes that these phrases are "promises which indicate Yahweh's reversal of his judgment, and the restoration of a condition of well-being."[31]

Besides the similarity of שְׁבוּת to שְׁבִית, what muddies the waters is that very often the promise is given in the context of the return of exiles, especially the nine cases in Jer 29–33. As it forms a nice word-play, this influences some to think that it always means the return of exiles. However, it must be noted that many uses have nothing to do with a return from exile, such as Job 42:10 or Ps 14:7. Ben Zvi claims that many occurrences could be interpreted either way.[32]

Ancient versions believed this was a return from exile, hence LXX, ἀπέστρεψε τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν αὐτῶν, "he returned (them) from their captivity"; Vulg., *avertet captivitatem eorum*, "turn their captivity"; *Tg. Neb.*, ויתיב גלותהון, "he will return their exiles." Even the MT Qere reading, שְׁבִיתָם, is indicative that they understood "captivity" rather than "fortune".

William Holladay summarizes and builds upon the work of Ernst Dietrich to explain how the two distinct words שְׁבוּת and שְׁבִית became confused.[33]

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[29] M. Ben-Yashar and M. Zipor, "שְׁבוּת/שְׁבִית" in *TDOT*, 14:295; Heinz-Joseph Fabry, "שְׁבוּת/שְׁבִית" in *TDOT*, 14:295–97.

[30] John M. Bracke, "*šûb šᵉbût*: A Reappraisal" *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97 (1985): 233–36.

[31] Ibid., 243.

[32] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 163.

[33] The work he cites is Ernst Ludwig Dietrich, שׁוב שבות: *Die Endzeitliche Wiederherstellung bei den Propheten* (BZAW 40; Giessen, Germany: Alfred Töpelmann, 1925). Dietrich himself does not give this handy a summary. His conclusion does not mention the Exile at all. Holladay may be expanding Dietrich's thinking a bit.

> The original form of the noun was **šābhûth*, with unchangeable qames, derived from *šûbh*, and was still so pronounced when OT Hebrew was still a living language. The phrase *šûbh *šābhûth* meant "render a restoration", and was a technical term for the eschatological restoration of the entire nation to its primal glory. Because the hope of Israel was concentrated so firmly in post-exilic times on restoration from exile, and also possibly because of manuscript confusion between waw and yodh, the noun was confused with *š^ebhîth*, an abstract noun from *šābhâ*, so much so that the later Masoretes were unable to distinguish properly between the two words.[34]

Sweeney disagrees only in that he claims that the Masoretes "*deliberately* read the expression as a reference to YHWH's intention to restore the captivity of Judah."[35]

Here is a confusion of *meaning* and *referent*. When שׁוּב שְׁבוּת is used in verses which speak of a return, its *meaning* is "restore fortune" and its *referent* is the return from captivity. Their fortunes are restored by their return to the land. Even if the *referent* of Zephaniah's declaration is a return from captivity, the *meaning*—and therefore the translation—of וְשָׁב שְׁבוּתָם must still be "he will restore their fortunes." Again, see the discussion at 2:3 in chapter 5 for a discussion of Zephaniah's theologies of remnant and captivity. 2:5 already indicated that this vaguely defined group would take possession of Philistine territory. 2:7 calls that occupation a reversal of fortune for the remnant.

2:8 שָׁמַעְתִּי חֶרְפַּת מוֹאָב
וְגִדּוּפֵי בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן
אֲשֶׁר חֵרְפוּ אֶת־עַמִּי
וַיַּגְדִּילוּ עַל־גְּבוּלָם

I have heard the reproach of Moab
and the revilings of the Ammonites
who have reproached my people
and magnified themselves against their territory.

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[34] William Lee Holladay, *The Root šûbh in the Old Testament: With Particular Reference to its Usages in Covenantal Contexts* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 113.

[35] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 132, emphasis mine

The roots of the two key Hebrew words in this verse, חרף and גדף, have a great deal of semantic range and overlap. Whether one chooses "taunt" or "revile" or "boast" or even "insult" for one or the other makes little difference as they seem to be used synonymously here for the sake of the poetics.

The appearance of a form גדל in place of גדף in the final colon is interesting. First they form a sound pair which draws attention to its choice. As another verb of speaking would be expected here, this word stands out.[36] TDOT draws attention to other prophetic words against nations (especially Ezek 35:13) that accuse them of *magnifying themselves* by their words.[37] However, גדל does not have "boast" or "threat" or any other verb of speaking as its basic definition; rather it means "to be great".

The Hiphil form of Qal intransitives are often called "internal" Hiphils, that is, the action turns back inward on the subject.[38] Therefore, a reflexive translation is in order. On the few occasions where the Hiphil form of גדל occurs without a direct object and followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with עַל in the HB, it always has a reflexive meaning "to make oneself great over".[39]

There is word-play here. Moab and Ammon exalt themselves by their taunts, but the purpose of their taunts are their designs to expand into the territory of Yahweh's people. By taking over all or part of Judah, they will magnify themselves by expanding their land/borders. This is more than just talk for which they will be punished; they have evil designs.

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[36] In fact, many modern translations and commentators use "make threats" or "boast" here.

[37] R. Mosis, "גָּדַל," in *TDOT*, 2:405.

[38] See Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 439–40.

[39] Job 19:5; Ps 35:26; 38:17; 55:13; Jer 48:26; 48:42; Ezek 35:13. Mosis, *TDOT*, 2:404–5. "Here the verb has an intrinsically transitive meaning, i.e., the subject of the action and the subject of the process being brought about, viz., bringing the greatness into operation and effectiveness, are the same."

לָכֵן חַי־אָנִי **2:9**
נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
כִּי־מוֹאָב כִּסְדֹם תִּהְיֶה
וּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן כַּעֲמֹרָה
מִמְשַׁק חָרוּל
וּמִכְרֵה־מֶלַח
וּשְׁמָמָה עַד־עוֹלָם
שְׁאֵרִית עַמִּי יְבָזּוּם
וְיֶתֶר גּוֹי יִנְחָלוּם

Therefore as I live
—the utterance of Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel—
Moab will become like Sodom
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah:
a possession of weeds
and a pit of salt
and a devastation forever.
The remnant of my people will plunder them
and the remainder of my nation will possess them.

The opening particle, לָכֵן, will be an important part of interpreting 3:8. In this context, however, its connection between what precedes and what follows is obvious enough. Because of the designs of Moab and Ammon upon the land of Judah, Yahweh will turn their own lands into desolation and a remnant of Judah will inherit them.

כִּי does not have its normal causal function in this verse. One of its many uses is to introduce the decree that follows an oath. Therefore, it is best left untranslated.[40] Chapter 4 contains fuller discussion.

The phrase מִמְשַׁק חָרוּל וּמִכְרֵה־מֶלַח is notable its rare words. מִמְשַׁק is defined as "ground" by *HALOT* and "possession" by *BDB*.[41] The latter proposes an otherwise unknown root מׇשַׁק for this word, used only here in the HB, but calls it "highly dubious." Both *BDB* and *HALOT* give

[40] See Num 14:21–22; Isa 49:18; Jer 22:24; 46:18; Ezek 35:6.

[41] *HALOT*, 2:596; *BDB*, 606.

"weed" for חָרוּל, which seems to fit its other two HB contexts as well.[42] כרה, "to dig" is suggested as the root for the *hapax legomenon* מִכְרֵה, "pit".[43] Commentators note the resultant difficulty of coming up with a precise translation for these words, but they all render it similarly.[44]

The MT Qere reading gives גּוֹיִי, "my nation", for גּוֹי, which fits the context.

זֹאת לָהֶם תַּחַת גְּאוֹנָם **2:10**
כִּי חֵרְפוּ וַיַּגְדִּלוּ
עַל־עַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
נוֹרָא יְהוָה עֲלֵיהֶם **2:11**
כִּי רָזָה אֵת כָּל־אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ
וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ־לוֹ
אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ
כֹּל אִיֵּי הַגּוֹיִם

This (will be) theirs instead of their pride,
because they reproached and magnified themselves
against the people of Yahweh of hosts.
Yahweh is to be feared over them,
because he will have starved all the gods of the earth.
And they will bow down to him,
each from his own place,
(namely), all the islands of the nations.

These two verses are favorite candidates to be considered redactional additions to the original prophecy.[45] While this is mostly a content decision, a few claim that these two verses are prose rather than poetry. Gerleman states, "Etwas anders verhält es sich mit v. 10 und 11. Im Gegensatz zum rhythmischen Aufbau des Vorhergehenden sind sie reine Prosa. V. 10 is ausserdem sehr blass und farblos und besteht nur aus einer Wiederholung des Vorhergehenden.

[42] *HALOT*, 1:351; *BDB*, 355.

[43] *HALOT*, 2:582; *BDB*, 500.

[44] See, for example, Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 106–7; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 139–40.

[45] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 141, summarizes this position.

V11 erinnert an die eschatologisch eingestellten Stücke, die Kap. 1 einleiten und abschliessen."[46] Kapelrud claims that the prose is in and of itself an indication of addition. "Not only the prose form, but also the way in which the events are interpreted indicate a glossator who wanted to give readers a lesson."[47]

While not everyone agrees on what constitutes Hebrew poetry, commonly used indicators of poetry are at work in these verses. There are only three prose particles out of the twenty-seven words of 2:10–11, which is within an acceptable range.[48] Syllable and stress counts are also within poetic ranges. Picturesque language is certainly at work when Yahweh is said to רָזָה, "starve", the gods of the nations.

Ryou, while defending the poetics of these verses, claims that there is no clear parallelism in 2:10.[49] It is hard to disagree with that assessment. While its poetics may be weak, as a summary statement, it fits in nicely with what precedes.

2:11, however, exhibits some parallelism. Its third line reverses the subject and object of the first. *Yahweh* will be awesome against *them*/*they* will worship *Yahweh*. The object in the first line is the Moabites and Ammonites from the previous verse. In the third line, however, the subject is the people of the entire earth. כָּל־אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ forms a conceptual pair with כֹּל אִיֵּי הַגּוֹיִם. Berlin's treatment of parallelism is appropriate here. "The question is not how much parallelism

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[46] Gerleman, *Zephanja*, 40. Also note that *BHK*[1] and *BHK*[3] break these verses into cola; *BHS*, however, prints them as prose.

[47] Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, 34. Others who agree include J. M. P. Smith, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 229; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 229; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 144; R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 134–35.

[48] Francis I. Andersen, and A. Dean Forbes, "'Prose Particle' Counts of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. Carol L. Meyers and Michael O'Connor; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 166–67. For the Prophets, Freedman considers 5% and 15% the benchmarks. David Noel Freedman, "Another Look at Biblical Hebrew Poetry," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (JSOTSup 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 16–17.

[49] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 327.

a text has, but how much of it is effective and meaningful in terms of focusing the message on itself (the poetic function)."[50]

One innovative suggestion to strengthen the parallelism in 2:10 is to translate זֹאת as "shame". Mitchell Dahood suggests that in five verses—Ps 7:4; 44:18; 74:18; Zeph 2:10; and Job 2:11— זֹאת is not the feminine form of the common demonstrative pronoun "this", but another word meaning "indignity" or "insult".[51] Although *this* works grammatically, he claims that it does not work poetically. *Indignity* makes a good parallel whereas *this* does not.

Sabottka was the first of several Zephaniah scholars to adopt this position in relation to 2:10.[52] Most, however, disagree.[53] Ryou calls this "a complicated explanation of a text for which a simple reading of a common Hebrew word would suffice for the context."[54]

Against Sabottka's proposal is the fact that, if Biblical Hebrew knew this definition of זֹאת, by the time of the ancient versions, it has been lost. Further what would its root be? Dahood and Sabottka suggest צֹאָה, "filth". There are other examples of a shift between ז and צ (צרב/זרב, צעק/זעק , צער/זער) so this is certainly possible.

In the end, as tempting as it is to adopt *shame*, since it improves the poetics in a verse that could use the help, the evidence to overturn the simple meaning of this common pronoun is simply found wanting.

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[50] Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 9–10.

[51] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1–50* (AB16. New York: Doubleday, 1965), 42.

[52] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 88–89.

[53] While many simply render זֹאת as "this" in their translation, some are explicitly against "shame": Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 172; Gregorio del Olmo Lete, "El Libro de Sofonías y la Filologia Semítica Nor-occidental" *EstBib* 32 (1973): 300; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 201. Besides Sabottka, those for "shame" include R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 134; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 149; Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 170–71.

[54] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 39.

The use of the feminine is not surprising as there is no single specific antecedent. All the bad things that will come to Moab and Ammon in the previous verse is in view. Bruce Waltke and Michael O'Connor note that "a dummy or impersonal pronoun is usually feminine."[55]

Following LXX, but against *Tg. Neb.* and Vulg., *BHS* and other commentators propose to emend נוֹרָא, "he is to be feared", to נִרְאֶה, "he will be seen". This is unnecessary. The form of נוֹרָא is a Niphal masculine singular participle. Its use here matches Waltke and O'Connor's "gerundive" category, which is sometimes equivalent to a future passive.[56] As the action in this verse is set in the future, "is to be feared" captures both the future passive and adjectival senses of this construction.

רָזָה is Qal perfect third masculine singular, whereas a Piel or Hiphil imperfect might be more appropriate grammatically to show causation. Ryou suggests that because it is transitive only here in the HB, the Qal perfect could well have a future causative meaning.[57] This is a very picturesque way to describe Yahweh's victory over other gods: he would starve them, that is, they would not receive their food offerings when the peoples of the nations switch their worship to Yahweh.

The entire verse is set in the future, while רָזָה is a perfect form. Therefore the main clause of the sentence, "Yahweh is to be feared," is predicated on the event in the clause having already happened. Thus, "he will have starved."[58]

Though it seems obvious to translate מִמְּקוֹמוֹ as "from his own place", O'Connor cites an Arabic root *maqām*, which means "holy place" or "shrine", which results in "Each worships him

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[55] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 110.

[56] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 387.

[57] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 41–42.

[58] Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2:363–64.

from his own temple."[59] The problem is that in the HB, there are fifty-three uses of מְקוֹמוֹ, simply meaning "his place". Most often it indicates a person's home (Gen 31:55). Other referents include a sleeping place (1 Sam 3:9), hiding place (Josh 8:19), place of the ark or an idol within a temple (1 Kgs 8:6), the temple (Mic 1:3). O'Connor may be guilty of mixing *meaning* and *referent*. When considering that מִמְּקוֹמוֹ is used in parallel with אִי, the place where one lives seems to be in view.

אִי normally means either "island" or "coast", most often the latter. Zephaniah, however, uses חֶבֶל, "territory", (twice in construct with יָם, "sea") in 2:5–7, to refer to the coastal territory of the Philistines, There are several instances where אִי is used as a synecdoche for the ends of the earth, as in Isa 49:1, שִׁמְעוּ אִיִּים אֵלַי וְהַקְשִׁיבוּ לְאֻמִּים מֵרָחֹוק, "Listen to me, oh islands/coasts and give attention, you distant peoples." This seems to be the understanding here.

When grouping the translation in Hebrew clauses, it is hard to see that "all the islands of the nations" is the subject of the sentence. The masculine plural of the verb and of אִיֵּי indicate how it should be read. It would be better paraphrased "The ends of the earth will bow down to him, each one from his own land."

2:12 גַּם־אַתֶּם כּוּשִׁים
חַלְלֵי חַרְבִּי הֵמָּה

Likewise you, O Cushites:
They are the ones pierced by my sword.

The scene shifts to southern neighbors in an extremely short statement. Though the presence of the second person pronoun in the first colon does not match the third person pronoun in the second, Ryou cites numerous other examples of this type of prophetic construction.[60]

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[59] O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 253.

[60] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 43–44.

וְיֵט יָדוֹ עַל־צָפוֹן 2:13
וְיַאֲבֵד אֶת־אַשּׁוּר
וְיָשֵׂם אֶת־נִינְוֵה לְשַׁמָּמָה
צִיָּה כַּמִּדְבָּר

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

The form of both וְיֵט and וְיָשֵׂם seems to be a Qal jussive. Are they also jussive in meaning and how does that affect the translation? According to Gesenius, this form is a poetic shortening of the imperfect for metrical reasons and the apparent jussive form is coincidental. It is simply a form of defective writing for which he gives many other examples.[61] Though not citing this verse, Paul Joüon agrees with Gesenius that "it is possible to conjecture that the jussive vocalization was due to the scriptio defectiva" for those "forms which are vocalized as jussives," but are "difficult or impossible to explain."[62] Waltke and O'Connor, who say this situation "rarely" exists, do not commit to why a jussive form may have an imperfect meaning but declare, "It is best in problem passages of this nature to be governed by sense rather than by form."[63]

If these two verbs are taken as jussive, then the imperfect form וְיַאֲבֵד also needs jussive force since the Piel of אבד has no unique jussive form. This would result in "may he stretch…may he destroy…may he set." Waltke and O'Connor state that a jussive used by an inferior to a superior typically means a request, prayer, or request for permission.[64] A jussive

[61] "Moreover, in not a few cases, the jussive is used, without any collateral sense, for the ordinary imperfect form. and this occurs not alone in forms, which may arise from a misunderstanding of the defective writing…This use of the jussive can hardly be due merely to poetic license, but is rather to be explained on rhythmical grounds. In all the above-cited examples, in fact, the jussive stands at the beginning of the sentence (and hence removed as far as possible from the principal tone)." *GCK*, 323.

[62] Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 377.

[63] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 387.

[64] Ibid., 568–69.

translation would certainly make sense in this verse. However, nowhere else in the entire book of Zephaniah does the prophet or people request anything from Yahweh. Therefore, following Gesenius, I am using indicative verbs.

2:14 וְרָבְצוּ בְתוֹכָהּ עֲדָרִים
כָּל־חַיְתוֹ־גוֹי
גַּם־קָאַת גַּם־קִפֹּד
בְּכַפְתֹּרֶיהָ יָלִינוּ
קוֹל יְשׁוֹרֵר בַּחַלּוֹן
חֹרֶב בַּסַּף
כִּי אַרְזָהּ עֵרָה

And herds will lie down in her midst,
every beast of a nation;
both the owl and the hedgehog,
in her capitals they will spend the night.
A voice will continually sing in the window,
devastation on the threshold;
for he will have laid bare the cedar-work.

This verse is made difficult by its uncommon words, unusual uses of words, and its terse construction. Despite all this, its overall meaning is easy to decipher: Nineveh will be so completely destroyed that only wild animals will makes its ruin their home.

Since beasts or wild animals do not properly belong to nations, many scholars have unnecessarily suggested emendations for כָּל־חַיְתוֹ־גוֹי.[65] Though this construction exists nowhere else attested in the HB, its meaning is not difficult. The semantic range of גּוֹי includes political entities defined by territory. In this, it can interchange with אֶרֶץ, which is how LXX understands it (τῆς γῆς). As גּוֹי does not mean "land", but rather "nation", the latter is reflected in the translation. The ending of חַיְתוֹ is an old case ending which appears occasionally on the noun חַיָּה in poetic texts.[66]

[65] See the summary in Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 46–47.

[66] *BDB*, 312. Other verse cited are Gen 1:24; Ps 50:10; 79:2; 104:11, 20; Isa 56:9 (2x).

The precise identification of the animals, קָאַת and קִפֹּד, is not definitively ascertainable. That בְּכַפְתֹּרֶיהָ, though uncertain, is considered to be some kind of architectural term is attested by the ancient versions (LXX, ἐν τοῖς φατνώμασιν αὐτῆς, "ceiling work"; Vulg., *in liminibus eius*, "in its thresholds"; *Tg. Neb.*, בפיתוח תרעהא, "in the opening of its gate"). In any case, if animals are lodging in the buildings, the city is in ruins.

קוֹל יְשׁוֹרֵר בַּחַלּוֹן is noteworthy for the unusual Polel imperfect form of שׁיר. It appears thirty-six other times in the HB in the Polel, thirty-five times as a substantivized participle, "singer". The other indicative form is a perfect in Job 36:24, זְכֹר כִּי־תַשְׁגִּיא פָּעֳלוֹ אֲשֶׁר שֹׁרְרוּ אֲנָשִׁים, "Remember to extol his work of which men have sung." For some, this form indicates repeated or continuous singing. Ryou states, "The Polel imperfect ישורר 'a sound shall echo' from the root שׁיר, means 'to continually echo,' as in Job 36:24 and here."[67] Sweeney notes, "The polel form of the verb conveys intensive and repetitive sound that may be employed for Levitical singers in the temple."[68]

Berlin remarks that, according to the MT accents, חֹרֶב בַּסַּף should be the continuation of the singing in the windows. Therefore, she accepts the emendation of חרב , "desolation", to ערב, "raven", as in LXX and Vulg. Accordingly, סַף becomes the *threshold* of a window, that is, a *sill*. This creates a strong parallelism. "A voice will sing in the windows, a raven on the sill."[69] Though Berlin's suggestion is attractive, the parallelism of MT is sufficient to reject emendation.

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[67] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 49. Also, Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 194.

[68] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 153.

[69] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 115–16. Also, Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 296.

כִּי אַרְזָהּ עֻרָּה is a causal clause, indicating how the previous description will come to be.[70] The perfect form of ערה indicates a time when someone will view the ruins and remember the completeness of its destruction. There is no reason to recommend its emendation or deletion.[71]

Many EV and commentators consider אַרְזָהּ to be the subject and assign a passive meaning to the Piel verb form עֻרָּה. This creates a mismatch between the feminine singular noun and the masculine singular verb. Further the occurrences of עֻרָּה in Piel in the HB always take a direct object and never have a passive meaning. All the problems are solved, however, if אַרְזָהּ is the direct object and Yahweh is the implied subject. Yahweh is the subject of a masculine singular verb as recently as 2:13. The use of ערה, "lay bare", for inanimate objects is well known (Ps 137:7; Isa 22:6). The future perfect translation is the same case as רָזָה in 2:11.

2:15 זֹאת הָעִיר הָעַלִּיזָה
הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת לָבֶטַח
הָאֹמְרָה בִּלְבָבָהּ
אֲנִי וְאַפְסִי עוֹד
אֵיךְ הָיְתָה לְשַׁמָּה
מַרְבֵּץ לַחַיָּה
כֹּל עוֹבֵר עָלֶיהָ יִשְׁרֹק יָנִיעַ יָדוֹ

This is the exultant city,
the one which dwells in safety,
the one which says in her heart,
"I am, and there is no other."
How she has become a devastation,
a lying-down place for living things.
Everyone who passes by her will hiss,
he will shake his hand.

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[70] Recognizing that כִּי must have a connective force, along with the strong disjunctive accent on בַּסַּף makes the suggestion, "A sword on the sill strips the cedarwork," unworkable (O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 254). It also makes unnecessary his reading of "sill" for and his emendation of חֹרֶב, "destruction", to חֶרֶב, "sword".

[71] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 50–51, has a summary of the arguments and suggestions.

The phrase הָאֹמְרָה בִלְבָבָהּ אֲנִי וְאַפְסִי עוֹד is nearly identical to that found in Isa 47:10, the only difference being a second person referent rather than third and an indicative form of אמר.

מַרְבֵּץ is a *hapax legomena*. The form suggests a Hiphil masculine singular participle of רבץ, "to lie down". It is probably a noun derived from the same root that in this form means "a place to lie down".

The Hiphil form of נוע occurs six times in the HB with רֹאשׁ to mean "shake one's head", a clearly derisive action.[72] Only here is it used with יָד, "hand", but the symbolism is likewise derisive.

3:1 הוֹי מֹרְאָה וְנִגְאָלָה
הָעִיר הַיּוֹנָה

Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted,
the oppressing city.

The initial impression upon the hearer of the feminine singular is that Nineveh is still the subject. It will not be until the next verse that it becomes clear that Jerusalem is the new subject. Chapter 4 on the structure of Zephaniah will have more discussion on this.

מֹרְאָה is a Qal feminine singular participle which appears to be from the root מרא, "to flap". Gesenius however, lists quite a few III-ה verbs that substitute a final א in some or all of their forms, including this one.[73] Therefore, the presumed root would be מרה, "to be rebellious". Ancient versions had trouble with this word. *Tg. Neb.* used יחי, "to hurry" (Hebrew equivalent, מהר); LXX, ἐπιφανὴς, "splendid". The latter may have resulted from the translators thinking that מוֹרָא, "awesome", was the intended word. LXX further reads ἡ πόλις ἡ περιστερα, "the city of

[72] 2 Kgs 19:21; Job 16:4; Ps 22:8; 109:25; Isa 37:22; Lam 2:15.

[73] *GKC*, 216–17.

the dove," for הָעִיר הַיּוֹנָה. This is lexically possible as הַיּוֹנָה is potentially ambiguous, either the definite form of יוֹנָה, "dove", or the Qal feminine singular participle of יָנָה, "to oppress".

Ben Zvi suggests that a play on words is intended here when the text was read orally: The awesome city is also rebellious.[74] B. Jongeling, noting the various translations of all three descriptive terms in the ancient versions, contends that the entire sentence is an intentional word-play. "Woe to/Alas for the rebellious/splendid, polluted/redeemed, oppressive/dove like city."[75] While not impossible, both suggestions seem a stretch as they are based on what appear to be a misunderstanding of LXX.

3:2 לֹא שָׁמְעָה בְקוֹל
לֹא לָקְחָה מוּסָר
בַּיהוָה לֹא בָטָחָה
אֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ לֹא קָרֵבָה

She has not hearkened to a voice;
she has not taken correction.
In Yahweh she has not trusted;
to her God she has not drawn near.

These are all common words used normally with classic syntactical as well as morphological parallelism. The string of four short clauses creates a staccato effect, signaling a strong indictment. The last two lines front the direct object to bring emphasis to whom the city should have been paying attention. Since יהוה is the God of Israel, the reader now understands that Nineveh is no longer the subject.

3:3 שָׂרֶיהָ בְקִרְבָּהּ אֲרָיוֹת שֹׁאֲגִים
שֹׁפְטֶיהָ זְאֵבֵי עֶרֶב
לֹא גָרְמוּ לַבֹּקֶר

[74] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 184–85.

[75] B. Jongeling, "Jeux de Mots en Sophonie III 1 et 3?" *VT* 21 (1971): 541–43.

Her officials in her midst are roaring lions;
her judges are wolves of the evening—
they do not gnaw bones in the morning.

Whether שָׂרֶיהָ, should be read as a generic term, "her officials", or as a technical term, "her princes", is debated.[76] In this context, whether it refers to hired officials or those of royal blood, it definitely signifies the ruling class of the nation.

גָּרְמוּ is a *hapax legomenon*. The root is used only two other times in the HB, both in Piel rather than Qal as here. *BDB*, based on the definition of the noun גֶּרֶם as "bone", gives the meaning of גָּרַם II as "to break bones", although in its contexts (Num 24:8 and Ezek 23:34) "gnaw on bones" might be better.[77] *BDB* cites this verse as a separate verb with the same root letters, גָּרַם , "to leave", noting its Aramaic parallel.[78] BDB may be more influenced by the Vulg., "to leave behind", or LXX, ὑπολείπω, "to leave remaining", or *Tg. Neb*., ארך, "lengthen, draw out".[79]

While most EV and some commentators translate with some form of "they leave nothing/no bones for morning," scholars have suggested other possibilities.[80] Sabottka keeps the *gnawing on bones* concept and takes לְ as "since", yielding "die nichts zu nagen hatten seit dem

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[76] See Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 200–1; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 163.

[77] *BDB*, 175.

[78] *BDB*, 175, cites *NHWB*, 1:350, which translates גרם as "verursachen, veranlassen, zuwege bringen". *NHWB*, 1:427, cites Arabic parallels. Jastrow, 1:269, defines גרם as "to carry with it, to be the cause of".

[79] "The translation 'leave behind' given by LXX and V may have been derived from Arabic and Aramaic roots meaning 'to cut off' but it seems forced in this connection." Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 155. For ארך, see Jastrow, 121.

[80] For "leave until morning" see ESV, NIV, JPS, NABS, NJB, NLT, NRSV, NKJV; Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 75; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 55–57; R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 137; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 156–57.

Morgen," in other words, the time that has passed between their last meal in the morning and the evening in which they work has left them ravenous.[81] Ball appeals to the noun form of the word, which he claims may mean "strong" in some contexts. He then puts the phrase in a contrastive parallel with 3:5 to translate it "they have no strength [to do their job as judges] during the morning."[82] Berlin keeps it simple, but leaves its meaning a bit ambiguous, "who do not gnaw till the morning."[83] I follow Roberts who takes לְ as "in", "who do not gnaw bones in the morning."[84] That is, the judges are so ravenous that by morning there is nothing left to eat.

3:4 נְבִיאֶיהָ פֹּחֲזִים
אַנְשֵׁי בֹּגְדוֹת
כֹּהֲנֶיהָ חִלְּלוּ־קֹדֶשׁ
חָמְסוּ תוֹרָה׃

Her prophets are reckless,
treacherous men,
Her priests pollute what is holy,
they do violence to the law.

The root פחז occurs only four times in the HB. Its translation as "reckless" fits each context.[85] בֹּגְדוֹת is a *hapax legomenon*, derived from בגד, "act treacherously". It appears to be a feminine plural participle. This creates a potential difficulty. There are twenty-three other appearances of בגד as a participle. Twenty times it acts as a substantive (masculine singular or plural); in each case it refers to people, as in, "treacherous man." Once it functions as an indicative verb (masculine singular). Twice it occurs as a feminine singular attributive adjective, modifying Judah. In this verse, there is no feminine plural noun, so it cannot be attributive. Since

[81] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 101;

[82] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 158–59. Also Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 194.

[83] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 125.

[84] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 204, 207, 213.

[85] "The exact shade of meaning of נביאיה פחזים may be under dispute, but the general message is clear: They were unreliable prophets." Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 195.

every other attributive use refers to a person or persons, if it were treated as a participle here, the translation would be expected to be, "husbands of treacherous women."

Against this, no modern commentator, ancient version, or EV adopt this reading.[86] Modern lexicons likewise give בְּגִדוֹת its own listing as a noun.[87] Whether it is a participle or a noun, the feminine plural probably signals that it is an abstract noun.[88] If it is indeed a noun, then it appears in a construct chain. This particular occurrence fits Waltke and O'Connor's definition of an "adjectival genitive."[89] Hence the translation "treacherous men."

A few EV translate קֹדֶשׁ as "sanctuary", namely, "holy place".[90] Not only is Zephaniah capable of using מִקְדָּשׁ if he meant "holy place", the parallelism supports "what is holy."

יְהוָה צַדִּיק בְּקִרְבָּהּ **3:5**
לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה עַוְלָה
בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר מִשְׁפָּטוֹ יִתֵּן לָאוֹר
לֹא נֶעְדָּר
וְלֹא־יוֹדֵעַ עַוָל בּוֹשֶׁת
Yahweh is righteous within her,
he does no unrighteousness.
Morning by morning he gives his judgment into the light,
it does not fail.
But the unrighteous does not know shame.

Both indicative verbs (יַעֲשֶׂה and יִתֵּן) are imperfect in form. The context does not indicate a future time. These should be rendered in the present to describe habitual action.[91]

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[86] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 219, notes one nineteenth-century Jewish commentator who translated it as "husbands of treacherous women."

[87] *DCH*, 2:93; *TWOT*, 1:90, *HALOT* 1:108. Gesenius' original lexicon listed as a feminine plural participle. Unlike other participles, however, he gave it the meaning "treacheries". Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (tr. E. Robinson; 14th ed.; Boston: Crocker and Brewer, 1862), 111. *BDB*, 93, however, treats it as a separate noun as the other modern lexicons.

[88] *GKC*, 393–94; Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 104–5.

[89] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 149.

[90] NIV, NASB, NLT, KJV.

[91] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 506.

The first difficulty here is how to divide the middle line. Most commentators and modern EV break it between יִתֵּן and לָאוֹר, forming two lines. "Morning by morning he gives his judgment/in the light [that is, at dawn] he never fails."[92] This division certainly makes sense and forms a nice parallelism. However, it ignores the MT accents and the understanding of the ancient versions.[93] MT has a conjunctive accent on יִתֵּן. The major disjunctive accent is on נֶעְדָּר and minor disjunctive accents on מִשְׁפָּטוֹ and לָאוֹר. Further, other verses that combine מִשְׁפָּט and אוֹר convey the message of bringing judgment to light, that is, making Yahweh's judgment visible (Ps 37:6; Hos 6:5; Micah 7:9).[94]

Sweeney and Elliger read לָאוֹר with what precedes, but break off נֶעְדָּר לֹא, making Yahweh's judgment the subject of the phrase. "Morning by morning he gives forth his law to the light, it does not fail."[95] For my translation, I am keeping the entire phrase together, following Berlin and Sabottka.[96]

The subject of the final line causes some difficulty. The ancient versions, EV, and many modern commentators believe that עַוָּל, "unrighteous", is the subject.[97] Other commentators claim that if עַוָּל were the subject, it would destroy the parallelism of the verse; therefore they see Yahweh as the subject. "(Yahweh) does not know shameful unrighteousness" (עַוָּל בֹּשֶׁת forms an

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[92] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 218; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 205; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 284; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 60–61; R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 137; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 178.

[93] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 162, "The LXX and Vulgate take this word with the preceding phrase, thus destroying the parallelism with בבקר בבקר."

[94] See the discussion in Sverre Aalen, "אוֹר," *TDOT*, 1:163.

[95] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 167; also see Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 75.

[96] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 130; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 101.

[97] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 103; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 284; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 16; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 178. Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 212–13 and Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 205, agree that עַוָּל is the subject, but because they claim it wrecks the parallelism, they believe the verse to be a gloss.

adjectival genitive construct chain).[98] Either approach produces its own type of parallelism: the former contrastive (Yahweh gives justice/the unrighteous are shameless), and the latter synonymous (Yahweh gives justice/Yahweh does not know unrighteousness).

The first problem is that עַוָּל does not mean "unrigteousness", as a quality, but "unrighteous one", a person. Further, to read עַוָּל בֹּשֶׁת as a construct chain ignores the MT disjunctive accent on עַוָּל, making them two separate nouns. If they were both direct objects without being joined by ו, then the translation would have to be "Yahweh does not know the unrighteous one, shame," which makes no sense. Rather the best option is to see that MT keeps the normal verb-subject-object word order and it should read, "the unrighteous does not know shame."

3:6 הִכְרַתִּי גוֹיִם
נָשַׁמּוּ פִּנּוֹתָם
הֶחֱרַבְתִּי חוּצוֹתָם
מִבְּלִי עוֹבֵר
נִצְדּוּ עָרֵיהֶם
מִבְּלִי־אִישׁ
מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב

I cut off nations,
their corner towers are desolate.
I made desolate their streets,
with no one to pass through.
Their cities are laid waste—
without a man,
without an inhabitant.

פִּנָּה literally means "corner", and besides simply indicating to the corner of a square object (Exod 27:2) it also signifies to a street corner (Prov 7:12), cornerstone (Ps 118:22), or the corner of the city wall (Neh 3:24). It also metaphorically refers to every part of the city (2 Chr 28:24) or

[98] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 101; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 167. With no textual evidence, Kevin J. Cathcart, "*Bōšet* in Zephaniah 3:5." *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 12 (1984): 35–39, simply removes עַוָּל and supposes a different root for בֹּשֶׁת.

to the chiefs of the people (Judg 20:2).[99] Here it is best defined by its use in 1:16, יוֹם שׁוֹפָר וּתְרוּעָה עַל הֶעָרִים הַבְּצֻרוֹת וְעַל הַפִּנּוֹת הַגְּבֹהוֹת, "a day of the trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the high corners," that is, fortifications on top of the corners of the walls. 2 Chr 26:15 credits King Uzziah with creating devices to shoot arrows and stones from עַל־הַמִּגְדָּלִים וְעַל־הַפִּנּוֹת, "upon the towers and upon the corners."

The root צדה is used only three times in the HB. The first two times it seems to mean "lie in wait", synonymous with ארב.[100] In this verse, it is thought to mean "make desolate". Both uses have parallels in the two different meanings of the Aramaic צדה.[101] *BDB* suggests that its appearance in the HB is as an Aramaic loan word.[102]

3:7 אָמַרְתִּי
אַךְ־תִּירְאִי אוֹתִי
תִּקְחִי מוּסָר
וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת מְעוֹנָהּ
כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־פָּקַדְתִּי עָלֶיהָ
אָכֵן הִשְׁכִּימוּ הִשְׁחִיתוּ כֹּל עֲלִילוֹתָם

I said, "Surely you will fear me,
you will take correction,"
Then her dwelling would not be cut off—
all which I appointed against her.
Rather they rose early, they corrupted all their deeds.

Throughout 3:1–5, the city of Jerusalem has been referred to with third feminine singular verbs and pronouns. The first line of this verse uses second feminine singular verbs, but returns to third feminine singular pronominal suffixes. This serves to mark which phrases belong inside and outside Yahweh's quote of himself. The change to third masculine plural verbs and

[99] *BDB*, 819.

[100] Exod 21:13; 1 Sam 24:12.

[101] *HALOT*, 3:1000–1; Jastrow, 2:1261.

[102] *BDB*, 841.

pronominal suffixes in the final line switches the attention from the city as a collective to the evil people themselves—already identified as princes and judges and prophets and priests.

However, the change from second person to third person has caused many commentators, along with *BHS*, to emend מְעוֹנָהּ to מֵעֵינֶיהָ, following LXX, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξολεθρευθῆτε ἐξ ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῆς, "and you will surely not be destroyed before your eyes."[103] This is unnecessary. MT makes good sense and is consistent with the context.

Since Yahweh is mulling a desired future for Jerusalem, the imperfect וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת should be translated with a modal "would not be cut off."[104]

אָכֵן is normally an emphatic particle, "surely" (Exod 2:14). In some contexts, however, it comes between an expectation and a different reality (Job 32:8; Ps 31:2; 66:19; 82:7; Isa 49:14; Jer 3:20). In these cases it needs to be translated adversatively.[105]

BDB cites עֲלִילָה as either "wantonness" or "deed".[106] While in most contexts this word describes the men's corrupt deeds, there may be some confusion of *meaning* and *referent*. Indeed, the word is used at times for Yahweh's actions.[107] The corrupt nature of their actions is derived from the verb שׁחת, "to corrupt". In this verse, it is not a list of individual bad deeds that are in view but their overall conduct.[108]

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[103] Edler, *Das Kerygma des Propheten Zefanja*, 10; Elliger *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 72; Gerleman, *Zephanja*, 53–55; House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama* , 132; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 242; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 205; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 285; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 65; J. M. P. Smith, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 242. Also see some EV: NJB, NRSB.

[104] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 509.

[105] *BDB*, 403. Also see the study by P. J. Van Zijl, "A Possible Interpretation of the Expression 'āmartî…' ākēn in Zephaniah 3:7," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (Die Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika. Potchefstroom, South Africa: Pro Rege, 1975), 87–93.

[106] *BDB*, 760. *DCH*, 6:425, lists "wantonness" as a secondary meaning but only in Deut 22:14, 17.

[107] Isa 12:4; Ps 9:12, among others.

[108] Heinz-Josef Fabry, "עלל II," *TDOT*, 11:141–42.

[On 3:8–10, see chapter 5.]

3:11 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
לֹא תֵבוֹשִׁי מִכֹּל עֲלִילֹתַיִךְ
אֲשֶׁר פָּשַׁעַתְּ בִּי
כִּי־אָז אָסִיר מִקִּרְבֵּךְ עַלִּיזֵי גַאֲוָתֵךְ
וְלֹא־תוֹסִפִי לְגָבְהָה עוֹד בְּהַר קָדְשִׁי

On that day
you will not be ashamed from all your deeds
by which you rebelled against me.
For at that time I will take away from your midst your proudly exultant ones,
and you will no longer exalt yourself on my holy mountain.

3:11 is filled with second person feminine verbs and pronominal suffixes, which hearkens back to the city of Jerusalem in 3:1–7. Chapter 4 will deal with the structural flow that this implies.

The construct chain, עַלִּיזֵי גַאֲוָתֵךְ, matches Waltke and O'Connor's "adjectival genitive" category.[109] J. Weingreen remarks that the pronominal suffix on the construct noun actually belongs with the head noun so this phrase consequently is understood as "your exultant ones of pride," which is what I mean by "your proudly exultant ones."[110]

The form לְגָבְהָה is quite unusual. It looks like a Qal infinitive construct of גבה and is parsed that way by all commentators. However, (1) the final ה of the root did not change to a ת as expected, (2) it has an extra ה on the end, and (3) the vowels do not match the typical pattern גְּבַהּ. Regarding the first condition, Gesenius notes that some III-ה verbs at least occasionally maintain their final ה instead of changing to ת.[111] The additional ה seems to mark it as a feminine form. Though infinitives are considered to be genderless, Joüon presents a list of infinitive construct

[109] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 149.

[110] J. Weingreen, "The Construct-Genetive Relation in Hebrew Syntax," *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (1954): 50–59. The same is true later in the verse with בְּהַר קָדְשִׁי, "my holy mountain."

[111] *GKC*, 210.

verbs (mostly stative) which sometimes add a feminine ending.[112] Since the main verb is second person feminine singular, this matches. Further, in all the examples cited by Gesenius and Joüon, when the feminine ending is attached the *holem* changes to a *sheva* as it does here.

וְהִשְׁאַרְתִּי בְקִרְבֵּךְ עַם עָנִי וָדָל **3:12**
וְחָסוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה

And I will leave in your midst a people humble and low.
And they will seek refuge in the name of Yahweh.

The root ענה and its various noun and adjectival forms (עָנָי, עָנִי, עֲנִי, עָנָו, עֲנָוָה) have a wide, if related, semantic range. These words are commonly translated as "poor", "afflicted", or "humble". Much of the time, the context makes clear which should be chosen.

TDOT wonders if עָנִי has a different semantic range than עָנָו, which appears in 2:3 and was translated "humble" there (the reasons why are given in chapter 5). They cautiously suggest that עָנִי generally means "poor" and עָנָו generally "humble" or "devout", but at the same time maintain that "the distinction should not be pressed."[113]

Most of the commentators who read 2:3 as "humble" also do so here without distinguishing between עָנָו and עָנִי. Interestingly, Renaud and Sabottka, who are the only ones to insist that עָנָיִם means "poor" in 2:3, translate עָנִי here as "humble" and "demütig".[114] They both base their choice, not on lexicography, but on the contrast of עָנִי וָדָל with עַלִּיזֵי גַאֲוָתֵךְ, "your haughty proud ones" of 3:11. Rudolph renders עָנִי as "armes", but does not mean "poor" in economic terms "sondern religiöse Begriffe," again noting the contrast to 3:11.[115] Hubert Irsigler likewise uses

[112] Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 1:146. Also see *GKC*, 123.

[113] E. Gerstenberger, "עָנָה," *TDOT*, 11:242.

[114] Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 251; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 122.

[115] Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 297.

"arm" in his translation and believes that though they are economically poor, the focus of 3:11–13 indicates that they be seen as bowed down before Yahweh.[116]

Despite the position of scholars, it must be recognized that the overwhelming majority of the seventy-five appearances of עָנִי in the HB seem to mean either "poor" or "afflicted". There are only four clear instances where the sense of "poor" or "afflicted" does not fit the context, but rather seem to mean "humble".[117] Further, if עָנִי most often refers to the economically poor or lower social classes, then the term with which it is paired, דָּל, does even more so.[118] It overlaps somewhat with עָנִי in that it is also translated, "poor" or "needy;" however, it never seems to carry the idea of "afflicted". Further, דָּל can also be rendered "weak" or "least". The other five times that these words are paired, the context indicates that "poor", "needy", and "afflicted" are appropriate terms for these words.[119]

Although it seems that, based on usage elsewhere, "a people poor and lowly" is the proper translation, I still maintain that "humble and low" is a better choice for these reasons:

(1) Though they are few, there are instances where עָנִי clearly means "humble". (2) 2 Sam 22:28 (=Ps 18:28) the only other appearance of the phrase עַם עָנִי. The contrast there is between וְאֶת־עַם עָנִי תוֹשִׁיעַ, "you save a humble people," and וְעֵינֶיךָ עַל־רָמִים תַּשְׁפִּיל, "your eyes [are] upon haughty—you make [them] low." (3) Rather than focus on the relationship of וָדָל to עָנִי, this pair needs to be seen in contrast with עַלִיזֵי גַאֲוָתֵךְ from 3:11. (4) Unlike the eighth-century prophets, Zephaniah otherwise shows no concern with social justice issues.

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[116] Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 393.

[117] 2 Sam 22:28 (=Ps 18:28); Isa 66:2; Zech 9:9. Ps 34:7 is unclear.

[118] Heiz-Josef Fabry, "דָּל," *TDOT*, 3:225.

[119] Job 34:28; Ps 82:3; Prov 22:22; Isa 10:2; 26:6.

Along with *BHS*, several scholars want to include the first two words of 3:13 at the end of this verse. That would divide the two verses as follows, "And the remnant of Israel will seek refuge in the name of Yahweh/They will not do evil nor will they speak lies."[120] This is how LXX understands the passage, but the main reason for the suggestion is that it improves the meter. Conversely, Sweeney notes that if this were how it should be read, the very next words of 3:13 should start with a ו.[121] I prefer to follow MT, but in the end the עַם עָנִי וָדָל of 3:12 and the שְׁאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל of 3:13 are the same group.

3:13 שְׁאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל
לֹא־יַעֲשׂוּ עַוְלָה
וְלֹא־יְדַבְּרוּ כָזָב
וְלֹא־יִמָּצֵא בְּפִיהֶם לְשׁוֹן תַּרְמִית
כִּי־הֵמָּה יִרְעוּ וְרָבְצוּ
וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד

The remnant of Israel
will not do unrighteousness
and they will not speak lies
and a tongue of deceitfulness will not be found in their mouth.
For they will pasture and lie down
and there will be no one to terrify (them).

For the matching problem of the feminine plural noun, שְׁאֵרִית, "remnant", with its masculine plural verbs, see the discussion at 2:7. Though שְׁאֵרִית appears in 2:7 and 2:9, the context there adds nothing to the definition of the word for Zephaniah. Its usage here, however, indicates more about his theology of the remnant which is discussed in detail in the exegesis of 2:3 in chapter 5.

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[120] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 80; Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 363; O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 259; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 210; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 123; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 204.

[121] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 191.

3:11–13 describe the future city of Jerusalem that results from the Day of Yahweh. It will be populated by the remnant—those who are not proud not exalt themselves, humble and lowly people, those who put their trust in Yahweh, who do not perform unrighteousness nor speak lies, and who will live under the protection and care of Yahweh.

The function of כִּי here is indirectly causal, or more specifically, explanatory. Chapter 4 will deal with כִּי clauses in more detail.

The pastoral phrase, יִרְעוּ וְרָבְצוּ, "they will feed and lie down," echoes what Judah will do in the land of the Philistines when they occupy it in 2:7.

CHAPTER FOUR

STRUCTURE OF ZEPHANIAH

Now that Zeph 2:1–3:13 is translated, it is important to see its structure and that of the entire book. A work like this would ordinarily look at the book's structure to help readers follow the flow of the argument. In the case of Zephaniah, however, it was demonstrated in chapter 1 that differences in how commentators viewed the prophet's structure affect the interpretation of 3:8–9. The multiplicity of structural outlines results in a multiplicity of interpretations.

Therefore, to determine an adequate interpretation of 3:8–9, presenting a defensible structure is of the utmost importance. Structure should inform interpretation, but wrong interpretations can result if a few cautions are not observed: (1) One must construct a structure that best accounts for all the data. (2) A valid structure cannot be created by content analysis alone. (3) The resulting structure must not overwhelm clear grammatical or lexical evidence.

Vlaardingerbroek demonstrates the tendency to start with content analysis when constructing structure. Here he discusses his delineation of 2:4–15 as a unit. "The forward demarcation is given with the clear ending of the preceding section 1:2–2:3. The end of this unit is indicated by the change of focus in 3:1."[1] While Vlaardingerbroek pays a great deal of attention to grammatical details he fails to use them when constructing his structure. Other scholars tend to do the same.

[1] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 128.

Content cannot be ignored when determining structure. However, when seeing the many different outlines commentators have proposed, it is clear that content alone will not produce an agreeable structure. In this chapter I will identify important grammatical clues that, along with content, should yield a defensible structure for the entire book of Zephaniah and especially 2:1–3:13.

Misleading Structural Expectations

There are two special problems where expectations lead some scholars astray when examining Zephaniah's structure.

Insistence on Linear Structure

Neither the reader nor commentator should assume a linear outline. Such an assumption seems to be prevalent among some redaction critics. When the text takes an unexpected turn, it becomes a clue that the material which seems out of place was added by a later editor.[2] Rex Mason comments, "As it stands, v. 8 speaks of Yahweh's judgment against the nations; but this is totally unexpected. After the indictment of Jerusalem we expect some announcement of judgment, and the word 'therefore' usually introduces this."[3] Consequently he argues that the redactor changed the text from "to pour out upon *you* my indignation" to "to pour out upon *them* my indignation."

Expectation of a linear structure leads to a sequential interpretation even for some who treat the text holistically. For example, if 3:9 is thought to follow 3:8 temporally, then it is claimed that the purpose and result of judgment is to purify. Samuel Rolles Driver, for example,

[2] This is only one reason that redaction criticism is applied to this text. Assumptions about the eras that certain subject matters would arise are equally as strong.

[3] Mason, *Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel*, 24.

claims, “Let the faithful in Jerusalem, then, wait patiently, until the approaching judgment is completed (iii. 8), and the ‘remnant of Israel,’ purified of all its proud and worldly members, will in faith and humility cleave sincerely to its God, and dwell in safety upon their own land (iii. 11–14).”[4] Alphonse Maillot speaks of the purification of the nations. “Si Dieu déchaîne sa fureur, s’il moissonne les nations, c’est pour les renouveler, c’est pour les restaurer, c’est pour leur donner la possibilité de devenir enfin fideles.”[5]

Tripartite Structure

Some scholars expect a tripartite structure. Such a division is recognized in other prophetic books: (1) judgment against Israel/Judah; (2) judgment upon the nations; (3) restoration of Israel/Judah.[6] Whatever its applicability to other prophetic books, the question is whether Zephaniah exhibits this division.[7]

When fashioning their structure, tripartite proponents have to decide whether 3:1–8 is the final part of the judgment of the nations[8] or the opening of the deliverance of Judah.[9] However,

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[4] Driver, *Minor Prophets*, 105.

[5] Maillot, *Jonas, Sophonie*, 126.

[6] See Ehud Ben Zvi, “Understanding the Message of the Tripartite Prophetic Books,” *ResQ* 35 (1993): 93–100. He cites Isaiah, Jeremiah (in the LXX), Ezekiel, and Zephaniah as the books most commonly considered to be tripartite. Sweeney, however, claims that only Ezekiel and the LXX version of Jeremiah decidedly exhibit this tendency. Marvin A. Sweeney, “A Form-Critical Reassessment of the Book of Zephaniah,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 389–90.

[7] Scholars who explicitly support the tripartite division include: Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 402; Boadt, *Jeremiah 26–52, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Nahum*, 204; Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 458; Kaiser, *Micah–Malachi*; Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 29; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 256; Seybold, *Nahum, Habakuk, Zephanja*, 85; Taylor, “The Book of Zephaniah,” 6:1009. A few others, while not using the term, exhibit a tripartite structure, Mackay, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 242; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 162–63. Others who have a three point structure do not follow the traditional tripartite formula as their divisions follow different logic.

[8] “‘To wait’ for God means to expect him to act, whether in blessing (Isa. 40:31) or, as here, in judgment.” Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 82.

[9] Therefore, Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 219–21, views “wait” as very hopeful of deliverance of the faithful when Yahweh destroys the wicked.

the mix of judgment and hope within this section defies attempts to place it in one section or the other in a tripartite arrangement. Sweeney comments,

> The oracle against Jerusalem in Zeph 3:1–8 is particularly problematic in this regard. If it is included with the oracles against the nations in 2:4–15, it conflicts with the pattern of threats against the nations. Likewise, if it is included with the promises that follow in 3:9–20, it conflicts with the pattern of restoration for Jerusalem/Judah and the nations.[10]

Painting Zephaniah as tripartite simply does not work, especially in Zeph 3. Even Ben Zvi, who supports a tripartite formula, is forced to admit that it does not hold up as well here.

> While according to the tripartite structure one expects that Zephaniah 3:1 would be the opening of the salvation section, Zephaniah 3:1 actually goes back to the judgments against Israel; and, later on, further references to the judgments against the nations are made. Thus, by means of a loop, the entire issue is brought back to the community of readers of the text for further communal learning concerning God's will.[11]

If one "loop" is permitted, why not more? And if there are enough loops (as later analysis will show there are), then the tripartite concept is rendered meaningless.

Even Zeph 1 mixes the judgment upon Judah with that of the nations. The OAN section is headed by an exhortation to the humble in Judah and Jerusalem (2:1–4). Zeph 3, rather than beginning with future deliverance, repeats condemnation themes from the OAN section, but applies them to Jerusalem. The righteous of 2:1–4 are again addressed in 3:8 to bring this part of the message full circle. 3:9 starts a restoration section, but it begins, not with the restoration of Judah's fortunes, but with the conversion of the nations.

There are too many problems to see the structure of Zephaniah as tripartite. Sweeney comments, "Although the threefold thematic concerns with judgment against Jerusalem or Israel, judgment against the nations, and (eschatological) salvation for Israel and the nations frequently

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[10] Sweeney, "A Form-Critical Reassessment," 390.

[11] Ben Zvi, "Understanding the Message of the Tripartite Prophetic Books," 98.

dominate discussion of the structure of the book, such concerns do not correlate with the linguistic features of the text."[12] The linguistic features upon which I will now focus are: (1) philological, (2) content, and (3) literary traits.

Philological Structural Keys

Analysis of Zephaniah reveals four different philological keys to determine its structure. Three are particles—כִּי, הוֹי, and לָכֵן—along with the person, gender, and number of verbs and pronouns. Why each of these is important will be shown in due course.

The Conjunction כִּי

The Meaning and Function of כִּי. Among many others, Ben Zvi treats כִּי as an emphatic particle in 2:4, 3:8, and 3:9, claiming that this is "widely attested in the OT"[13] and citing James Muilenburg for support. Muilenburg's influential study of כִּי asserts that its original and basic function was emphatic. "It is designed to give emphasis, to give force to a statement."[14] He maintains that in the evolution of the word, it always carries forward this emphatic function.

However, in every one of Muilenburg's examples that he claims are solely emphatic, the emphatic nature of כִּי is attested by some other feature in the text, whether it be a stereotyped word pairing (כִּי־הִנֵּה)[15] or its combination with another emphatic word (כִּי־אַף)[16] or being

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[12] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 6.

[13] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 150.

[14] James Muilenburg, "The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle כי in the Old Testament" *HUCA* 32 (1961): 136.

[15] Ibid., 137.

[16] Ibid., 139.

followed by an emphatic verbal construction (for example כִּי־מוֹת נָמוּת in 2 Sam 14:14).[17] Not once does Muilenburg demonstrate the emphatic force of כִּי without some other verbal clue.[18]

Muilenburg insists that even the various "causal" functions of כִּי have an emphatic function. He claims that it introduces a "vivid" comparison or "dramatic" scene, or following an "urgent" imperative or question.[19] While it is arguable whether all causal functions of כִּי are in "vivid" or "dramatic" or "urgent" settings, it is worth noting that in every case he cites, he also recognizes its connective function; never does he say that it is only emphatic.

It must be granted that there may be non-connective, emphatic functions of כִּי in the HB. Takamitsu Muraoka's survey of emphatic words defines the limits. "It is so used particularly when it appears in oath formulae, and closely related to that in the apodosis of conditional sentences. Beyond these uses, it may be used for the emphasizing purpose when directly prefixed to the predicate, and that almost exclusively in poetic context."[20]

An example of oath formula is Gen 42:16 וְאִם־לֹא חֵי פַּרְעֹה כִּי מְרַגְּלִים אַתֶּם, "But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." For the apodosis of a conditional, see Isa 7:9, אִם לֹא תַאֲמִינוּ כִּי לֹא תֵאָמֵנוּ, "If you do not believe, surely you will not be confirmed." By "directly prefixed to the predicate," he means that it comes between the subject and predicate as in Gen

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[17] Ibid., 145.

[18] "The emphatic suggested by Muilenburg can very often not be regarded as the contribution of the particle to the context, but rather follows from the fact that the context itself is of an emphatic nature. In other cases the notion of emphasis is transferred from another particle close to *kî* as though it was the contribution of *kî* to the context." W.T. Claassen, "Speaker-oriented Functions of Kî in Biblical Hebrew" *JNSL* 11 (1983): 33. Another critic of the primarily emphatic כִּי is Anneli Aejmelaeus, "Function and Interpretation of כי in Biblical Hebrew" *JBL* 105 (1986): 195–96: "It is hardly probable that a conjunction, any more than a noun or a verb, should carry its etymology along in all of its several functions, although some scholars, particularly the ones supporting frequent application of the emphatic interpretation, seem to suppose so."

[19] Muilenburg, "The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle כי," 145–48.

[20] Takamitsu Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1985), 164.

זַעֲקַת סְדֹם וַעֲמֹרָה כִּי־רָבָּה וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כָבְדָה מְאֹד 18:20, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great and their sin is indeed very heavy."[21]

Arvid Tångberg's monograph on warning speeches in the prophets addresses the use of כִּי. For him there are two key elements to the prophetic warning: (1) appeal and (2) motivation. He further notes that imperatives and vetitives are significant markers; rarely do jussives perform this function alone.[22] The motivation follows the appeal in either an independent sentence or a dependent clause that begins with a key connective word (he lists כִּי, פֶּן, לְמַעַן, עַד, and בְּטֶרֶם). Often the motivation is anticipated by the appearance of the vocative in the warning of the main sentence. Motivations can take the form of promise, threat, or indictment.[23]

He cites as an example Jer 4:6, שְׂאוּ־נֵס צִיּוֹנָה הָעִיזוּ אַל־תַּעֲמֹדוּ כִּי רָעָה אָנֹכִי מֵבִיא מִצָּפוֹן וְשֶׁבֶר גָּדוֹל, "Lift up a standard toward Zion. Seek refuge, do not stand. For I am bringing evil from the north and great crushing." Yahweh enjoins the people of the land to leave their homes and villages to take refuge in Zion. The motivation is that northern enemies are coming to attack.[24] Though it is negative, if the people believe the prophet, they are certainly motivated to not remain in their homes. Following Tångberg's logic when looking at Zeph 2:3, one might expect its appeal to be followed in 2:4 by a motivational clause headed by a word like כִּי.

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[21] For more examples also see Muilenburg, "The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle כי," 143; Antoon Schoors, "The Particle כִּי," in *Remembering All the Way: A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentisch Wekezelschap in Nederland* (ed. A. S. van der Woude; OtSt 21; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 248–53.

There are dissenters. Barry Louis Bandstra, "The Syntax of Particle *Ky* in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1982), 44, demonstrates connective functions in the emphatic "proof texts." For example, he translates the clauses in Gen 18:20 as causal by referring to a wider context: "And the Lord said, 'The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah, because it is great; and their sin, because it is very grievous, I will go down and see if what they have done is as great as the cry that has come to me.'"

[22] K. Arvid Tångberg, *Die Prophetische Mahnrede: Form- und Traditions-geschichtliche Studien zum Prophetischen Umkehrruf* (FRLANT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 140.

[23] Ibid., 141.

[24] Ibid., 85–89.

Anneli Aejmelaeus identifies all the various functions of כִּי. In some cases, the כִּי clause precedes the main clause. She calls these "circumstantial" clauses, as they state a circumstance relating to the main clause. They take on the form of: (1) conditional (translated by "if"); (2) temporal ("when"); (3) causal ("because" or "for"); and occasionally (4) concessive ("even though.)"[25]

When the כִּי clause follows the main clause, she notes these functions: (1) marking the content of an oath formula by "that"; (2) marking the apodosis of a conditional sentence; (3) introducing direct speech; (4) directly connecting a subject to its predicate.[26] These roughly correspond to Muraoka's emphatic uses. While Aejmelaeus agrees that an emphatic translation may be in order at times, she argues that even in these cases, the primary function of כִּי is specialized connection, not emphasis.

Further uses of the כִּי clause following the main clause are: (5) marking the content of what is known or seen with verbs of knowing or perception (translated by "that"); (6) creating an adversative relationship when paired with another כִּי clause which negates its verb ("rather"); (7) the much more common and broad category of "direct causal" ("for" or "because"); and (8) "indirect causal," which she subcategorizes as "motivational," "explanatory," and "evidential."[27]

Aejmelaeus notes that the "indirect causal" category causes scholars the most difficulty and most often leads to emphatic claims. Trouble exists only if one demands a direct connection.

> It is characteristic of the indirect causal expressions that they do not state the cause for what is actually said in the main clause but rather the reason for saying it or that

[25] Aejmelaeus, "Function and Interpretation of כי in Biblical Hebrew," 196–99.

[26] Ibid., 208–209.

[27] Ibid., 199–207.

they do not refer to the full statement of the main clause but perhaps only one word in it.[28]

The subcategory of "motivational" typically follows commands or prohibitions, the former rendered by imperatives or sometimes imperfects and the latter by a negative particle and the jussive. The successive כִּי clause then gives the reason why the command or prohibition should be obeyed.

In summary, except in several clearly defined cases, כִּי always has a connective function. To brush aside its connective force by claiming it is primarily emphatic does not fit with its established use in the HB. Therefore, when it begins a verse, it cannot mark a new section because it must connect that verse to the previous one.

Occurrences of כִּי in Zephaniah. כִּי shows up seventeen times in Zephaniah, never preceding the main clause. 2:9 is the one clear example of an oath formula. Only 1:17, 2:10, and 2:14 are strictly causal, "because". The remainder are indirect causal. I consider 1:18, 2:7, and 3:13 to be evidential. 2:11, 3:11, and 3:20 are explanatory. The clause in 1:7 gives the reason to be silent. If the main verb in 1:11 is imperative, "wail", then the כִּי clause is motivational. If, however, as I argue later in this chapter, it is indicative, "you will wail", then the כִּי clause is strictly causal. None of these impact the structure of Zephaniah. The remaining four occasions in Zephaniah have relevance to this dissertation: 2:4; twice in 3:8; and 3:9.

A long list of modern scholars claim that the כִּי clauses in 2:4 and 3:9 are non-connective and, for content reasons, mark the opening of a new section. Most view כִּי as an emphatic word.[29]

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[28] Ibid,. 203.

[29] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 150, 320; Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 122, 234–36; Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 69, 78; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 222, 244–47; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 70, 116; R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 133, 140; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 136, 196; Walker, "Zephaniah," 7:552, 559–60.

A few consider 2:4 connective, but not 3:9.[30] As has already been demonstrated, כִּי must connect what follows to what precedes.

Some are misled by the addition of the particle אָז in 3:9, as if this changes the connective value of כִּי. Ryou, who limits the OAN to 2:1–3:8, gives as his first reason, "the כִּי אָז construction (v. 9, cf. 11b) functions as a macro-syntactic marker."[31] Though he notes that כִּי־אָז also appears in 3:11b, he does not assign it the same function there, where it has clear causal connection with what precedes. In fact, none of the ten other uses of this phrase in the HB can be considered to mark some kind of section break. These cases include the normal and varied functions of כִּי: causal (Deut 29:19; 2 Sam 5:24; Zeph 3:11; Job 38:21), result (Josh 1:8; Job 22:26; Jer 22:22), oath formula (2 Sam 2:27), and conditional apodosis (2 Sam 19:7; Job 11:15).

Though the proponents of the emphatic כִּי cite Muilenburg, they do not cite any point where it begins a verse as it does in 2:4 or 3:9. Sweeney argues for the connective force of כִּי and speculates why some are so quick to posit an emphatic function. "This is a decision that is based entirely on thematic grounds."[32]

Fortunately, quite a few scholars recognize the connective value of כִּי and give these clauses that force.[33] Some, however, recognize the grammatical connection, yet do not consider the implications and claim that 2:4 and 3:9 start new sections.[34] None of them give any reason for

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[30] R. Bennett, "Zephaniah," 7:685, 669; Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 150, 152; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 140, 196–97; Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 166, 178. Heflin, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 139–41, 150, actually reverses them.

[31] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 140.

[32] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 120. This is in relation to 2:4; he makes a similar comment (183) when discussing 3:9.

[33] Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 76, 82; Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 99, 133; Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:215, 233; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 196–7, 216; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 120, 182–83.

[34] Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 104; Barber, *Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 106, 118; Keil and Delitzsch, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:139; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 279, 294–95.

this inconsistency. If כִּי grammatically connects to the previous clause, it cannot also begin an entirely new section.

Roberts knows that the כִּי clause of 2:4 must connect with what precedes. However, he cannot see a logical connection between 2:4 and 2:3. Therefore, he suggests that 2:4 originally followed 2:5, where it would provide a reason for the woe oracle.[35] While he is to be credited with not abandoning the grammatical facts, he limits his understanding to a direct causal function and does not consider the motivational possibility.

The function of the four כִּי clauses in 2:4, 3:8, and 3:9 match the requirements of Aejmelaeus' motivational category. They are all preceded by imperatives and give a reason why the imperative should be obeyed. The fact that 2:4 and 3:9 begin with כִּי only means that the main clause is to be found in the previous verse. The purpose of the כִּי clauses in 3:8 are often lightly passed over in the interpretation of that verse. Only Floyd and Sweeney see the motivational aspect.[36]

The Particle הוֹי

The Meaning and Function of הוֹי. הוֹי appears fifty-three times in the HB, only once outside the prophets.[37] A related word occurs אוֹי twenty-four times, five times outside of the prophets. The difference between the two words is that in all but three of its uses, אוֹי takes a

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[35] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 196–97.

[36] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:233; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 120.

[37] 1 Kgs 13:30 where the older prophet laments over the body of the unnamed prophet who prophesized against Jeroboam's altar. This also counts the two uses of in Amos 5:16, which may just be defective spelling. See Richard J. Clifford, "The Use of Hôy in the Prophets" *CBQ* 28 (1966): 458.

dative object with the preposition לְ. This is in contrast to הוֹי which ordinarily has no object, but is followed by a vocative.[38]

These grammatical features are significant to James Williams. "*Hôy* is a *true* interjection, since it is not formally related grammatically to the actual subject of the sentence, whereas *ʾôy* usually is so related by use of the *lamed*."[39] This makes them very different words. "So my first main point is that *hôy* is in origin a cry of lamentation which in form and established usage is distinct from *ʾôy*, although they may occasionally overlap in use and meaning."[40]

The difference between original function and grammatical relationships helps Williams define the purpose of הוֹי for the eighth-century prophets on whom he focuses. "My primary point is that when those to whom the prophets preached heard the initial exclamation, '*hôy!*', they would have immediately associated this mentally and emotionally with mourning for the dead. The association of *hôy* with lamentation would have been especially striking to the listeners, for it would have brought into vivid relief the pronouncement of Israel's death."[41]

Claus Westermann defines woe oracles as הוֹי attached to participles or substantivized adjectives that define who is being addressed.

> The woe followed by a participle is by nature concerned with a section of the whole and this section is defined by the participle. For this reason, the woe never refers to the whole nation and seldom does it refer to existing members of the group such as priests, prophets, and the like. The woe is meant for those who have just done something specific.[42]

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[38] Although הוֹי appears once with לְ and three times with עַל to mark its dative object.

[39] James G. Williams, "The Alas-Oracles of the Eight Century Prophets" *HUCA* 38 (1967): 75

[40] Ibid., 75.

[41] Ibid., 86.

[42] Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (2d ed.; tr. Hugh Clayton White; Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1991; translation of *Grundformen Prophetischer Rede*; BEvT 31; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1960), 191–92.

Westermann is correct that this is the most common pattern, as in Mic 2:1, הוֹי חֹשְׁבֵי־אָוֶן, "Woe to those who devise wickedness." However, there are quite a few uses of הוֹי that do not exhibit this pattern, such as Isa 18:1, הוֹי אֶרֶץ צִלְצַל כְּנָפָיִם, "Woe to the land of whirring wings"; or Isa 10:5, הוֹי אַשּׁוּר, "Woe to Assyria." Westermann simply decides that these are not woe oracles at all, but rather funeral laments or summons.[43] Some EV follow his lead in these cases by translating it as "Ah".[44]

Westermann further declares proper woe oracles as equivalent to curse formulae, such as is found in Deut 27.[45] Erhard Gerstenberger disagrees. Whereas, for him the curse formula is in reaction to transgression of the law, an oracle is oriented toward ethical living and is typically found in wisdom literature. So whereas the opposite of אָרוּר, "cursed", is בָּרוּךְ, "blessed", which can only be uttered by someone in authority, the opposite of הוֹי is אַשְׁרֵי, "happy", which is the provenance of prophets and sages.[46]

> The woe-sentences cannot compete with such official and powerful pronouncements. They are more private, much more detached from the scene of evildoing, much more contemplative, much less effective. The woe-cries, though of quite similar intention in condemning destructive deeds, still seem to deplore the existence of the evil, to sympathize with the wrongdoer, to throb with the recognition that an evil deed will bring about nothing but misfortune, despair, and heartbreak.[47]

In his survey of הוֹי, Richard Clifford notes that the earliest uses were in funeral laments: 1 Kgs 13:30 and Jer 22:18.[48] He further notes that אוֹי, when combined with לְ, becomes "woe". He

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[43] Ibid., 191.

[44] For example, Isa 10:5 is translated "Ah, Assyria," by NRSV and ESV.

[45] Ibid., 193.

[46] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Woe-Oracles of the Prophets" *JBL* 81 (1962): 249–63.

[47] Ibid., 260.

[48] Clifford, "The Use of Hôy in the Prophets," 459–60. Also see Amos 5:16–17.

claims that, following its funerary use, הוי has initially more of the concept of an interjection, "alas!" By the time of the seventh-century prophets, however, it seems to him to be used as a taunt, such as in Jer 48:1, "*hoy* against (*ʾel*) Nebo, for it is laid waste."[49] In the end, however, it is still a type of lament. As far as its rhetorical force, he argues against too rigid a distinction. "The prophet's own feeling and the tone of each *hôy* passage must be learned from the context."[50]

Waldemar Janzen sees what follows הוי as critical to understanding its meaning. Because it is typically followed by a participle or substantivized adjective with an article, and as it does have a background in funeral laments, he concludes that הוי is a personal vocative address. Like Westermann who sees the addressees as specific, but unlike Erstenberger for whom the wisdom background makes them general categories of people, Janzen says, "It is very likely that at least some of the participles following upon *hôy* are intended as vocatives in a life context of direct confrontation."[51]

Ryou claims that הוי marks new sections. He calls it a "macrosyntactic" marker, following Wolfgang Schneider's definition, "Makrosyntaktische Zeichen sind Wörter, Partikeln und Wendungen, die in der gesprochenen Sprache dazu dienen, die Großgliederung von Texten zu markieren....Der Sprecher setzt solche makrosyntaktischen Zeichen ein, um den Hörer auf Anfang, Übergänge, Höhepunkte und Schluß seiner Rede aufmerksam zu machen."[52] Without any explanation, however, Ryou expands Schneider's list. "We may add several macrosyntactic

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[49] Ibid., 461.

[50] Ibid., 464.

[51] Waldemar Janzen, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle* (BZAW 125; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), 23.

[52] Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des Biblishen Hebräisch* (Munich: Claudius Verlag, 1974), 261.

markers such as הוי, לכן. from our prophetic text."[53] Each word will need to be tested in Zephaniah to see if his modification is correct.

Schneider's macrosyntactic categories include beginning, transition, climax, and conclusion. Ryou assigns הוי to the beginning category. "A marker is well described as a breaker in connection with the upward boundary."[54] For him, therefore, each appearance of הוי signals a new section in the text. "Linguistically speaking, in most cases, the woe-cry is used as a macrosyntactic marker."[55]

"In most cases" Ryou is probably correct, especially when הוי is followed by a substantivized participle. There are exceptions, such as the six times it appears in Isa 5:8–22; since this occurs in a list, only the first הוי might be the section marker. While I hesitate to make this an iron clad rule, I will approach Zephaniah with the thought that הוי ordinarily marks the beginning of a section or subsection and see if content or other syntactical clues confirm it.

Occurrences of הוי in Zephaniah. While woe oracles may not be exactly equivalent to a curse, it might be wise to not push the lament aspect too far. It is hard to see how 2:5 uses הוי to "sympathize" with Philistia in any way or how its meaning in 3:1 is anything other than condemnatory of Jerusalem.

The appearances of הוי in Zephaniah are quite significant. 2:5 begins the OAN section. Chapter 1 showed that commentators have had trouble deciding whether this section starts at 2:4 or 2:5 since both verses have similar content. It has already been determined that 2:4 cannot begin a new section because the connective value of כִּי demands that it connects to the previous

[53] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 100.

[54] Ibid., 100.

[55] Ibid., 340.

verse. Following Ryou's definition of macrosyntactic markers, הוֹי marks 2:5 as the beginning of a new subsection. Therefore, 2:1–4 is the first subsection and 2:5–15 is the next.

The fact that both 2:4 and 2:5 contains the same basic content—destruction of Philistia—does not negate splitting them between two subsections. As stated earlier, content decisions should be subordinate to philological considerations. Rather than using the shared content to structurally link the two verses, Zephaniah uses the destruction of Philistia as synecdoche. This nation, nearest to Judah, is the first in the list of four nations listed in the OAN and stands in for all of them. In turn, these four nations stand in for the entire earth. The mention of the Philistines in 2:4 has two functions. First, it provides the content of the motivational כִּי clause; the faithful should continue to seek Yahweh so that they might be hidden when destruction comes to the earth. Second, it signals that the OAN section does not stand alone or introduce an unrelated subject, but is an expansion of the motivational clause.

The הוֹי that begins 3:1 also marks the beginning of a new subsection that parallels the OAN subsection. 2:4 and 2:5 shared a subject but diverged in purpose. 3:1 shares its purpose with 2:5–15 and both shares and changes the subject. The indictment upon the nations in the previous section is applied to a surprising entrant in the list of גּוֹיִם: Jerusalem. Jerusalem is not explicitly mentioned but its identity becomes obvious when Zephaniah refers to the city's God as Yahweh in 3:2. In fact, the veiled way of presenting the subject of 3:1 caused the Peshitta to add a phrase to the end of 2:15 which results in "he will shake his hand and say, 'Woe…'" In addition, the end of 3:1 reads, "the city of Jonah," which would be Nineveh.[56] It is claimed that LXX misreads the text the other direction by making 2:15 the beginning of the oracle against

[56] A. Gelston, *The Peshitta of the Twelve Prophets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 148.

Jerusalem which is the content of Zeph 3.[57] The content of the two sections seemed to be similar to these ancient translators.

So while the subject changes from foreign nations to Jerusalem, it is also the same subject in that Zephaniah categorizes Jerusalem to be just the same as those nations, both in its sinfulness and coming judgment. The rhetoric of repeating הוי as in 2:5 and setting up the initial ambiguity to the identity of the city makes a powerful impact upon his audience.

In both cases Ryou's suggestion that הוי be treated as a macrosyntactic marker fits the context.

The Particle לָכֵן

The Meaning and Function of לָכֵן. The modern approach to לָכֵן may find its genesis in the most common LXX translation of the word, διὰ τοῦτο, meaning "for this reason", on account of this", or "therefore". EV use "therefore" the overwhelming majority of the time, French versions commonly use "c'est pourquoi" and Spanish versions use "por tanto", each equivalent to "this is why", "for this reason", or "therefore".

Modern lexicons have followed suit. Most modern Hebrew lexicography traces back to Gesenius. His 1815 German work translated it "deshalb" or "deswegen", corresponding to the English "therefore".[58] His more famous Latin edition used *propterea*, which appears in Vulg. at

[57] Gerleman, *Zephanja*, 47–48; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 155. I am not sure that this is the case, however. Though many modern printed editions read MT 2:15 as LXX 3:1, this division might not be original to LXX. Just as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are the two oldest complete NT manuscripts, they are also the oldest LXX manuscripts. I examined facsimile copies of both. Sinaiticus (*Codex Sinaiticus* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922]) seems to have paragraph/section breaks which make no sense. A half blank line occurs in the middle of 1:17 and 3:7, making the beginning of this section καὶ ἐκχεῖ τὸ αἷμα αὐτῶν ὡς χοῦν, "And their blood will be poured out like dust," and the end of the section πάντα ὅσα ἐξεδίκησα ἐπ' αὐτήν, "according to all which I avenged upon her." This is certainly no support for the argument. Vaticanus (*Bibliorum Sacrorum Graecorum Codex Vaticanus B* [Rome: Instituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999]) has section markers in the margins of the text. The section marker seems to be around 2:11/12, not at 3:1 or 2:15. Again, this does not support his contention.

[58] Wilhelm Gesenius, *Neues Hebräisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1815), 295.

2:9 and the related *quapropter* at 3:8 and is again equivalent to "therefore".[59] English editions of Gesenius have retained the sense of "therefore", "that being so", "on that account".[60]

HAL defines לָכֵן as "darum", a modern equivalent to "deswegen".[61] The English edition, *HALOT*, recognized this by translating it as "therefore".[62] *DCH* likewise uses "therefore" as its basic definition.[63] Despite this seeming consensus, the English word "therefore" has been found wanting by some modern scholars.

Frederic Goldbaum noted several uses of לָכֵן that perplexed commentators over the years (1 Kgs 22:19; Judg 8:7; Jer 30:16) and decides that it does not mean "therefore" but rather in most cases "לָכֵן performs the function of introducing a vow."[64] Those instances where "therefore" seems to work are coincidental to its real function. Though he recognizes the difficulty of rendering this thought into English, he suggests the translation, "upon my word."

Conversely, Eugene March notes that Goldbaum's analysis is mostly limited to Genesis–Kings and even here there are exceptions. Following the work of Johannes Pederson, he maintains that לָכֵן does have some type of connective value, however "therefore" is not always the correct connection.[65] Pederson had noted "the apparent looseness with which such a 'therefore' is often used. This is because it does not really mean 'therefore;' it does not indicate

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[59] Wilhelm Gesenius, *Thesaurus Philologicus Criticus Linguae Hebraeae et Chaldaeae Beteris Testamenti* (3 vols. Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1835–1858), 2:669.

[60] Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (tr. Edward Robinson; 14th ed.; Boston: Crocker and Brewer, 1862), 474; *BDB*, 486.

[61] *HAL*, 2:504.

[62] *HALOT*, 2:530.

[63] *DCH*, 4:547.

[64] Fredric J. Goldbaum, "Two Hebrew Quasi-adverbs: לכן and אכן" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 23 (1964): 133.

[65] W. Eugene March, "*Lākēn*: Its Function and Meaning," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (ed. Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler; Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 1; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1974), 258–59.

consequence, but connection. It is not necessarily connected with the immediately preceding; it belongs to the totality which has gone before it."[66]

For March, לָכֵן is a word with many applications that defy simple categorization. Importantly, it is always connective with the previous material; an entirely new subject never begins with לָכֵן. "*lākēn* would be misread if it were interpreted as discontinuous with what precedes."[67] Rather March places the greater focus upon the word's force as an attention getter. "*lākēn* lends emphasis by directing attention to what will follow, prompting the audience to a mood of anticipation."[68] March summarizes his findings and suggests translation options.

> *Lākēn* reminds the hearer that a discussion, a dialogue is in process. The preceding words make what follows necessary or understandable. With an emphatic term which signals, perhaps accompanied by a physical gesture like the raising a hand or the voice, the speaker acknowledges what has gone before and makes ready to reveal his next move, his response. *Lākēn* in such instances functions to heighten expectancy, to move the hearer to the edge of his seat. Contemporary equivalents to *lākēn* are expression like "sure I understand, so here's what I'm going to do" or "granted! but now listen to my side" or "yes that's right and what's more" or "indeed and further."[69]

March's study is thorough and takes into account all the types of contexts in which לָכֵן appears.[70] In addition to its connective value, לָכֵן always has dramatic climactic force. It is an attention grabbing word to mark something to which the hearer needs to pay attention.

Occurrences of לָכֵן in Zephaniah. לָכֵן shows up only twice in Zephaniah. 2:9 marks the climax of the second oracle in the OAN subsection. First, the sins of Moab and Ammon are

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[66] Johannes Pederson, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (4 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 1:116.

[67] March, "*Lākēn*: Its Function and Meaning," 260.

[68] Ibid., 260.

[69] Ibid., 284.

[70] There are a small group of instances where scholars suggest, based on LXX translation οὐχ οὕτως , that לָכֵן should be read as לֹא־כֵן, perhaps written defectively. These fifteen (out of 193) do not affect the understanding that he rightly assigns to the rest. March, "*Lākēn*: Its Function and Meaning," 275–77.

listed in 2:8. Because of those sins their destruction is foretold following לָכֵן. This shows a direct connection between what precedes and what follows. In this case, the lexical translation "therefore" is quite appropriate in both meaning and force. The cause of 2:8 leads to the consequence of the main verb in 2:9.

The problem with 3:8 is that some scholars interpret "therefore" too narrowly by making חַכּוּ־לִי, "wait for me", the consequence of the sins of Jerusalem in 3:1–7 and especially 3:7. "This is the moment when Judah and Jerusalem share the fate of the nations, since they are now counted among the enemies of God."[71]

Scholars who for other reasons understand that חַכּוּ־לִי is hopeful are taken aback by the presence of לָכֵן. Taylor struggles with it. "There is only a rough connection between vs 7 and vs 8. …Logically **therefore** does not follow."[72] Sweeney is vague about what to do with it. "The particle לָכֵן therefore does express consequentiality but must be of a different nature."[73]

The solution is to examine both the backward and forward connections. (1) לָכֵן does not connect to only the main verb in 3:8, but to all of 3:8–9. "There is much wickedness in the nations and in Jerusalem; Yahweh's justice demands that the wicked be punished. Therefore, wait and watch, O righteous ones, as Yahweh performs as he said he would."

(2) The cause of לָכֵן חַכּוּ־לִי is not just the immediate context of 3:7 or even 3:1–7, but of 2:5–3:7. Limiting the context to 3:7 leads to the erroneous conclusion that judgment is coming mainly upon Judah for her sins. When the context of לָכֵן is expanded, the picture changes. The

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[71] R. Bennett, "Zephaniah," 7:696. Also see Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 114; Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:234; Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 353; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 243; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 288; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 184; Walker, "Zephaniah," 7:558;

[72] Taylor, "The Book of Zephaniah," 6:1030.

[73] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 179.

faithful were told to seek Yahweh in 2:3 that they might be hidden on the Day of Yahweh. 2:4 is a summary account of the destruction that would come. 2:5–3:7 elaborates on 2:4. "Therefore," in light of all the trouble that Yahweh has said would come, this same group is told to "wait upon me," a parallel action to "seek" in 2:3.

When both of these aspects are seen, then the difficulty of how to deal with לָכֵן disappears. In the upward direction, it connects to 2:5–3:7 and introduces the climax of that long section. Looking downward, it connects to all of 3:8–9—in light of all that is about to occur, the faithful are told to wait and watch.

Ryou was previously quoted as adding הוֹי and לָכֵן to his list of macrosyntactic markers. While this was borne out for the basically emphatic הוֹי, the inclusion of לָכֵן is questionable. March gave a higher priority to its emphatic function over its connective value. Ryou seems to do the same. For him, a macrosyntactic marker is "a breaker in connection with the upward boundary."[74] Therefore, his syntactical outline shows major subsection breaks at 2:9 and 3:8. The suggestion that 2:9 is a major break is impossible; it functions within the very small context of 2:8–10 to introduce the doom that Moab and Ammon will face as a result of their sins in 2:8.[75] This leads him to the erroneous conclusion that 3:8 is the conclusion of the immediately preceding material in a "consequential paragraph."[76]

Since it has already been demonstrated that לָכֵן connects all the way back to 2:5, it is legitimate to see 3:8–9 as a climactic point of the argument, but that is based on content and other considerations, not on the supposed emphatic nature of לָכֵן.

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[74] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 100.

[75] Ibid., 74–86.

[76] Ibid., 140.

The Person/Number/Gender of Verbs and Pronouns

Person/Number/Gender Consistency. Even a beginning Hebrew student quickly learns that the matching of nouns and pronouns with verbs does not always work to textbook expectations. Sometimes there are discernable reasons, such as when a plural noun takes a singular verb because it is considered a collective. There are other times where the reason eludes even the best scholar. No language operates perfectly and Hebrew is no exception.

However, Hebrew writers for the most part did follow the conventions of the language so as to be understood. Therefore, the exegete needs to at least attempt to match referents to verbs and pronouns based on person, number, and gender.

Key Verbs and Pronouns in Zephaniah. Nouns, verbs, independent pronouns, and pronominal suffixes match up quickly and easily in most cases in 2:1–3:13, and there is little trouble finding a referent for most. Chapter 3 noted a few exceptions:

(1) The masculine plural imperatives in 2:1 have a masculine singular, גּוֹי, as its vocative referent. Usage in the HB demonstrates that as a collective noun גּוֹי very often takes plural verbs.

(2) The feminine singular שְׁאֵרִית, "remnant", in 2:7, 2:9, and 3:13 is the referent for masculine plural verbs and pronominal suffixes. שְׁאֵרִית in the HB typically follows the semantical orientation of the remnant, not the grammatical gender of the noun itself. Therefore, its use in Zephaniah is consistent with HB practice.

(3) 2:12 begins with a second person vocative phrase, גַּם־אַתֶּם כּוּשִׁים, "and you Cushites," while the following verbless clause uses a third person pronoun, חַלְלֵי חַרְבִּי הֵמָּה, "they will be pierced by my sword." This is a not uncommon feature in Biblical Hebrew.[77]

[77] *GKC*, 462.

More important is the consistency by which Zephaniah distinguishes between the city of Jerusalem as a whole and people or groups of people within the city by using feminine singular or masculine plural verbs and pronouns, respectively.

In 2:1–3, the prophet speaks to people within the city (2:1–2, to everyone; 2:3, to the faithful) with masculine plural verbs and pronominal suffixes. This group is not directly addressed in 2:5–15.

In 3:1–2 Jerusalem as a whole is spoken of the third person with feminine singular "city" and accompanying feminine singular nouns and pronominal suffixes. 3:3–4 shows how the prophet distinguishes between the city and groups within it. Her (feminine singular) officials (masculine plural) are roaring lions, etc. 3:6 digresses for a moment to discuss the nations whom Yahweh has destroyed as background to 3:7. Here masculine plural verbs and pronominal suffixes are used.

There is a mix of feminine singular and masculine plurals in 3:7, which give some commentators pause. Understanding the basic pattern, however, makes the matching clear. First he switches from talking about the city to directly addressing it with second person feminine singular verbs. As I demonstrated in chapter 3, the shift from second to third person feminine shows where to close the quote. The phrase כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־פָּקַדְתִּי עָלֶיהָ. is especially helpful since Zephaniah never speaks of the destruction of people but of cities or nations. The final line switches to a third person common plural verb combined with a third person masculine plural pronominal suffix. This is consistent with 3:3–4 where classes of officials are cited for their evil deeds.

3:8 then begins with a masculine plural imperative. Who are the addressees? Scholars assert one group or another, but only a few do so on the basis of matching person, number, and gender. Their positions will be looked at in detail in chapter 5. For now, it needs to be noted that

masculine plural imperatives are found in 2:1 (the entire city) and 2:3 (the faithful within the larger group). The whole is called "not desired" and the smaller group is told "perhaps you will escape." As "wait for me" in 3:8 would be a hopeful message in the ordinary use of the expression, it appears that the humble of the land are again addressed in 3:8.

In 3:11, the prophet returns to feminine singular verbs and pronominal suffixes to describe the future Jerusalem. Though the wicked will be punished, the city itself, now populated by the humble of the land, will continue to exist and even thrive. So Jerusalem will no longer be ashamed, her proud will be removed from her, and she will no longer exalt herself. In her midst, 3:12 declares that only the "humble and low" people (masculine plural verb) will be left. The resumption of masculine plural verbs identifies the "humble and low people" of 3:12 with the "humble of the land" who are encouraged to "wait" in 3:8 and to "seek" in 2:3. The continuation of masculine plural verbs in 3:13 links this group with the remnant.

To summarize, the person, gender, and number of verbs and pronouns are used consistently in Zephaniah and provide many clues to its structure.

Content as It Relates to Structure

Zephaniah 1 contains the record of the terrible devastation that will occur on the Day of Yahweh. It is not limited to Judah, but encompasses the whole earth. 2:1–3 also speaks of the Day of Yahweh. Based on content alone, some commentators connect these verses with what precedes.[78] However, there is a shift in intent. Whereas 1:2–18 portrayed the Day of Yahweh as unavoidably demolishing the entire earth and is addressed to no one in particular, those in 2:1–3 are encouraged to seek Yahweh so that they might avoid that day. Further, syntactical clues the use of imperatives discussed below) indicate that a new section starts with 2:1, so this cannot be

[78] See chapter 1 for a chart showing how different scholars have presented their structural outlines.

part of the previous section. Although a new section starts here, the repeated Day of Yahweh indicates that this is not an entirely new message, but that 1:2–18 forms the background for the subject of 2:1–3.

The content of 2:5–15 is OAN. 2:4 also speaks of judgment upon one of the nations. Therefore, based on content alone, many scholars have put this verse into the OAN section. For grammatical reasons—the appearance of כִּי—it must connect to 2:1–3. Its content relationship to what follows again shows that it is part of a larger argument.

3:1–7 is the condemnation of Jerusalem. Foreign nations are mentioned in 3:6 only to set up Jerusalem's failure to repent in 3:7. That this section is connected to 2:5–15 is evidenced by the repetition of הוי: Jerusalem is as wicked as Nineveh and the nations.

3:8–13 relates what will happen on the Day of Yahweh: nations will be destroyed, peoples from all over the earth will worship Yahweh, Jerusalem will be purified of evildoers, the nation will be at rest. An entirely new section cannot begin with לָכֵן, so the shift in content marks it as a subsection.

The content of 3:14–20 is quite different from what precedes. It is a hymn of celebration over the good things that Yahweh will be seen to have done in the future for Israel and Jerusalem.

Literary Structural Keys

Speaker and Addressee Contributions to Structure

As is common throughout the Latter Prophets, the speakers and addressees shift quite a bit in Zephaniah. They can change within a short section or even in a single verse. Though grammatical and content considerations should be given greater weight when examining structure, the speakers and addressees should also be investigated.

Analysis of Speakers. Paul House takes the radical step of basing his structural outline on a combination of speaker identification and content.[79] His resulting outline is 1:2–17; 1:18–3:5; 3:6–20. Within each of these "acts" within his "prophetic drama" are different scenes, also divided by speaker and content. This approach ignores much stronger philological clues to structure (imperatives, כִּי, לָכֵן, הוֹי), breaks related content across "scenes" (for example, between 2:8–11 and 2:12–3:5), and misses clear content breaks (for example, at 2:1).

Table 4. House's Identification of Speakers

Speaker	Passage
Yahweh	1:2–6
Zephaniah	1:7
Yahweh	1:8–13
Zephaniah	1:14–16
Yahweh	1:17
Zephaniah	1:18–2:7
Yahweh	2:8–10
Zephaniah	2:11
Yahweh	2:12
Zephaniah	2:13–3:5
Yahweh	3:6–3:13
Zephaniah	3:14–17
Yahweh	3:18–20

Source: Paul R. House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama* (BiLiSe 16; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988), 118–26.

House is correct on his identification with a couple of exceptions: (1) 2:5b is divine speech. If House thinks it a quote on the prophet's lips, he does not say so or identify how this works. (2) 2:10 is probably not divine speech since Yahweh occurs in the third person.

[79] House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*, 118–26.

Where I disagree with House is his contention that some of these shifts indicates section breaks. There is no reason that prophetic speech can not both end one section and start the next as it must between 1:18 and 2:1 or between 2:4 and 2:5.

What the mix of speakers within the book and within sections tells the audience that Zephaniah speaks the words of Yahweh. Though one or the other is often identified as the speaker, the ultimate source is the same. The prophet's words are the words of Yahweh and Yahweh speaks through the prophet. The two voices merge together in prophetic discourse. Therefore, the change of speaker reveals nothing about Zephaniah's structure.

Analysis of Addressees. Greater fruit results from the analysis of addressees. Two things need to be determined: (1) their identity and (2) classification of the audience as real or rhetorical.

(1) Identity. There is no direct address, as indicated by second person or imperative verbs, in 1:1–18. Though הֵילִילוּ in 1:11 has the form a Hiphil imperative masculine plural, its form could just as easily indicate a Hiphil perfect third masculine plural. All the ancient versions and most modern scholars translate it as an imperative.[80] Two reasons are given by commentators: (1) If an indicative verb were intended, a vav-consecutive form would be expected, וְהֵילִילוּ.[81] (2) It is assumed that the genre of the context is "Summons to a lament of the people."[82] The first reason assumes that a future tense is intended, which is not necessarily the case. The second is a bit circular in that the primary argument for a "summons" to lament is the supposed imperative.

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[80] Though *Tg. Neb*. is often cited as support for the imperative, the same ambiguity exists in Aramaic as in Hebrew.

[81] Gerleman, *Zephanja*, 46; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 174–75; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 263.

[82] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 91. Others who use a similar argument include Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:197; Gerleman, *Zephanja*, 46.

A couple of scholars translate הֵילִילוּ with an indicative verb.[83] Sweeney disagrees that a call to lament is in view. "Nevertheless, the verb can be read easily as a perfect, which, like the nominal statements in v. 10aα$^{7-10}$α-b, conveys the general situation of terror among the people of Jerusalem as the threat becomes apparent."[84] This means that there is no direct address in Zeph 1. Both the nations and Jerusalem are spoken about in the third person.

The identity of the referents throughout 2:1–3:13 has already been determined by grammatical means. The imperatives of 2:1 speak to all of Jerusalem. At 2:3 the audience is narrowed to the faithful. The former is addressed pejoratively, first being told to gather like stubble and then labeled as unwanted. The latter is referred to as those who do what Yahweh wants.

Many scholars have noted the difference in tone.[85] Since they have already determined that Zephaniah is castigating faithless Jerusalem, some contend that the vocative in 2:3 is a redactional addition.[86] Rudolph proposes emendation by placing the preposition כְּ before כָּל, contending that haplography accounts for its absence. In this case, there is no new vocative, but the "worthless nation" is encouraged to seek Yahweh "as the humble of the land who do his judgment" do.[87]

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[83] Without comment, this is the position of Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 59 and O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 245. Also, *BHK*^{3} suggests in a footnote that the text should possibly be read as והילילו., which would change it from an imperative to a perfect vav-consecutive.

[84] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 90.

[85] "How can one reconcile the first vocative, with the second one ?" Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 144.

[86] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 65–66; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 121; Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 67–70 and Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 100 also consider "Seek Yahweh" as an addition. Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 148–50, does not explicitly state that there is editorial addition, but notes that the existence of 2:3 would encourage his post exilic communities to trust the prophecy since not everyone was destroyed.

[87] Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 273–74.

Another tack that treats the text as it stands contends that this is one group addressed in two different ways—the first to grab their attention and the second to encourage them in proper behavior.[88]

Sweeney's solution is to see both wicked and righteous as target audiences throughout.

> The problem is engendered, however, by some rather wooden readings of these verses that assume that the prophet knows whether he is speaking to a sympathetic or a hostile crowd. In order to understand these references, the interpreter must take account of the rhetorical situation of such speech, in which the prophet attempts to convince his audience to adopt his viewpoint and carry out the actions he recommends. In such a situation, it is unlikely that he knows fully where each member of his audience stands on the issue, and even if he does know whether the audience at large is sympathetic he still must appeal to its sense of self-identity to achieve his goals.[89]

Sweeney helps in that he notes that both wicked and righteous could be part of the audience. This should be obvious by the call to the entire nation in 2:1. However, he is too influenced by his assertion that 2:1–3:13 is a call to repentance which contradicts a two-distinct-audience theory.

It seems that rather than continuing to speak to the entire group, Zephaniah narrows his focus to just the faithful. At this point he is no longer speaking to those destined for destruction as nothing in the rest of the book holds out the possibility that they might repent and be saved. Rather he appeals to only the faithful to continue what they have been doing and to do even more. This is the position of Vanlier Hunter, Robert Bennett, Baker, Eaton, and Floyd.[90]

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[88] Hubert Irsigler, *Gottesgericht und Jahwetag: Die Komposition Zef 1,1–2,3 untersucht auf der Grundlage der Literarkritik des Zefanjabuches* (ATAT 3; St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1977), 452.

[89] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 118.

[90] Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 103–4; R. Bennett, "Zephaniah," 7:684–85; Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 136–37; Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:216; Walker, "Zephaniah," 551.

The faithful remain the real audience in 2:5–3:7. While most of this section speaks of the nations and the wicked in Jerusalem in the third person, there are second person pronouns and verbs referring to one of these groups in 2:5, 2:12, and 3:7.

The return to a masculine plural imperative without a vocative in 3:8 signals that Zephaniah returns to the humble of the land addressed in 2:3.

In 3:11–13, Zephaniah changes his discourse from the "humble of the land" to the city of Jerusalem, as evidenced by the change to feminine singular verbs and pronominal suffixes. Throughout this section, Yahweh describes the changes to the city on that day: removal of the wicked, populated by the humble, and righteousness of the inhabitants. It is during this section that the wicked city becomes the righteous people of God. It forms a transition to the feminine singular referents of 3:14–19.

3:14–19 uses second person feminine singular verbs and pronominal suffixes, referring to "Daughter Zion" or "Daughter Jerusalem" which are one and the same (the masculine phrase, הָרִיעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Shout, O Israel," is in apposition to the main feminine vocatives).

3:20, however, uses only second masculine plural pronominal suffixes with no vocative or obvious masculine plural referent. Though there are potential masculine plural substantives in 3:18 (נוּגֵי מִמּוֹעֵד, "those who are grieved for the appointed meeting") and 3:19 (הַצֹּלֵעָה וְהַנִּדָּחָה, "the lame and the banished one"), they are spoken about only in the third person and are not the main focus of the passage. The absence of the vocative implies that the reader has already met these second person addressees in 2:3 and 3:8: the faithful of Jerusalem. This is the final result of their waiting. "When Jerusalem is purged and restored, you (pl.) will have your (pl.) place within her and your (pl.) fortunes will be restored."

(2) Classification of the audience. Does he intend for those ostensibly addressed to hear his message and respond to it or are they a rhetorical audience? Understanding Zephaniah's

purposes will help determine whether they are real or rhetorical in each instance. In 1:1 he received the word of Yahweh in the days of King Josiah. This strongly suggests an overall Judahite audience. Therefore, when the nations are addressed in the second person (2:5 and 2:12), this is clearly a rhetorical address. Zephaniah does not envision anyone from these nations actually hearing this judgment, much less doing anything about it. Paul Raabe's analysis of OAN holds out the possibility that at least in some cases the prophet intended the foreign nation to hear the oracle and repent.[91] However, he puts Zephaniah's OAN into a category of "general warnings that aim to deter Israelites from desiring the nations' gods or envying and emulating their ways."[92] Given that there is no call to repentance anywhere in Zephaniah reinforces this idea.

There are two real audiences: (1) all of Jerusalem, wicked and righteous alike; and (2) the righteous of Jerusalem. That 2:1–2 addresses all of Jerusalem is manifested by the vocative נִכְסָף לֹא הַגּוֹי, "O nation not desired." Though they will later be referred to as a collective whole in the feminine singular (matching עִיר, "city"), each and every person in the land is summoned here. This city, the political, cultural, and religious center, stand in for the entire nation. All of Jerusalem is called to gather and hear the word of Yahweh before the day of destruction.

The nation as a whole is not given any instructions, however. They are not told to repent; it is too late for that. Rather, the purpose for their gathering is so Zephaniah can make an appeal to a group within the whole: the "humble of the land who do Yahweh's judgment." Though the entire city is allowed to overhear, it is this smaller group to whom the prophet addresses his message.

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[91] Paul R. Raabe, "Why Prophetic Oracles against the Nations?" in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Astrid B. Beck, Andrew H. Bartelt, Paul R. Raabe, and Chris A. Franke; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 250–53.

[92] Ibid., 249.

Though other groups of people will be referred to, it is this latter group who remains the real audience through the rest of the book. The masculine plural verbs in 3:8 and 3:20 are not accompanied by masculine plural vocatives or referents. This is because there is no need; that group was identified in 2:3.

Zephaniah has a simple message for these faithful ones who have gathered along with the rest: seek Yahweh and righteousness and humility (2:3), and wait patiently for his work to be completed (3:8). The OAN section, 2:5–15, to which is appended the parallel section regarding Jerusalem, 3:1–7, is elaboration of the motivational clause in 2:4 and the background to the motivational clauses of 3:8–9. 3:10 is a further elaboration of 3:9. The "humble of the land" is the real audience of 2:3–3:10; the rest of Jerusalem is likewise real, but not the intended target.

That the audience of 3:11–13 is no longer just the faithful is demonstrated by the change to second person feminine singular verbs and pronominal suffixes. The "humble of the land" are not addressed in the second person, but in the third. Though not specifically named, the city of Jerusalem is the obvious referent. At this point, Zephaniah expands his message from the smaller group to the whole. He describes for all of them what will happen to the city on that day: the wicked will be removed, no one will be haughty, the humble will be its inhabitants, no one will do evil, all will be at peace.

Is this audience real or rhetorical? Most of them would not live to see that day as they would be the ones removed. This seems to indicate a rhetorical audience. However, though repentance is not explicit here, Yahweh always has the desire for people to repent in his plan. The message of Jonah to Nineveh contained no call to repentance, but only a declaration of destruction. When the city did repent, however, Yahweh was pleased and relented. Obviously wicked individuals could yet repent and join the "humble of the land" who "perhaps" would be hidden on that day. Therefore, the audience for these verses should probably be considered real.

3:14–19 addresses the future city, which will be purged, converted, and restored. As this city does not yet exist, it is a rhetorical audience. 3:15 uses perfect verbs to describe Yahweh's deliverance; therefore, the hymn is expected to be sung in the future when the restored city can look back.

3:20 returns to second person masculine plural pronominal suffixes. As the future city will be made up of the faithful who were directly addressed in 2:3–3:10, they are again addressed here. Their future reward for seeking and waiting will finally be theirs. Therefore, Zephaniah returns to direct address.

Table 5. Second Person Verbs and Pronouns in Zephaniah.

Verse	Verb	Pronoun/ Pronominal Suff.	Referent	Type of Address
2:1	Impv mp (2)		All Judah	Real
2:2		2mp (2)	All Judah	Real
2:3	Impv mp (3) Impf 2mp		Humble of the land	Real
2:5		2mp	Cherethites	Rhetorical
		2fs	Land of the Philistines	Rhetorical
2:12		2mp	Cushites	Rhetorical
3:7	Impf 2fs (2)		Jerusalem	Rhetorical
3:8	Impv mp		Humble of the land	Real
3:11	Impf 2fs	2fs (3)	Jerusalem	Real
	Perf 2fs		Jerusalem	Real
3:12		2fs	Jerusalem	Real
3:14	Impv fs (3)		Daughter Zion/Jerusalem	Rhetorical
	Impv mp		Israel	Rhetorical
3:15	Impf 2fs	2fs (3)	Daughter Zion/Jerusalem	Rhetorical
3:16	Impf 2fs	2fs	Zion	Rhetorical
3:17		2fs (4)	Zion	Rhetorical
3:18		2fs	Zion	Rhetorical
3:19		2fs	Zion	Rhetorical
3:20		2mp (5)	Humble of the land	Real

The Use of Imperatives in Zephaniah

Using computer software I have identified more than 4,200 imperatives out of the little more than 300,000 words in the HB, or about 1.4%.[93] In just the Latter Prophets, there are just over 1,200 out of 71,000 words, or 1.7%. Zephaniah has only ten imperatives over its 767 words, or 1.3%. These differences are statistically insignificant. Zephaniah cannot be said to use imperatives more or less frequently than other prophets or the HB in general.

Imperatives by themselves do not constitute structural markers; they can occur anywhere within an argument or even a sentence. Neither are they necessarily emphatic; simple instructions use imperatives. However, there is some evidence that imperatives are used at times in the Latter Prophets as attentiongetting opening to a new oracle.

The book of Isaiah quite often begins an entirely new oracle with an imperative. In fact, right after the superscription, the very first oracle of this book begins שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהַאֲזִינִי אֶרֶץ, "Hear, oh heavens and listen, oh earth."[94] Many of these opening lines are calls to hear Yahweh's message. A parallel to the command to gather in Zeph 2:1 is found in Isa 34:1, קִרְבוּ גוֹיִם לִשְׁמֹעַ, "Draw near, oh peoples, to listen."[95] The call to praise in Zeph 3:14 has parallels in Isa 42:10; 49:13; and Jer 20:13. In each example, the exhortation builds on what has been said previously.

There are several dozen other examples where an imperative begins either a completely new oracle or a significant section break within one.[96] Certainly scholars will not agree that there is a break, major or minor, in every case citedr, but overall there should be significant agreement.

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[93] *BibleWorks* (Version 7.0.019e.8; Big Fork, Mont.: Hermeneutika, 2008). Computer software is only as good as its given morphological information, but over the course of the entire HB, differences should not affect the numbers greatly.

[94] The books of Joel and Micah begin similarly.

[95] Also see Isa 41:1 and 45:20.

[96] In addition to those already cited, consider Isa 1:10; 8:9; 13:6; 23:1; 26:20; 28:23; 29:9; 31:6; 33:13; 35:3; 40:1; 41:21; 43:8; 44:21; 44:23; 46:3; 47:1; 48:1; 48:2; 49:1; 51:1; 51:4; 51:7; 51:9; 51:17; 52:1; 54:1; 58:1; 60:1;

In these examples, it is not the presence of an imperative itself that determined the new section, but rather content. However, the fact that this seems to be a common literary prophetic device could be significant when looking at the unusual distribution of them in Zephaniah.

The ten imperatives in Zephaniah are notable in that they are contained in but four verses. They appear in 2:1 (2x); 2:3 (3x); 3:8; and 3:14 (4x). As the imperative groupings in each verse combine to form a single thought, this means that there are only four imperative groupings in the entire book, which could be structurally significant.

Leading off 2:1 with the doubled imperative ("gather and be gathered") is a strong indication that a major new section is beginning. All of Zeph 1 spoke of the targets of Yahweh's wrath in the third person. With the change in address—indicated by imperatives—the central message begins. 2:3 has three imperatives which are addressed to the more narrowed group. This signals a subsection break. As was already seen the two appearances of הוי in 2:5 and 3:1 are markers of new subsections which are parallel to each other. At the end of this lengthy section which elaborates on 2:4, Zephaniah returns to his target audience. This is again indicated by an imperative in 3:8 to marks a new subsection. The final grouping in 3:14 is a call for the nation to respond to Yahweh's declaration. As such the imperatives are the clue that a new final section begins.

When considering that imperatives very often head up new sections or subsections in the Latter Prophets, the sparse and scattered use in Zephaniah seems to be one of his literary devices to mark these sections and coincides nicely enough with other clues to suggest that this is intentional.

66:10; Jer 2:4; 5:1; 5:10; 6:1; 10:1; 10:17; 13:15; 18:19; 22:20; 25:34; 31:10; 46:3; 46:14; 49:3; 50:2; 50:8; 51:6; 51:27; Ezek 21:12 [MT 21:17]; Hos 2:4; 4:1; 5:1; 5:8; 6:1; 14:2 [MT 14:1]; Joel 2:1; 3:9; Amos 3:1; 3:9; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4; Mic 3:9; 6:1; 7:14; Hab 1:5; Zech 11:1. I have not attempted to sort these by major and minor breaks; there seem to be many examples of both.

The Structure of Zephaniah

Summary of Structural Examination

1. Because of the connective value of כִּי, 2:4 and 3:9 must each go with what precedes.

2. Zephaniah's use of imperatives leads me to suggest that their use in 2:1; 2:3; 3:8; and 3:14 functions as new section or subsection markers.

3. הוֹי can signal the start of a new section or subsection. This word begins 2:5 and 3:1.

4. לָכֵן has a connection with what precedes. In 2:9 the content indicates a tightly bound connection with the previous verses. In 3:8, however, the connection is to a much larger context.

5. The masculine plural imperative of 3:8 has as its addressee the "humble of the land" from 2:3. This is evidenced by the lack of a vocative and the matching of second person plural imperatives combined with analysis of addressees.

6. As far as content, 1:2–18 describes the Day of Yahweh as the utter destruction of both Judah and the nations. 2:1–3 records Yahweh's appeal to the righteous within Jerusalem to be faithful. 2:4 gives the reason that they should be faithful: trouble is coming. 2:5–15 declares that this destruction will cover all of the surrounding nations. 3:1–7 describes that Jerusalem and its leaders have continued to be unfaithful, even though they have been warned by Yahweh's destruction of the nations. In 3:8–13, Yahweh again encourages the faithful by describing how the Day of Yahweh will restore their fortunes.

Resulting Structure

Here is the outline of Zephaniah that results from this analysis. The main middle section forms a large chiasm.

Superscription	1:1
I. Prologue: The Terrible Day of Yahweh	1:2–18
A Yahweh will destroy the entire earth	1:2–3
B Yahweh will destroy Judah for her sins	1:4–13

A′ The terrible Day of Yahweh will destroy the entire world	1:14–18
II. Appeal: Trust in Yahweh	2:1–3:13
A All Jerusalem gather	2:1–2
B The humble must seek Yahweh	2:3–3:4
Seek Yahweh and righteousness	2:1–3
Motivation: Destruction is coming near	2:4
C Woe to the nations	2:5–15
1. Philistia—West	2:5–7
2. Moab and Ammon—East	2:8–10
(Yahweh will be worshipped rather than the gods of the nations by the nations)	(2:11)
3. Cush—South	2:12
4. Assyria—North	2:13–15
C′ Woe to Jerusalem	3:1–7
The city is wicked like Nineveh	3:1–2
Blame is on its leaders	3:3–4
Unlike Yahweh who is righteous	3:5
Destruction of other nations did not warn them	3:6–7
B′ Therefore, the humble wait upon Yahweh	3:8–10
Wait expectantly for Yahweh to rise for prey	3:8a
Motivation: Yahweh will destroy the nations	3:8b
Motivation: Yahweh will convert the nations	3:9–10
A′ Result: Jerusalem will be purified and restored as Yahweh's holy place	3:11–13
III. Epilogue: Rejoice in Yahweh, O future Zion	3:14–20
Rejoice	3:14
Yahweh will forgive and purify you	3:15
Yahweh will save you from your oppressors	3:16–19
Yahweh will restore the humble in Jerusalem	3:20

Explanation of Structure

Based on both content and form, 1:2–18 forms a complete unit. First the Day of Yahweh is described as devastation of the entire earth. Then the focus is narrowed upon Judah; her sins are named and her destruction is described in some detail. Then the prophet returns to the larger picture for further descriptions of that day. Nowhere in this chapter is any hope held out that he might relent. No one is encouraged to repent.

2:1 begins an entirely new unit. It opens with imperatives to act. It is in the form of an appeal. Hope is expressed that those who seek Yahweh will not face calamity. There is no syntactical connection with 1:2–18. Zeph 1 informs the terrible Day of Yahweh referenced in 2:2–3. Therefore, 1:2–18 functions as a lengthy prologue to the appeal which starts in 2:1, but especially in 2:3.

The end of this section is 3:13. This is signaled by the five imperatives to rejoice that are contained in 3:14 and the different form of 3:14–20. Rather than an appeal to do anything about their situation, the prophet encourages the rhetorical audience of the future restored city to rejoice in what Yahweh will have done for them. There is no grammatical connection to what precedes. 2:1–3:13 forms a complete thought without 3:14–20. Though there is no content dependence, there is a great deal of correspondence to make the two sections quite complementary and, as such, 3:14–20 forms a fitting epilogue to the book.

Within the main appeal section, there are several subdivisions. The addressees point to two audiences. All of Jerusalem is addressed in 2:1–2 and 3:11–13. In the first section, they are told to gather so that Zephaniah can address his main audience, the faithful within them. In the final section, the entire city is told what its future will be. The real target of his appeal—the "humble of the land"—are addressed throughout 2:3–3:10.

The OAN section of 2:5–15 seems at first to be something of an aside to the main appeal. הוֹי is a dramatic word that marks it as a new unit. The content, while not completely unrelated, changes quite a bit from that of 2:1–3. Since it is the same basic subject as 2:4, the motivation for the commands of 2:1–3, it functions as an expansion of 2:4.

Still working the side track started in 2:5, 3:1–7 is a striking new subsection. Echoing 2:5, it begins with הוֹי, again marking the new unit. At first its content seems to continue the condemnation of Nineveh in 2:14–15. In 3:2, the reference to trusting in Yahweh makes it clear

that Jerusalem is now the subject. Beginning with הוֹי 3:1–7 makes a parallel statement that Jerusalem is as bad as the nations and will suffer a similar result.

Quite a few things are going on in 3:8. There are three grammatical/literary clues: לָכֵן, an imperative verb, and the referent of the masculine plural imperative. לָכֵן connects 3:8–10 with what precedes, not just the previous verse but all of 2:5–3:7. Because imperatives occurred at section and subsection breaks in 2:1, 2:3, and 3:14, it suggests that despite the connective value of לָכֵן, there is a sense in which a new subsection starts here. Finding that the referent for the masculine plural imperative is found in 2:3 completes the puzzle. 3:8 does not mark an entirely new section, but is a loop which returns the reader to the appeal started in 2:3–4. This makes 3:8–10 the B´ to the B of 2:3–4. The intervening 2:5–3:7 section then performs two functions: elaborate on the motivational clause in 2:4 and provide the reasons behind Yahweh's actions in 3:8–10.

3:9 must continue the subsection since it begins with the grammatically connective word כִּי. 3:10 expands on the thought of 3:9. The change of second person verbs and pronouns to feminine singular in 3:11–13 mark this as a final subsection which addresses all of Jerusalem and expands upon 3:9–10.

Sweeney notices philological clues to structure and posits that Zephaniah has a two part structure: Day of Yahweh—(1:1–18) and Zephaniah's parenetic speech—(2:1–3:20).[97] His keys are: (1) the lack of any syntactical connections between 2:1 and 1:2–18, though these kinds of connections exist throughout both sections and (2) the vagueness of the addressees in the first section compared to the specificity of them in the second.[98] Going further than Sweeney, I

[97] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 9.

[98] Ibid., 7–8.

contend that for much the same reason, 3:14 also marks a major section break. Though 3:14 contains feminine verbs similar to 3:11–12, new vocative referents are provided, much as in 2:1. There are no other connective words, such as לָכֵן or כִּי. Regarding his second point, the change from impersonal to personal address is not simply marked by second person verbs, but by imperatives. The appearance of four imperatives in 3:14 potentially signals a new section. When considering the content and form shift, it seems that 3:14–20 is not an essential part of Zephaniah's main parenesis, but an epilogue.

Ryou does a very careful and detailed analysis of the syntactical clues in 2:1–3:8.[99] While his work is extremely helpful, he may place too much stock in his syntactical hierarchy. Though he is shown to be correct on the macro-syntactic value of הוֹי (at least in Zephaniah), his similar treatment of לָכֵן proves questionable. Further, though he understands the connective value of כִּי elsewhere, his handling of it at 3:9 is a major weakness of his structural outline.

Summary of Key Questions

In chapter 1, I showed a chart of the twenty-six options proposed by fifty-one commentators. Six key issues were at the base of those options. Here again are those questions, along with the answers gleaned from the above analysis.

1. What is the relationship of 2:1–3 (or 2:1–4) to its literary context? Does it complete the thought of Zeph 1, start a new section, or stand on its own? 2:1–4 starts the main section of Zephaniah. 1:2–18 provides the background for the terrible Day of Yahweh, but is not central to the message that begins here. The imperatives of this section, picked up later in 3:8 form the main thrust of the prophets' message.

[99] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*. See especially 73–155 for his syntactical work.

2. Does 2:4 go with what precedes or with what follows? The כִּי ties it directly to what precedes.

3. How does Zeph 3 (at least the earlier part) connect with Zeph 2? Is it an integral part of the argument of Zeph 2 (or at least of 2:5–15) or does it begin a new thought? The repeat הוֹי of in 2:5 and 3:1 indicate that 3:1–7 is a parallel passage to 2:5–15, showing that Jerusalem is as wicked as the nations. 3:8–13 continues the exhortation begun in 2:1–3 to seek Yahweh and see his salvation.

4. What is the relationship between the harsh tone of 3:1–7 (or 3:1–8) and the hopeful note of 3:9–13? When 2:5–3:7 is seen as background for the motivation clauses in 2:4 and 3:8–9, then it is clear that Yahweh will punish because of sin, convert the nations, and restore the righteous within Judah.

5. Does 3:8 complete the previous section, start a new one, or link what precedes with what follows? לָכֵן connects it to 2:5–3:7, but the masculine plural imperatives connect it to 2:3–4. Therefore, it marks a climax that continues the appeal of 2:3–4 based on the content of 2:5–3:7.

6. Does 3:14–20 stand alone or is it tied into 3:9–13? The imperatives that are contained in 3:14 indicate the beginning of an entirely new section, an exhortation to rejoice. All of 2:1–3:13, but especially 3:8–13, form the background for understanding 3:14–20.

The Structural Story of Zephaniah

The central message of Zephaniah is an appeal to the faithful in Judah/Jerusalem to stay faithful to Yahweh in the face of unprecedented trouble. Before delivering that message, the prophet describes in no uncertain terms the catastrophic nature of the Day of Yahweh. In a summary account, he declares that everything that draws breath upon the face of the earth will be destroyed on that day.

Then he gets specific as he describes the fate of Jerusalem as part of that destruction. They were unfaithful to him and worthy of death, so he would search the city high and low for those marked for destruction. There would be no houses in which to live or fields to cultivate. Nothing would be left. Finally, he reiterates that the Day will not just come upon his unfaithful people, but upon the entire earth which has been unfaithful to Yahweh.

Then Zephaniah shifts his attention to the people of Yahweh. He calls upon them, an unwanted nation, to gather together before that day comes upon them. Then narrowing his address to the faithful as the humble of the land who perform his judgment, he attempts to persuade them to continue to seek Yahweh, seek righteousness, and seek humility. Though he has described the Day of Yahweh as complete annihilation, in this way they might be spared. Their motivation is that destruction will come very soon upon its nearest neighbor, Philistia. Though their complete devastation is in the near future (Babylon captured and destroyed the main cities of the Philistines in 604), Judah had possibly already seen their vulnerability if the speculation that Egypt had already marched through these cities is correct.[100] Thus Zeph 2:4 serves as a signal to its hearers as the first of many such judgments to come. This is what they want to avoid for themselves.

Next Zephaniah digresses, but with a purpose. Though the OAN interrupts the appeal and initially may seem to not fit, there are reasons for its inclusion here. First, it is an elaboration of the motive in 2:4. Not only will their nearest neighbor be destroyed, but so will all the others. Second, it serves to emphasize the comprehensiveness of the Day of Yahweh. The four nations chosen are not accidental. They line up as compass points: Philistia to the west, Moab and Ammon to the east, Cush to the south and Assyria to the north. In this way they represent the

[100] Bright, *A History of Israel*, 326–27; Katzenstein, "Philistines," 328.

entire earth upon which Yahweh's anger will be poured. Third, it provides the framework for Zephaniah's description of the wicked in Jerusalem.

In the middle of the OAN appears 2:11. The scope of this verse is too big to refer just to Moab and Ammon, the previously mentioned nations. It mentions the islands or coastlands, a description which does not fit these landlocked countries. Coming at the midpoint of the OAN (at least in terms of numbers of nations), it indicates that all of the nations, both those listed and others represented by them, would acknowledge Yahweh as their God.

Then the prophet switches his attention to Jerusalem. He uses הוי to parallel 2:5 and begins talking about a wicked city to parallel 2:14–15. But then the city turns out to be Jerusalem. The unfaithful oppressors are not just in foreign nations, but also within the people of Yahweh. This is not particularly surprising since 1:4–13 already prepared the audience for this. What is striking is the implication that the leaders of Jerusalem, who should know better, are just as bad as the nations who are without Yahweh. Judgment upon foreign nations should have served as a warning to Jerusalem, but sadly it did not.

Now the author returns to his appeal. Keeping all this in mind—the terrible sinfulness and complete annihilation that is coming to both foreign nations and to Jerusalem—then the faithful are encouraged to wait for Yahweh to do his work. He will take prey from all the evildoers and bring his judgment to bear. He will gather nations and kingdoms to pour out upon them his wrath. Then he will purify the lips of the nations so that they will serve Yahweh alongside the faithful of Jerusalem. Those who were previously scattered at the Tower of Babel (more on this in chapter 5) and those who remain will bring Yahweh's offering to the central place of worship in Jerusalem.

Then the city will no longer be ashamed because its proud ones will have been removed in favor of the humble of the land who faithfully sought Yahweh throughout. They will dwell in safety and righteousness. Their desire for Yahweh's judgment will be realized at last.

Because of this Jerusalem should sing and exalt Yahweh. The epilogue summarizes the benefits that the judgment of Yahweh will bring to his faithful ones.

Summary

Chapter 2 laid out the three things that would result from the analysis of Zephaniah's structure: (1) the addressees in 3:8; (2) the overall message of Zephaniah, especially 2:1–3:13; and (3) the structural flow of Zephaniah's message. Following is a summary of what has been determined.

Addressees

Though there is some disagreement on this point, even among scholars who treat the book synchronically, the structure of the book determines that the only possible addressees of the imperative in 3:8 are the "humble of the land" who were first introduced in 2:3. Both the matching of person, number, and gender of verbs along with the analysis of Zephaniah's flow and message make this a certainty.

Overall Message

The message of Zeph 2:1–3:13 is to encourage the faithful to remain so and to put their trust in Yahweh through the difficult times to come. Everything else in this section—the gathering of all Jerusalem, the oracle against the nations, the naming of Jerusalem as one of the nations, the future state of Jerusalem—is all part of this encouragement. As it appears that Zeph 1 is a prologue to inform the Day of Yahweh which is the doom side of 2:1–3:13 and that 3:14–20 is a call to rejoice over the hopeful side of 2:1–3:13, then encouraging the faithful is the purpose of the entire book.

Structural Flow

Zephaniah first describes the terrible Day of Yahweh (1:2–18). Next he calls upon all Jerusalem to gather (2:1–2). Then he addresses his real audience who is part of the larger group—"the humble of the land" (2:3–3:13). This group is encouraged to seek Yahweh; perhaps he will protect them in the coming destruction (2:3). They need to put their trust in him because terrible devastation is coming (2:4). He expands on this thought to declare that Yahweh's judgment will not be just local but will accompany the entire earth (2:5–15). Further, Jerusalem has become so wicked that it is just like the nations and will likewise be annihilated (3:1–7). After this digression (which forms the basis of the "therefore" that leads off 3:8), he again addressed the faithful by calling on them to wait upon Yahweh for what he will do (3:8–10). Then Zephaniah expands his address to the entire city to describe what the restored Jerusalem will be like when it is purified (3:11–13). Finally he calls upon the future city to rejoice in the things that Yahweh will do (from his time reference) and had done (from their time perspective) (3:14–20).

CHAPTER FIVE

ZEPHANIAH 3:8–9 INTERPRETED IN ITS CONTEXT

Detailed Exegesis

Properly interpreting Zeph 3:8–9 will involve doing a detailed exegesis of not only those verses, but also of 2:3 and 3:10. Because structural analysis has already determined that the addressees in 3:8 are the same as those in 2:3, that verse needs a closer look. The outline that resulted in chapter 4 indicates that 3:8–10 all belongs together. Although 3:10 does not figure into the juxtaposition question, the results of its exegesis will help the interpretation of 3:9.

Zephaniah 2:3

בַּקְּשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה … בַּקְּשׁוּ־צֶדֶק בַּקְּשׁוּ עֲנָוָה *Seek Yahweh….Seek righteousness. Seek humility.*

I have rearranged the verse only to deal with the three imperative *seek* clauses together. Though a vocative phrase is inserted between the first and second commands, the repeated imperative *seek* indicates that they be treated as a unit.

The literal sense of בקשׁ is "seek to find", that is, physically look and search until an object or person is located.[1] Most of the uses in the HB are figurative, as in Zephaniah. The majority of the figurative uses without Yahweh as the object translate roughly to "desire", as in 1 Kgs 11:40, וַיְבַקֵּשׁ שְׁלֹמֹה לְהָמִית אֶת־יָרָבְעָם, "And Solomon desired to put Jeroboam to death."[2] Though TDOT

[1] *BDB*, 134.

[2] Siegfried Wagner, "בִּקַּשׁ," *TDOT*, 2:233–35.

recognizes a variety of degrees of intensity involved in the seeking, they maintain that the object of the seeking "is desired most earnestly and initiates the seeking. *biqqesh* has to do with satisfying this desire."[3]

In dealing with seeking abstract qualities, *TDOT* notes a quality of fulfillment that accompanies the desire. "In this connection, attention should be called to the expressions 'seek good' and 'seek evil (or my evil or hurt)'…, where an applicatory element is at work alongside the active."[4] Therefore, when the faithful are commanded to "seek righteousness" and "seek humility", the implication is that they would do more than simply desire these qualities for themselves and others. Rather they would live their lives to pursue a course of righteousness and humility.

The way the verse is constructed, it seems that the command to seek Yahweh is defined somewhat by the commands after the vocative to seek righteousness and humility. Therefore, they need to be dealt with first.

Nowhere else in the HB are these expressions used. The closest is Isa 51:1 where future blessings are promised to רֹדְפֵי צֶדֶק מְבַקְשֵׁי יְהוָה, "those who pursue righteousness and seek Yahweh," which again may bring some focus of what it means to seek Yahweh.

צֶדֶק is translated "righteousness", as correct action in an ethical sense. It is used in the HB to describe Yahweh's character, especially as it relates to his decisions (Ps 9:5); as the antithesis of partial judicial decisions (Lev 19:15); as the fair way business should be conducted (Deut

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[3] Ibid., 2:229.

[4] Ibid., 2:234. בקשׁ appears only in the Piel and Pual stems in the HB. Is it possible that its existence in this stem implies some level of intensity? In his study of Piel verb forms, Ernst Jenni (*Das Hebräische Pi ʿel: Syntaktisch-semasiologische Untersuchung einer Verbalform im Alten Testament* [Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1968], 230) contends that rather than intensive or repeated, the difference between a verb in its Qal and Piel forms is that the latter carries a sense of result, that is, bring about the state that the Qal references. Even for verbs which have no corresponding verb form, he maintains that the same sense is present.

25:15); as the expected quality of the people's sacrifices (Ps 4:6); as the quality of those who are blameless (Ps 15:2); as a description of Yahweh's Torah (Ps 119:62); as the proper quality of speech (Prov 16:13); and as the hallmark of the future converted nation (Isa 62:2).

The root ענה and its various noun and adjectival forms is found in the translation notes on 3:12 in chapter 3. In this verse the substantivized adjective עָנָו appears in the vocative and will be discussed below. The noun עֲנָוָה is used here as something to be sought. BDB lists the only meanings for this rarely used word (six times in the HB) as "humility" or "meekness".[5] According to TDOT, it indicates "a human quality or social condition."[6] Antithetical terms are כָּבוֹד, "honor", (Prov 15:33; 18:12) and גבה, "to be haughty" (Prov 18:12). Humility is a quality of the most powerful Yahweh (Ps 45:5).

To *seek Yahweh* seems to be a technical phrase, yet certainly contains the same element of *desire* as in other figurative uses. The real question is whether this phrase is used as a somewhat generic praying to Yahweh or as specific participation in cultic activity. Many of the uses in the HB are clearly related to some type of rite at the place of worship (Exod 33:7; 2 Sam 21:1; 2 Chr 20:4; Ps 27:8; 105:3, 4; Jer 50:4; Hos 5:6). Other instances are in antithesis to seeking other gods (Deut 4:29; Isa 45:19). The rest are more generic (1 Chr 16:10, 11; 2 Chr 11:16; 15:4; 15:15; Ps 40:17; 69:6 [MT 69:7]; 83:17; Prov 28:5; Isa 51:1; Hos 3:5; 7:10; Zech 8:21, 22). The case could be made that some of the more generic uses could apply to temple worship. On the other hand, those verses that put בקשׁ in the context of temple worship do not have to imply that those rites are present in the meaning of the word. TDOT recognizes the cultic uses of בקשׁ, even stating that

[5] *BDB*, 776.

[6] Gerstenberger, *TDOT*, 11:241.

the imperatives seem to be calls to worship. However, they recognize that to insist on this in every case is too limiting.[7] Modern commentators do not see temple worship in 2:3.

Commentators who believe that Zephaniah's purpose is repentance interpret "seek Yahweh" in terms of the life style changes indicated by "seek righteousness" and "seek humility". They miss the change of addressee from 2:1 to 2:3.[8] Though Roberts mistakenly sees repentance as the call, he makes the proper connection between what it means to seek Yahweh in the light of also seeking righteousness and humility.

> Zephaniah further defines the kind of religious approach to Yahweh that Judah's desperate situation demands. It is a religious devotion to Yahweh that involves the serious attempt to live righteously and humbly before him, and that is neither careless about obedience nor haughty in human self-sufficiency.[9]

Sweeney comments,

> The prophet's strategy is facilitated by the vague nature of his imperative appeals….The verb is sometimes understood to be a technical term that refers to oracular divination or cultic inquiry, but the present context requires only that it function in the general sense of seeking or turning to YHWH. Of course, this statement contrasts with that in 1:6, which charges that people in Jerusalem/Judah have turned away from YHWH and neither "seek" YHWH nor "inquire" of YHWH.[10]

For Zephaniah, then, to seek Yahweh in this context is to humbly put trust only in him and to do what he commands.

כָּל־עַנְוֵי הָאָרֶץ *All you humble of the land.* This is the vocative referent for not only the first imperative, but for the next two as well. Further, analysis of the structure has already revealed

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[7] Wagner, *TDOT*, 2:237–39.

[8] Irsigler, *Gottesgericht und Jahwetag*, 452 Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 272–75; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 121; Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 164.

[9] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 190.

[10] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 118–19.

that this group is the addressee for 3:8 and 3:20 as well. Chapter 4 has also demonstrated why this group is different than that named in 2:1.

Most scholars translate עַנְוֵי here as "humble". Only Renaud and Sabottka use "poor". Sabottka recognizes the prevailing view that עָנָו means "humble", but simply disagrees.[11] Renaud imports the concern for the economically poor and downtrodden exhibited in the eighth-century prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Micah) into Zephaniah.[12] The concerns of Zephaniah's time do not have to be the same as that of a century earlier. Examining the larger context of Zephaniah, there is no interest in the oppression of the poor (unlike Amos or Isaiah). His concern is faithfulness to Yahweh and his ways. Though the עָנָו are contrasted with the official classes of Jerusalem in 3:1–4, he does not paint it as a rich vs. poor problem; rather it is unfaithfulness vs. faithfulness.

עַנְוֵי־אֶרֶץ shows up only two other times in the HB. Ps 76:10 does not provide enough context to narrow down its meaning there. In Isa 11:4 עַנְוֵי־אֶרֶץ is used in parallel with דַּלִּים, "poor", "needy", "weak", or "least". The context of that chapter is the righteous judgments of Yahweh, not economic contrasts or oppression. Therefore, "humble of the land" fits Isa 11:4 as well as here. The antithesis of *humble* is *proud*. The faithful within this group do not put their trust in themselves, but in Yahweh alone.

אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁפָּטוֹ פָּעָלוּ *Who perform his judgment*. This phrase further defines the addressees. Not only are they humble, but they are those who live righteously, who "perform his judgment." To be humble, then, is more than an inner attitude; it is also a way of life.

Yahweh's מִשְׁפָּט. מִשְׁפָּט is the nominal form of שׁפט, "to judge" or "to decide". *BDB* shows the width of its semantic range with these English equivalents: (1) judgment; (a) act of deciding a

[11] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 65–66.

[12] Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 221.

case; (b) place of judgment, i.e., court; (c) process before a judge; (d) case for judgment; (e) sentence, decision of judge; (f) execution of judgment; (g) time of judgment; (2) justice, right; (3) ordinance; (4) decision in a legal case; (5) legal right, privilege, due; (6)(a) proper, fitting, measure; (b) custom.[13]

Scholars have tried to discern the root meaning of מִשְׁפָּט from which all others derive. For example, *TDOT* claims that "the focal point clearly lies in the realm of justice, judgment, and law."[14] They note the difficulty of finding that locus. "But in several texts the meaning 'decision' is sufficient."[15] The corresponding TDOT entry for the verb שפט takes the position "that it parallels terms denoting the exercise of sovereignty…and judicial authority….We may accordingly state the meaning of qal to be 'rule, lead, govern,' and 'judge, determine, grant justice.'"[16]

Loring Batten argues that the translation "judgment" is misleading. He proposes "to decide" as the primary meaning of שפט. Therefore, the basic understanding of מִשְׁפָּט would be "decision". He claims that all other meanings can be derived from this.[17]

Osborne Booth argues that the original meaning was the less frequent "custom", especially as this meaning is present in the earlier uses of the word. "As custom does not develop from law, but law from custom, it is probable that the meaning of this word traveled in the same direction."[18] He does not, however, claim that "custom" is present in later uses of the word.

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[13] *BDB*, 1048–49.

[14] B. Johnson, "מִשְׁפָּט," *TDOT*, 9:87.

[15] Ibid., 9:87.

[16] H. Niehr, "שָׁפַט," *TDOT*, 15:418–19.

[17] Loring W. Batten, "The Use of מִשְׁפָּט," *JBL* 11 (1892): 210.

[18] Osborne Booth, "The Semantic Development of the term מִשְׁפָּט in the Old Testament" *JBL* 61 (1942): 108.

Hemchand Gossai, while not discounting "rule" or "authority", sees the focal point of מִשְׁפָּט as *relationship*, more specifically covenant relationship.

> משׁפט is not an objective norm which must be subscribed to, whether in legal, cultic or religious affairs. Rather, everyone is involved in some form of relationship. The individual and the community are both expected to do משׁפט, but this expectation is effected through Yahweh's משפט which is inherent in his covenant. This involved commitment to the covenant and knowledge of Yahweh. For the individual, משׁפט embodies the expectations both of Yahweh and others of the covenant relationship.[19]

In the end an overarching meaning may not be helpful. As מִשְׁפָּט has been shown to have a wide semantic range, each use needs to be interpreted in its context within that range. This is certainly true in Zephaniah.

The three occurrences of מִשְׁפָּט in Zeph 2:1–3:13 all have pronominal suffixes with Yahweh as the referent (2:3; 3:5; 3:8). מִשְׁפָּט appears twenty times elsewhere in the HB in construct with יהוה or אֱלֹהִים, or with a pronominal suffix that has Yahweh as its referent. No single definition encompasses each of these occurrences. At times it indicates the commands of the תּוֹרָה (Deut 33:10; 2 Sam 22:23). At other times it is parallel to the דֶּרֶךְ of Yahweh (Jer 5:4, 5; 8:7). It also is used in tandem with צֶדֶק (Ps 36:7; 72:1; Isa 26:9). A couple of verses contain clear declarations of Yahweh's punishing judgment (Jer 1:16; Eze 39:21). There are still more uses that are somewhat vague as to their exact meaning, but which seem to have a positive connotation for the nation (Ps 36:7; 48:12; 97:8; Isa 26:8). There is no single way to understand the מִשְׁפָּט of Yahweh. Therefore each use in Zephaniah will need to be looked at individually.

There is no disagreement among commentators about the phrase אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁפָּטוֹ פָּעָלוּ in 2:3. Those who perform Yahweh's מִשְׁפָּט live according to his commands. While most do not specify

[19] Hemchand Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness, and the Social Critique of the Eighth-Century Prophets* (American University Studies Theology and Religion 141; New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 198.

what those commands are, Sweeney equates it with the Torah.[20] There is a list of verses where someone is said to עשׂה, "do", מִשְׁפָּט. In those verses where מִשְׁפָּט is plural, it carries the meaning of חֻקָּה, תּוֹרָה, or עֵלָה (often in combination with one or more of these terms). When used in the singular as here, it seems to be more generic. While doing what Yahweh thinks is right certainly includes the Torah, on the lips of the prophets there seems to be less of a legal cast and more of a moral one. In the Latter Prophets, מִשְׁפָּט and עשׂה are often combined with צֶדֶק. Not only is Yahweh himself exalted בַּמִּשְׁפָּט and shown to be holy בִּצְדָקָה (Isa 5:16), but he calls on his people שִׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפָּט וַעֲשׂוּ צְדָקָה (Isa 56:1). The eschatological king וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה בָּאָרֶץ (Jer 23:5).

When "the humble of the land who perform his judgment" are encouraged to בַּקְּשׁוּ־צֶדֶק, the prophet wants them to continue to live in the way that Yahweh expects them to live, justly and righteously.[21]

In 3:5, Zephaniah says that Yahweh מִשְׁפָּטוֹ יִתֵּן, "gives his judgment," each day. The assertion by some scholars that מִשְׁפָּט is here a declaration of Yahweh's sentence of doom upon Jerusalem (tied to what they claim is its use is in 3:8) completely misses the intended contrast.[22] This verse highlights the contrast between the judges who devour all night along with the priests who profane the law and Yahweh who is צַדִּיק, does no injustice, and מִשְׁפָּטוֹ יִתֵּן every morning. Once again מִשְׁפָּט and צַדִּיק are paired, which shows that it includes the moral nature of מִשְׁפָּט.

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[20] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 119.

[21] Only in this verse is פעל combined with מִשְׁפָּט; all other instances use עשׂה. The frequency of עשׂה dwarfs that of פעל in the HB, 2629 to 94. There seems to be no difference in meaning between the two and *DCH*, 6:727, notes that פעל is generally used "in poetic contexts."

[22] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 75; Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 317; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 240; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 178.

3:8 will be discussed below. Moving outside the main 2:1–3:13 section, Yahweh is said to remove מִשְׁפָּטַיִךְ, "your judgments," in 3:15. The referent of the pronominal suffix is the future restored city of Jerusalem as was demonstrated in chapter 4. This occurrence is different than the other three in that מִשְׁפָּט is plural and the suffix does not apply to the giver of judgment, but the recipient. Using Waltke and O'Connor's categories, this would be an adverbial objective genitive. The suffix marks the object of the action represented by the noun. In this verse it would be translated, "the judgment/punishment/sentence upon you."[23] This use is similar to that found in 1 Kgs 20:10 where מִשְׁפָּטֶךָ is best rendered "your sentence," that is, the sentence that is pronounced upon the hearer. Here, it cannot mean anything other than the punishment that Yahweh was to dole out against the city. 3:15 tells the future city that its punishment has been lifted.

To summarize, the addressees are those in Jerusalem who live according to the moral ways of Yahweh. Rather than being told to do something they were not already doing, they are encouraged to continue to do so even more as trouble comes upon the earth.

אוּלַי תִּסָּתְרוּ בְּיוֹם אַף־יְהוָה *Perhaps you will be hidden on the day of the wrath of Yahweh*. In addition to the ordinary uses of the term, סתר, "to hide", is commonly used in the Psalms to metaphorically indicate the protection of people by Yahweh (Ps 17:8; 27:5; 31:20 [MT 31:21]; 32:7; 61:4 [61:5]; 64:2 [64:3]; 81:7 [81:8]; 91:1; 119:14). In the Latter Prophets it carries this meaning in Isa 16:3–4 and 49:2.

In Zephaniah, יוֹם appears twenty-one times, five times in the idiom בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, "on that day", and once to indicate the time of the prophecy. The other fifteen uses indicate the future

[23] Here the suffix is second person masculine singular and the noun plural, מִשְׁפָּטַיִךְ. Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 303, call this use "a mediated object."

time when Yahweh would bring judgment upon the earth. It is called יוֹם יְהוָה, "the Day of Yahweh" (1:7; 1:14); יוֹם־יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל, "the great Day of Yahweh" (1:14); בְּיוֹם זֶבַח יְהוָה, "the Day of the sacrifice of Yahweh" (1:8); יוֹם עֶבְרָה, "a day of wrath" (1:15); יוֹם צָרָה וּמְצוּקָה, "a day of trouble and distress" (1:15); יוֹם שֹׁאָה וּמְשׁוֹאָה, "a day of destruction and devastation" (1:15); יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וַאֲפֵלָה, "a day of darkness and gloom" (1:15); יוֹם עָנָן וַעֲרָפֶל, "a day of clouds and thick darkness" (1:15); יוֹם שׁוֹפָר וּתְרוּעָה, "a day of trumpet and battle cry" (1:16); יְהוָה בְּיוֹם עֶבְרַת, "the Day of the wrath of Yahweh" (1:18); יוֹם אַף־יְהוָה, "the Day of the anger of Yahweh" (2:2; 2:3); לְיוֹם קוּמִי לָעַד, "the day of my arising for prey" (3:8). The remaining instance in 2:2 is a generic reference to that day.

By these descriptions, the Day of Yahweh in Zephaniah is the terrible future time when Yahweh will execute his wrath—a day that anyone would want to avoid. In this verse the prophet holds out hope that those who are faithful to Yahweh might escape the worst of that day if they remain true to him. 2:3 provides the first hint that Zephaniah has a theology of remnant. At this point it is worth seeing how it continues in the rest of the book.

Theology of the Remnant. As in many of the prophetic books, there is clearly a remnant theology in the book of Zephaniah. The key Hebrew word is שְׁאֵרִית, which is used three times (2:7, 9; 3:13). It is the nominal form of שׁאר, "to remain" or "to be left over". In many instances, this word group is used generically to describe that there is a remaining part of a group or thing after some activity. In 1 Chr 4:43 Israel defeats שְׁאֵרִית הַפְּלֵטָה לַעֲמָלֵק, "the remaining escaped Amalekites," who were left from an earlier battle. When the statue of Dagon fell before the ark of Yahweh and its limbs were broken off, רַק דָּגוֹן נִשְׁאַר עָלָיו, "only the trunk remained to him" (1 Sam 5:4).

Often, however, it takes on a more technical meaning, especially in the prophets. Gerhard Hasel's landmark work demonstrates that before the classic application in the prophets to those who were exiled or would remain after the eschaton, this theme traced back to nearly the beginning in Israel's theology.[24]

The first remnant story (and the one with the best connections to Zephaniah) is the story of Noah. God determined to punish the wickedness of mankind with the flood (Gen 6:11–13). The key verse that relates to the remnant theme is Gen 7:23: וַיִּמַּח אֶת־כָּל־הַיְקוּם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּמָּחוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשָּׁאֶר אַךְ־נֹחַ וַאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּבָה, "And thus all life which was upon the face of the earth, from man to beast to creeping things to birds of the sky, they were wiped out from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained."

Several aspects of this theme that Hasel points out have relevance for the remnant in Zephaniah: (1) Contrary to the flood stories in other ANE accounts where the gods have the right to destroy man simply because they created him, God wipes out mankind because of its sins. "Man's sins and his punishment are related to each other as cause and effect."[25] (2) Noah was not picked at random to survive, but "because he was צַדִּיק."[26] (3) Even here, Noah's righteousness was not only based on "some intrinsic merit on his own, but he is צַדִּיק because he stands in right relation to God. By believing and trusting in God, Noah stands in the right relationship and thus finds favor in God's eyes."[27] (4) This salvation is not the work of man. "It is God's grace and

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[24] Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (AUM 5. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1972), 135.

[25] Ibid., 142.

[26] Ibid., 143.

[27] Ibid., 144.

mercy which brings Noah safely through the judgment of the flood."[28] (5) Judgment and restoration both exist in the remnant. "It is obvious that the motif of the salvation of a remnant from the destruction of the flood contains the dual aspects of doom and hope."[29]

Continuing, Hasel also addresses the remnant in the Abraham-Lot narrative, the Jacob-Esau narrative, the Joseph narrative, and the Elijah cycle.[30] While these demonstrate other aspects of remnant theology, they are less applicable to Zephaniah.

According to Hasel, the remnant motif continues with the book considered to be the first written among the Latter Prophets, Amos.[31] This prophet first tears down the popular idea that the Day of Yahweh meant salvation for Israel and Judah, הוֹי הַמִּתְאַוִּים אֶת־יוֹם יְהוָה לָמָּה־זֶּה לָכֶם יוֹם יְהוָה הוּא־חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אוֹר, "Woe to those who desire the Day of Yahweh. Why this, that you [would want] the Day of Yahweh? It is darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18).

Most of the book of Amos consists of his descriptions of how and why Samaria and Jerusalem will be destroyed. However, he also introduces the concept of the remnant, which is repeated throughout the Latter Prophets. The first two references are hardly reassuring: Samaria's residents will be so annihilated that the remaining ones can all fit on a couch (Amos 3:12); a village of 1000 will be reduced to 100 and a village of 100 reduced to 10 (Amos 5:1). There will be a few left, but the point is that it will be so few.

The first positive remnant concept occurs in Amos 7:1–9 (though not treated by Hasel). Twice Yahweh shows Amos the destruction he will bring upon Israel. Each time Amos cries out, אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה סְלַח־נָא מִי יָקוּם יַעֲקֹב כִּי קָטֹן הוּא, "Lord Yahweh, please forgive. How can Jacob stand

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[28] Ibid., 145.

[29] Ibid., 140.

[30] Ibid., 147–73.

[31] Ibid., 173–215.

for he is small?" Both times Yahweh נִחַם, "has compassion". However small their numbers, they will not be completely destroyed because of Yahweh's mercy and forgiveness.

Amos 9:1–10 is a picture of widespread annihilation upon Israel. Even here, destruction will not be complete. כִּי לֹא הַשְׁמֵיד אַשְׁמִיד אֶת־בֵּית יַעֲקֹב נְאֻם־יְהוָה, "Yet I will not completely destroy the house of Jacob, the utterance of Yahweh." The next verses (Amos 9:11–15) describe the future restoration of that remnant. They will be safe in the land, David's dynasty will be restored, and they will possess the lands of the nations.

Further, Amos encourages individuals within Israel to become part of the remnant and not be destroyed in language that prefigures Zeph 2:3, כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּרְשׁוּנִי וִחְיוּ, "For thus says Yahweh to the house of Israel: Seek me and live" (Amos 5:4); דִּרְשׁוּ־טוֹב וְאַל־רָע לְמַעַן תִּחְיוּ וִיהִי־כֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת אִתְּכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲמַרְתֶּם שִׂנְאוּ־רָע וְאֶהֱבוּ טוֹב וְהַצִּיגוּ בַשַּׁעַר מִשְׁפָּט אוּלַי יְחֻנֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת שְׁאֵרִית יוֹסֵף, "Seek good and not evil in order that you might live. Thus Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be with you just as you say. Hate evil and love good and establish judgment in the gate. Perhaps Yahweh, the God of hosts, will show favor to the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:14–15).

Hasel gives a much longer treatment of Isaiah, with the same themes repeated throughout. The concept of the remnant has many facets and applications. Though some passages just note that there will be survivors, in general "the remnant possesses the immense innate potentialities of renewal, regeneration, and restoration."[32]

There are five potential remnant passages in Zephaniah: (1) 2:3 אוּלַי תִּסָּתְרוּ בְּיוֹם אַף־יְהוָה ("Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the anger of Yahweh"); (2) 2:7 וְהָיָה חֶבֶל לִשְׁאֵרִית

[32] Ibid., 384.

בֵּית יְהוּדָה ("It will become a territory for the remnant of the house of Judah"); (3) 2:9 שְׁאֵרִית עַמִּי יְבָזּוּם וְיֶתֶר גּוֹי יִנְחָלוּם ("The remnant of my people will plunder them, a remainder of [my] nation will inherit them"); (4) 3:10 מֵעֵבֶר לְנַהֲרֵי־כוּשׁ עֲתָרַי בַּת־פּוּצַי יוֹבִלוּן מִנְחָתִי ("From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshippers, the daughters of my scattered ones will bring my offering"); (5) 3:12 וְהִשְׁאַרְתִּי בְקִרְבֵּךְ עַם עָנִי וָדָל ("And I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly").

2:3 and 3:12 are related since those referenced are called כָּל־עַנְוֵי הָאָרֶץ and עַם עָנִי וָדָל, respectively. Since the עַנְוֵי הָאָרֶץ in 2:3 could hope to be hidden from Yahweh's wrath and the עַם עָנִי וָדָל in 3:12 are those left in the land after that same destruction, both verses describe a remnant who are spared on the Day of Yahweh and will be restored in the land.

2:7 and 2:9 both use שְׁאֵרִית. In the context, it refers to the same group spared in 2:3 and restored in 3:12. The remnant will not only live in Jerusalem, but will also spread out into vacated neighboring territory.

When 3:10 is exegeted later in this chapter, it will be seen that, despite those who see the return of Babylonian exiles, this group refers to restored Gentiles who come to Jerusalem to join the remnant in worshipping Yahweh.

Zephaniah 3:8

לָכֵן חַכּוּ־לִי *Therefore wait for me*. The function of לָכֵן was identified in chapter 4. To summarize its use here, לָכֵן connects 3:8 with what precedes; it does not mark a brand new section. It was also shown that it need not connect to just the present context; in this case it connects to all of 2:5–3:7. Combined with the masculine plural imperative that follows and matches the masculine plural imperatives of 2:3, 3:8 completes a loop. 2:3 encourages the faithful to seek Yahweh because (2:4) destruction is coming on the entire earth (2:5–3:7). Therefore (3:8) since destruction is coming upon the entire earth (2:5–3:7), the faithful are told to

wait upon Yahweh. כִּי, "for", and לָכֵן, "therefore", in 3:8 are equivalent. The former introduces the reason after one imperative and the latter refers to the previously given reason to justify the second imperative.

חַכּוּ־לִי is easy to translate, but its force has been questioned in scholarship. Many claim that there is a pejorative meaning to this phrase, that it is not hopeful, but menacing. For most, this is simply a contextual decision. Vlaardingerbroek claims that following 3:7, לָכֵן, "therefore", it introduces what would be "scarcely be anything other than" a declaration of doom.[33] Wright paraphrases it as, "Wait for God to bring you trouble."[34]

Renaud notes that חכה ordinarily has a positive connotation. "Introduite par le traditionnel 'c'est pourquoi', la sentence, formulée en trois vers, tombe comme un couperet: 'je vais déverser ma colère.'"[35] Since its force is normally favorable, its use here is "une note de cruelle ironie."[36]

Similarly, Eaton declares that חַכּוּ־לִי is ordinarily the "attitude of the true disciple." In this context, however, it "is used with menacing irony."[37] Irsigler also recognizes the normally positive connotation—"So kann der Eindruck entstehen, dass in Zef 3,8a von einem positiven 'Harren auf JHWH' die Rede ist"—but insists that the context of 3:6–7, combined with the opening of this verse makes it a warning.[38] Ryou claims that a message of salvation is impossible here because "it allows no answer to be given to vv. 6–7."[39]

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[33] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 184.

[34] Wright, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 89.

[35] Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 243.

[36] Ibid., 243.

[37] Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 149.

[38] Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 342.

[39] Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 276.

This approach runs counter to the ordinary meaning of חכה. In examining its usage in the HB, *TDOT* contends, "In narrative texts, the word is used only in a neutral sense (2 K. 7:9, 9:3; Job 32:4)."[40] Here it denotes simply allowing time to pass before something happens or some action is taken. It takes on greater significance when Yahweh is the indirect object.

> The use of *chākhāh* is theologically significant primarily where the waiting and hoping is somehow concerned with the preservation or restoration of the historical solidarity between Yahweh and "Israel." It is in this sense that the devout wait "for Yahweh," i.e., for a demonstration of his help (Ps. 33:20; Isa. 30:18b; 64:3[4]) or judgment (Zeph. 3:8), for his counsel (Ps. 106:13) or the fulfillment of his word (Isa. 8:17; Hab. 2:3; Dnl. 12:12), or are called upon to wait (Hab 2:3; Zeph. 3:8).[41]

TDOT also claims a great deal of overlap between חכה and other words in its semantic field. "The 'classic' verbs of waiting and hoping are *ḥkh*, *yḥl*, and *qwh*. Their semantic development has so converged through centuries of analogous use that distinct translation has little more than stylistic significance."[42] So although חכה occurs only fourteen times in the HB, all the words in the semantic field appear consistently in a positive connotation.

> The verb *chākhāh*, used in narrative texts as a neutral term for "wait," entered into the language of sacral poetry at a date that cannot now be determined. Here, together with *yḥl*, *qwh*, *bāṭach*, and other words for waiting, trusting, and hoping, it was used initially in the expression of confidence addressed to God in the Psalms of Lament ("I/we want for you"); later it was used in communal confession of confidence ("I waited for Yahweh"), and in macarism ("blessed is he who waits for Yahweh"). Referring to the devout as "those who wait for Yahweh" also derives from the language of the Psalms. The prophets beginning with Isaiah made use of the expression; here "waiting for Yahweh" often means waiting for the fulfillment of the prophetic message. What distinguishes *chākhāh* from other words for waiting and hoping is just this prophetic use of the idiom: what is needed is patient "waiting" and "endurance" with Yahweh.[43]

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[40] C. Barth, "חָכָה," *TDOT*, 4: 362.

[41] Ibid., 4:362.

[42] Ibid., 4:362.

[43] Ibid., 4:363.

Therefore, the typical use of חכה in the HB argues against a pejorative connotation. Scholars who posit such are forced to acknowledge that חכה does not have this force elsewhere in the HB. Rather they appeal to the use of irony to heighten the menacing nature of the verse. This is based on preconceptions regarding the structure and flow of the book, not on the word or verse itself. All things being equal, it is better to take words as conveying their common, ordinary sense. Francis Andersen argues for "salient readings—those that make the first claim on the listener/reader."[44]

Conversely, other scholars allow the normal meaning of the word to guide their exegesis. Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch contend that for חַכּוּ־לִי to apply to the unrighteous of Judah would "be at variance with the usage of the language, inasmuch as *chikkâh lay^ehōvâh* is only used for waiting in a believing attitude for the Lord and His help."[45]

Most who see חַכּוּ־לִי as positive recognize that the wicked of 3:6–7 are not the addresses of the imperative. As shown earlier in this chapter, Roberts, Boo Heflin, Kenneth Barker and Waylon Bailey, and Mark Hahlen and Clay Ham likewise view the righteous alone as addressees and consider the connotation hopeful.[46]

Uniquely, Sabottka turns Renaud's *cruelle ironie* around and contends that the tension creates a surprising message of healing within judgment.[47]

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[44] Francis I. Andersen, "Salience, Implicature, Ambiguity, and Redundancy in Clause-Clause Relationships in Biblical Hebrew," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (ed. Robert D. Bergen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 99.

[45] Keil and Delitzsch, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:153.

[46] Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 484; Hahlen and Ham, *Minor Prophets*, 233; Heflin, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 148.

[47] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 113.

Ball avoids deciding the force of חַכּוּ־לִי and the identity of its referent by declaring, "Its ambiguity in this place seems to be intentional."[48] To claim ambiguity merely when one has trouble deciding the correct answer is not a valid application of the concept. Intentional ambiguity is a valid device, but the resulting ambiguity must actually be trying to accomplish something.[49] Ball does not indicate what this ambiguity would be attempting to communicate.

If this verse were disconnected from its context, nothing would motivate a commentator to take this expression as anything other than positive and hopeful. The preconceptions that scholars bring to the text suggest other alternatives. They might ask, "Could the normally positive חכה be used ironically as a literary device to indicate judgment?" Certainly it could and the fact that this word never has a negative connotation elsewhere would heighten that irony. Against that possibility are these responses: (1) While it is valid for context to help interpret difficult words, it is something else to allow context to turn the clear meaning upside down. (2) The ordinary force of חַכּוּ־לִי fits the context when the other pieces are properly interpreted.

Chapter 4 demonstrated that the "humble of the land who perform his judgment" of 2:3 are the addressees here. Therefore a positive connotation would actually be expected and the pejorative would seem quite out of place. The loop created between 3:8 and 2:3 make "wait for me" and "seek Yahweh" parallel to each other. Since no one would expect "seek Yahweh" to be taken ironically, neither should "wait for me."

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[48] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 231.

[49] See, for example, the treatment in Paul R. Raabe, "Deliberate Ambiguity in the Psalter" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991): 213–227.

As *TDOT* already noted, חכה resides in a semantic field that includes other verbs meaning "wait" and "hope". Of its fourteen instances in the HB, only four other times is Yahweh the indirect object.[50]

Ps 33:20 נַפְשֵׁנוּ חִכְּתָה לַיהוָה עֶזְרֵנוּ וּמָגִנֵּנוּ הוּא *Our soul waits for Yahweh, he is our help and our shield*. The phrase is used in this context synonymously with ירא, "fear" (Ps 33:18), יחל, "wait, hope" (Ps 33:18, 22), and בטח, "trust" (Ps 33:21). For those who wait, Yahweh delivers from death and causes to live during famine.

Isa 8:17 וְחִכִּיתִי לַיהוָה הַמַּסְתִּיר פָּנָיו מִבֵּית יַעֲקֹב וְקִוֵּיתִי־לוֹ *And I will wait for Yahweh, the one who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him*. This context is quite relevant to Zephaniah. In the midst of coming trouble, Isaiah declares his intention to cling to Yahweh.

Isa 30:18 וְלָכֵן יְחַכֶּה יְהוָה לַחֲנַנְכֶם וְלָכֵן יָרוּם לְרַחֶמְכֶם כִּי־אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפָּט יְהוָה אַשְׁרֵי כָּל־חוֹכֵי לוֹ *And therefore Yahweh waits to show favor to you, and therefore he will rise to have compassion on you, for Yahweh [is] a God of justice. Happy [are] all the ones who wait for him*. This is similar to the context of Ps 33:20. Isaiah counsels those who trust in military might to instead trust in Yahweh. Vince Medina notes that in the middle of an announcement of judgment, the exhortation to wait contains "a note of promise. It announces YHWH's intention to show mercy to Zion after a period of suffering."[51]

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[50] Ps 106:13, לֹא־חִכּוּ לַעֲצָתוֹ, "they did not wait for his counsel," is problematic. The context is the incident of the golden calf. Here "wait" could simply reflect that the people made the calf because they did not want to wait any longer for Moses to come down from the mountain. When he did finally come down, he had the tablets of Yahweh's commands. This might be the meaning of "his counsel." Regardless it does not seem to fit well with the other texts.

[51] G. Vincent Medina, "Theme and Structure in Isaiah 28–33: A Unified and Coherent Reading Centered on Chapter 30" (Ph.D. diss. Concordia Seminary, 2009), 124.

וּמֵעוֹלָם לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ לֹא הֶאֱזִינוּ עַיִן לֹא־רָאָתָה אֱלֹהִים זוּלָתֶךָ יַעֲשֶׂה לִמְחַכֵּה־לוֹ Isa 64:4 [MT 64:3]

And from eternity no one has heard, no one has given ear, no eye has seen [any] God except you. He acts for the ones who wait for him. This is a more generic use of the phrase and gives us little with which to further define the concept.

Whatever else is going on, the concept that *wait* basically means enduring the passage of time still seems to apply. Believers are encouraged to not bail out when trouble comes but to believe that eventually Yahweh will come to their aid. This is a confidence that puts hope and trust in Yahweh.

Zephaniah makes a further contribution to the meaning of what it is to wait on Yahweh. Understanding that 3:8 loops back to 2:3 adds an active component to waiting. Waiting also means seeking. The faithful also enthusiastically seek the face of Yahweh in the day of trouble that they will receive confidence and actual help from him.

נְאֻם־יְהוָה *The utterance of Yahweh*. It has often been noted that this phrase frequently begins or ends a prophetic oracle. However, Santiago Bretón's survey assigns this type of use to only 119 out of its 350 occurrences in the Latter Prophets.[52] In Zephaniah's case, it seems that his particular style is to use it somewhere within his oracle, sometimes near the beginning (1:10; 2:9; 3:8) but also at other points (1:2; 1:3).

In 3:8, its position in the middle of the clause near the beginning of the verse may be emphatic. *TDOT* notes, "It is also a mark of lively rhetorical style that the Yahweh utterance formula can even stand parenthetically within a clause."[53] As this verse does lead off the climax of 2:1–3:13, an emphatic function would not be surprising.

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[52] Santiago Bretón, *Vocación y Misión: Formulario Profético* (AnBib 111; Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1987), 213–221.

[53] H. Eising, "נאֻם," *TDOT*, 9:111.

As for meaning, נְאֻם always serves to remind the audience that it is Yahweh who is speaking and authenticates the text. Bretón comments, "Gracias a la firma el oráculo profético obtiene toda la autoridad del Dios fiel a su palabra." It is used with threats, predictions of the future, identification of who Yahweh is, and messages of salvation. "Thus *n*^{e}*ʾum YHWH*, with its many associated statements, is a confession of the self-revealing God of Israel."[54]

לְיוֹם קוּמִי לְעַד *For the day of my arising for prey*. Twenty other times in the HB, Yahweh is described as arising or being encouraged to arise. In all cases but two (Ps 132:8=2 Chr 6:41, which encourage Yahweh to arise and enter his resting place in the newly built temple), he is imaged as rising either to strike enemies (the speaker's enemies, Yahweh's, or both) or to bring help to those who need it or both. Thirteen references are in the Psalms and are mostly generic, not applicable to a specific situation.

Yahweh rises in the Latter Prophets only in Isaiah (2:19, 21; 28:21; 33:10). As in Zephaniah, he rises to bring judgment on the earth. The form in Zephaniah—an infinitive construct with a first person singular pronoun—is unique, but carries the same meaning as the Qal imperfect first singular verb in Isa 33:10: Yahweh will arise to mete out judgment.

That judgment is in view is strengthened by the phrase לְעַד, "for prey". The meaning of this phrase resists consensus. MT notes this is a *hapax legomenon*. These consonants otherwise appear together pointed as לְעֵד, "as a witness", or לָעַד, "forever". LXX, along with most EV and scholars read "as a witness."[55] Vulg. and a couple of scholars go with "forever."[56] The problem

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[54] Ibid., 9:113.

[55] EV: NIV, JPS, NASB, NAB, NJB, NRSV. Edler, *Das Kerygma des Propheten Zefanja*, 21; House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama* , 132; Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 73; Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, 65; O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 257; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 209; Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 286–87; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 131; J. M. P. Smith, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 247; R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 139;

[56] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 133.

with both of these options is the MT pointing. "As a witness" would have *sere* under ע rather than *patach*. Every occurrence of "forever" has a *qamets* under ל instead of *sheva*; this may indicate the presence of the definite article.

BDB and *HALOT* list a second meaning for עַד, "booty" or "prey". Both "booty" and "forever" are thought to derive from עדה, "advance", since *forever* is advancing time and *booty* is advancing on the enemy. The latter occurs only in Gen 49:27 and Isa 33:23.[57] "Booty" or "plunder" is used in one EV and by a couple of scholars.[58] The advantage of "prey" is that, if עד is considered indefinite, it matches the MT pointing.

Ben Zvi suggests that "forever", witness", and "booty" are all present in an intentional ambiguity.[59] This is perhaps too subtle for the actual audience to appreciate.

A fourth option, "throne", is suggested by *DCH*.[60] This is based on the definition of *ʿd* as "throne" or "throne room" in Ugaritic.[61] Dahood translates 3:8 as "Therefore wait for me, word of the Lord, till the day I arise from the throne."[62] As attractive as this theory is, it suffers from two problems. (1) Dahood's other examples of עַד as "throne" in the HB are disputable. To make Ps 89:38 work, for example, he must emend the text. (2) קוּם followed by לְ never means "rise from". This preposition with קוּם always marks either a dative case or an infinitive construct in a periphrastic construction.

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[57] *BDB*, 723, which also lists Isa 9:5! *HALOT*, 2:786–89.

[58] ESV; Gerleman, *Zephanja*, 55; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 180–81;

[59] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 220–23.

[60] Who also sees "booty" as a strong possibility. *DCH*, 6:269–70.

[61] Cyrus Herzl Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (AnOr 38; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 453.

[62] Mitchell Dahood, "The Linguistic Position of Ugaritic in the Light of Recent Discoveries," in *Sacra Pagina: Miscellanea Biblica Congressus Internationalis Catholici de re Biblica* (ed J. Coppens, A. Descamps, and É. Massaux; BETL 12–13. Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1959), 1:277.

The case for "booty" or "prey" can be summarized as: (1) It matches the pointing of the MT. (2) Whenever Yahweh arises in the prophets, it is to mete out judgment. (3) The entire earth will be consumed (3:8) and Judah will occupy Philistia as the spoils of war (2:6–7).[63] Arguments against are: (1) This meaning is based on its use in but two other verses. (2) Throughout Zephaniah, the Day of Yahweh indicates the demolition of other nations, not their capture.[64] (3) According to 2:11, the remainder of the nations that are not destroyed will be converted in their locations, not brought to Jerusalem as spoils of war.

The reasons for "witness" are: (1) It only involves re-pointing the vowels, not the consonantal text. (2) The use of מִשְׁפָּט on the next line suggests a courtroom scene in which "witness" would be an appropriate meaning.[65] The arguments against are: (1) Re-pointing the text should be avoided when the MT vowels make sense. (2) It mixes the metaphor within the verse; it makes Yahweh both witness/complainant and judge/executioner. (3) The courtroom scene is not as strong as proponents claim and exists nowhere else in Zephaniah.[66]

In the end the fact that there is a coherent translation based on MT pointing is compelling. Therefore, "for prey" seems to be the best translation.

כִּי מִשְׁפָּטִי לֶאֱסֹף גּוֹיִם לְקָבְצִי מַמְלָכוֹת *For my judgment is to assemble nations, to gather kingdoms*. Chapter 4 demonstrated the necessity of taking כִּי when it follows the main clause as connective and that following an imperative it meets the requirements of a motivational clause. Chapter 6 will examine this relationship further.

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[63] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 182.

[64] Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 324.

[65] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 221; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 215–16.

[66] Keil and Delitzsch, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:153–54. This does not bother Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 186–87.

Commentators suggest three options for understanding Yahweh's מִשְׁפָּט: (1) It means "my judgment," which is equivalent to punishment.[67] Some claim the judgment is against Jerusalem, others against the nations. (2) It means "my decision."[68] Even here, most scholars interpret that decision as a judicial sentence. (3) Using another meaning of מִשְׁפָּט, it means "my right." In other words, Yahweh says, "I have the right to" gather the nations, etc.[69]

My right seems foreign to the context. Nowhere else has Yahweh been asserting the correctness of his actions; that fact has been self evident. Taking מִשְׁפָּט in terms of the judgment that Zephaniah will momentarily describe as being poured out on the nations seems to be the best option. But perhaps it deserves to be expanded a bit.

That 3:8 is looped back upon 2:3 has already been established. It is also worth noting that Yahweh's מִשְׁפָּט is referenced in both verses. Though a word with such semantic range does not have to mean the same thing in both instances, it is worth considering how their uses might be related.

The humble of the land פָּעֲלוּ מִשְׁפָּטוֹ, not from a sense of grudging obedience, but because they are on the same page as Yahweh with respect to what needs to happen in their city and the surrounding nations. They agree with Yahweh's punishment upon the wicked and they are grieved by the sin and corruption of their own leaders. The humble do more than live rightly and seek Yahweh, they also long for the day that he responds to the world by his מִשְׁפָּט.

The roots אסף and קבץ are synonyms used frequently to refer to bringing together groups of people, both for assembling individuals into a group and bringing one or more groups to a place.

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[67] Ball, *Rhetorical Study*, 232–33; Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 126; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 242; Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles Against the Nations*, 16.

[68] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 77; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 110; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 181.

[69] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 186.

There is no particular connotation present in the words themselves as they are used for positive and negative gatherings and, as here, are used together stylistically to signify the entire earth by piling up terms. The use of קבץ here is reminiscent of Joel 3:2, 11 [MT 4:2, 11] where the nations will be gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat to be judged by Yahweh. In that context, the specific sin of the nations was that they exiled Yahweh's people. In Zephaniah, it is more generic.

One question asked throughout this dissertation has been: Who is going to receive Yahweh's punishment? To again use Anderson's *salient readings* approach, if read in a vacuum, foreign nations—those other than Israel or Judah—would be the referent. Even the larger context fits this interpretation as other nations and cities have been singled out for his wrath throughout the book.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, many commentators dismiss the concept of foreign nations being in view here. While there are different reasons to do so, the common factor is interpreting 3:8 only in the most immediate context of the oracle against Jerusalem in 3:1–7. However, this completely ignores the loop created with 2:3 by the resumption of masculine plural imperatives. The context must be wider than 3:1–7. Further, the fact that 3:1–7 is parallel to 2:5–15 (as evidenced by the repeated הוי) indicates that Jerusalem cannot be the sole target of Yahweh's wrath, but that it may be included in his judgment against other nations.

Though foreign nations must be the starting point in 3:8, what of wicked Jerusalem? Though Judah is not specifically mentioned in this verse, by his structure and key terms, Zephaniah informs his readers that Jerusalem does not have any special status. Indeed, Judah, by her behavior, has been revealed to be one of the גּוֹיִם, "nations". Therefore, she will be included in the judgment upon the others.

לִשְׁפֹּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמִי כֹּל חֲרוֹן אַפִּי *To pour out upon them my indignation, all the heat of my wrath*. It is an uncertain transition from the most basic meaning of שׁפךְ, "to pour", to its use here. One of its more common figurative uses is when "to pour out blood" is used to describe massive slaughter; this is an easy move from literal to figurative. Several times the term is used to describe a person pouring out his heart or life. Lam 2:9 makes the metaphor explicit by describing this action as כַּמַּיִם, "like water".

When Yahweh is the subject, שׁפךְ can describe either blessing or curse. Commenting on the former, *TDOT* states,

> The fact that *rûaḥ* occasionally is "poured out" like water…does not mean that it should be thought of as "a kind of fluid." The fundamental notion seems rather to be that of movement, which can be expressed not only by *špk* but also by a variety of other dynamic verbs.[70]

It is a little less obvious how anger or wrath is poured out, though this is a quite common use of שׁפךְ.[71] In the wide array of words used to describe anger in the HB, many of them also mean or are derived from the concept of "fire" or "burn" (חָרוֹן, אֵשׁ, לַהַב, בער, חֵמָה).[72] Though the expression that Yahweh will pour out his wrath is well attested in the HB, there is no literal matching of שׁפךְ with words for "fire" or "burn". Therefore, the figurative language does not appear to draw on an example of real life pouring of fire for its imagery.

Rather, the concept of pouring out wrath is probably intended to make the abstract real. Hos 5:10 declares עֲלֵיהֶם אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ כַּמַּיִם עֶבְרָתִי, "upon them I will pour out like water my wrath."

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[70] R. Liwak, "שָׁפַךְ," *TDOT*, 15:438–39.

[71] "To pour out" בוז, "contempt": Job 12:12; Ps 107:40. רָעָה, "disaster": Jer 14:16. זַאַם, "indignation": Ps 69:25; Ezek 21:36; 22:31.

[72] The most common one used with שׁפךְ is חֵמָה, "burning": Ps 79:6; Isa 42:25; Jer 6:11; 10:25; Lam 2:4 (חֲמָתוֹ שָׁפַךְ כָּאֵשׁ, "he poured out his burning like fire"); Ezek 7:8; 9:8; 14:9; 20:8, 13, 21, 33, 36; 22:22; 30:15; 36:18. Also used are חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ, "heat of my anger," Lam 4:11 and עֶבְרָה, "burning anger," Hos 5:10.

His feelings will become tangible. Yahweh's wrath is not a mere feeling of annoyance, but it results in action against sin and disobedience.[73]

In one sense to pour out wrath may intentionally invoke the likewise common metaphor of the cup of Yahweh's wrath. Raabe's extensive excursus in his commentary on Obadiah demonstrates that this metaphor is tied into the shame and helplessness of intoxication.[74] This metaphor is much more easily related to real life situations. Though the mixing of the metaphors is imprecise, it is not a huge leap from drinking the cup to having the cup poured out upon the nations.[75] In Ps 75:8 [MT 75:9] the cup is נגר, "poured", out, using a rare synonym of שׁפך.

Several concepts are wrapped up in the concept of pouring out wrath. Yahweh is angered by sin, but despite the claims of some in Jerusalem (Zeph 1:12), his anger produces action. But it must be remembered that Yahweh's punishment upon the earth is not capricious but the result of his wrath which is itself backed by his righteous judgment.

Bruce Baloian's study on the anger of God paints a contrast with the same human emotion. Human anger is often quick and not thought out.[76] Yahweh, however, is "slow to anger" or "patient".[77] The human motivations for anger are too often frustration, anticipation of loss, irritation, and pride.[78] Yahweh's motivations are found in his righteousness, his protection of the

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[73] "In an expression like 'pouring out his wrath', wrath is very concrete' the expression does not mean 'to speak to someone in anger, to bury him under angry words', but 'to punish someone severely in his wrath'." Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 187.

[74] Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24a; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 211–213.

[75] In Psa 75:8 [MT 75:9] the cup is נגר, "poured", out, using a rare synonym of שׁפך.

[76] Bruce Edward Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament* (AUSTR 99; New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 20–21.

[77] Ibid., 67.

[78] Ibid., 29–43.

covenant and his people, and his legal right to display his wrath.[79] Further Yahweh's anger has purpose in that it is intended to bring a change in the human condition.[80]

Throughout Zephaniah, the outcome of the wrath of Yahweh is the removal of wickedness from the entire earth. His judgment motivates him to act on behalf of the covenant and of those who are still faithful.

כִּי בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי תֵּאָכֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ *For in the fire of my zeal all the earth will be consumed.*

This line is repeated from 1:18 with the only difference in that there it was in the third person. Though redaction critics contend that a later editor was responsible for its placement here, it forms a fitting summary to the verse as it stands.

Its repeated use ties the prologue into the main appeal. More than just background to understanding the Day of Yahweh, the entire chapter is inserted into 3:8 by the use of this repetition. The similar content indicates that this second כִּי clause does not constitute a separate motivation from the first, but an elaboration of it.

קִנְאָתִי, traditionally translated "my jealousy", describes Yahweh's motivation in destroying the earth. The English word *jealousy* covers only part of the semantic range of the root קנא, which also includes "zeal" and "passion".[81] When applied to humans, jealousy is often related to envy and, for the most part, the HB speaks negatively of this trait.[82] At times, however, קנא describes human emotion for which *jealousy* is not a proper translation. In Num 25:11, Yahweh declares that Phinehas בְּקַנְאוֹ אֶת־קִנְאָתִי, "was zealous with my zeal," when he slew the sinning

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[79] Ibid., 71–98.

[80] Ibid., 98–124.

[81] *BDB*, 320.

[82] See Gen 26:14; 30:1; 37:11; Num 5:14, 15, 18, 25, 29, 30; 11:29; Job 5:2; Ps 37:1; 73:3; 106:16; Prov 3:31; 6:34; 14:36; 23:17; 24:1; 24:19; 27:4; Eccl 4:4; 9:6; Song 8:6; Isa 11:13; Ezek 35:11.

Israelite and the Midianite woman with him. Elijah said קַנֵּא קִנֵּאתִי לַיהוָה, "I was very zealous for Yahweh (1 Kgs 19:10, 14). Jehu obeyed the commands of a prophet בְּקִנְאָתִי, "in my zeal" (2 Kgs 10:16).

Though EV are prone to use "jealousy" for קנא in reference to Yahweh, it is used in only six contexts which indicates his displeasure at his people worshipping gods other than himself.[83] Even here, it would probably not reflect the intent of the authors to ascribe jealousy to Yahweh "in a petty sense."[84] In every other case, "zeal" or "passion" would more than acceptably fit the context. Most often, his zeal is employed in his punishing wrath (Deut 29:19; Isa 42:13; Ezek 36:5; among others). Yahweh is passionate for the welfare of his people and will therefore act on their behalf (for example Isa 9:6; 37:32; Joel 2:18; Zech 1:14; 8:2). On occasion, his zeal burns against other nations (Isa 26:11; Ezek 35:5–6).

Yahweh does not mete out dispassionate justice simply because it is his duty to do so. Rather, he desires to protect the covenant that he made with his people. This covenant is part of his very being and drives him to intense action to accomplish his aims.[85]

Zephaniah 3:9

כִּי־אָז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל־עַמִּים שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה *For at that time, I will turn upon the peoples a pure lip.*

Critical to the interpretation of this verse is the proper understanding of כִּי־אָז. The analysis of כִּי in chapter 4 demonstrates that it must be connective with what precedes and any interpretation that views this phrase as merely emphatic and capable of beginning a new section is simply inaccurate. Instead, this is the second motivation for the faithful to wait upon Yahweh. The

[83] Deut 32:16, 21; 1 Kgs 14:22; Ps 78:58; Ezek 8:3, 5; 16:38, 42; 23:25.

[84] Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, 181.

[85] For more discussion see Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, 181–83.

presence of אָז does not change its connective value.[86] However, it does indicate time, which needs to be addressed.

Some commentators interpret 3:9 based on its relationship to 3:8 as defined by a perceived time value of the opening כִּי־אָז. Some view 3:9 as sequential to 3:8, others as simultaneous. Are these assumptions warranted?

BDB gives translations of "at that time" or "then" for אָז. It categorizes its functions as either temporal or logical. The latter appears mostly in conditional sentences, whether formal or with a suppressed apodosis. *BDB* does not say whether this implies simultaneous or sequential action.[87] *DCH* contends that the sequential is absolutely not in view.[88]

Against *DCH*, there are instances of אָז that, though logical in form, are also sequential in time (Exod 12:24, וּמַלְתָּה אֹתוֹ אָז יֹאכַל בּוֹ, "When you circumcise him, then he may eat of it"). However, these are coincidental to the logical sequence. There are no occasions where it is used to indicate a non-logical, temporal sequence.

In 3:9, there is no obvious logical sequence being completed. 3:8 does not set up an apodosis that 3:9 completes. Rather the כִּי clauses indicate that destruction and conversion are parallel rather than sequential.

Parallel implies simultaneous action. One example among many is found in 2 Kgs 8:22, וַיִּפְשַׁע אֱדוֹם מִתַּחַת יַד־יְהוּדָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אָז תִּפְשַׁע לִבְנָה בָּעֵת הַהִיא, "And Edom rebelled against Judah until this day. At that time Libnah rebelled." The writer is not portraying a sequence, but two actions at the same time. 3:8 defined a date for Yahweh to act: לְיוֹם קוּמִי, "for the day of my

[86] Chapter 4 demonstrated that none of the appearances of כִּי־אָז could be considered non-connective.

[87] *BDB*, 23.

[88] "Not in the sense of 'subsequently, next'." *DCH*, 1:167.

arising." When Yahweh arises he will judge the nations. Further, he will convert peoples. The fact that this conversion is given in a כִּי clause parallel to his judgment indicates that it is at the same time and should not be read as a sequence of events.

הפך often takes on the nuance of "overthrow", but simply means "turn".[89] BDB gives "turn", "turn over", "overturn" as in "destroy", "turn around", and "transform" as options for the Qal form as is found here.[90] R. Smith's suggestion that its employment here "expressed a sudden change" is unwarranted.[91] He illegitimately transfers force from those contexts in which הפך indicates a sudden change, but because of some other feature of the text.

Perhaps better is the nuance of overturning, that is, changing from one condition to the opposite, that often occurs with this word. Yahweh turned Balaam's curse into a blessing (Deut 23:6; Neh 13:2), the Jews were turned from victims to victors (Est 9:1), mourning is turned into dancing (Ps 30:12; Jer 31:13), dancing is turned into mourning (Lam 5:15; Amos 8:10), sickness is turned to health (Ps 41:4), a cultivated vine becomes wild (Jer 2:21), justice is turned into wormwood (Amos 5:7; 6:12). Though the previous condition is not mentioned here, readers would assume it. Therefore, it would be understood as changing their lip from polluted to pure.

The use of אֶל־ with this verb is unusual. The only other time this combination appears is in Josh 8:20, נֶהְפַּךְ אֶל־הָרוֹדֵף, "they turned themselves back to the pursuers" (the Niphal form of הפך is reflexive here, and thus not exactly parallel to 3:9). הפך ordinarily indicates its indirect object by לְ or עַל.[92] Waltke and O'Connor claim that אֶל can operate as "a simple dative" which I

[89] As in Lev 13:3ff; 1 Sam 10:6; 25:12; 2 Kgs 5:26, among others.

[90] *BDB*, 245.

[91] R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 141.

[92] לְ is also used to mark what the direct object is changed into. In this verse, lips will not be turned into people.

suspect is happening here: it marks those upon whom the action will fall.[93] According to *BHS*, the *wādi murabbaʿāt* substitute עַל for אֶל, indicating this is their comprehension.

עַם is one of the most common nouns in the HB, used more than 1800 times. Its semantic range is similar to its use in English: groups of humans in a room, a national collection, the population of the entire earth.[94] While it may have ambiguity in some verses, it clearly refers to foreign nations in 3:9. There are only 177 occurrences of עַם in the plural absolute as here, which almost never refers to Israel or groups within it, but to foreign nations.[95] The *peoples* are where Israel was chosen from (Deut 7:6), where they will be scattered to and return from (Ezek 11:17), and those who will come to Jerusalem to worship (Zech 8:22). Occasionally, it is used in parallel with גּוֹיִם (Isa 25:7). Therefore, any suggestion that עַמִּים could refer to Jerusalem is invalid.[96]

עַמִּים is missing the article. Articles are commonly dropped in poetry and this form appears in other prophetic passages with a determined meaning (Isa 11:10). The lack of an article is not evidence that the original text read עַמִּי as suggested by *BHS* and some scholars and for which there is no textual evidence.[97] This is not a textual decision, but an interpretive one. *BHS* cites a few manuscripts from *wādi murabbaʿāt* with the article and *Tg. Neb.* includes it as well, signaling this is how they understood the text.

שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה is a unique phrase, though its translation is simple enough. Ben Zvi takes exception to any rendering of "lip" or "lips", because he contends that שָׂפָה in the singular can

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[93] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 194.

[94] E. Lipinski, "עַם," *TDOT*, 11:174–77.

[95] While some uses might be considered ambiguous, there is only one clear instance where עַמִּים refers to people in Israel (1 Kgs 22:28=2 Chr 18:27).

[96] For example, Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 83.

[97] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 78–79; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 192.

only mean "speech".[98] He is missing the metonymy that Zephaniah employs. Of course, "pure speech" is the ultimate idea. However, not only were Zephaniah's readers able to make the connection, I suspect that modern readers can as well if the translation remains "lip". Further, he is wrong in maintaining that the singular of שָׂפָה is never translated as "lip". On many occasions in Psalms and Proverbs, "lip" is the only acceptable rendering to make the word parallel to לֵב, "heart", or לָשׁוֹן, "tongue".[99]

The root ברר, used here as the Qal passive feminine singular participle בְּרוּרָה, has a range of related, yet distinct meanings. BDB gives "purge", "select", and "polish" as the meanings for the verb.[100] The related adjective בַּר and noun בֹּר is only translated as "clean" or "pure".[101] The group is used less frequently than the טהר set. In general, the latter is used mostly in contexts of ceremonial cleanness, but also to denote pure gold.

ברר, however, is never used in a ceremonial sense. It is used in parallel with צְדָקָה, "righteousness" (2 Sam 22:21, 25=Ps 18:21, 25); זַךְ, "pure" or "clean" (Job 11:4); נָקִי, "innocent" (Job 22:30 Ps 24:4); יָשָׁר, "right" (Ps 19:9). Therefore, the speech of the restored nations will be that of righteousness and purity, which is a prerequisite for calling upon Yahweh.

לִקְרֹא כֻלָּם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה *That all of them might call upon the name of Yahweh*. This is the first of two parallel expressions which detail the result of Yahweh's action. Each contains an infinitive construct with an attached לְ. It is very common for this construction to form a purpose

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[98] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 225–26.

[99] Ps 12:3; 120:2; Prov 12:9; 17:4; 26:24.

[100] *BDB*, 140.

[101] *BDB*, 141. There is also a noun בַּר which means "grain".

or result clause as it does here.[102] Given that these clauses are not describing a current reality, but a future possibility dependent on another action, it seems best to translate the infinitives modally.

To call upon the name of Yahweh is a common expression in the HB to indicate either worship or supplication.[103] At times the expression seems also to signify identification, especially in Genesis. Both Abraham and Isaac are often said to move to a new place and immediately build an altar to call upon the name of Yahweh (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25). When Elijah proposes a contest to the prophets of Baal, he says אֶקְרָא בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה, "I will call upon Yahweh" (1 Kgs 18:24). By this statement, Elijah also declares to whom he gives allegiance.

לְעָבְדוֹ שְׁכֶם אֶחָד *That (they) might serve him with one shoulder*. עבד, with Yahweh as its object, can mean either "serve" or "worship" and in many contexts is ambiguous. Following the remarks of clean lips and calling upon Yahweh, it is tempting to translate it as "worship" in this verse, as O'Connor does.[104] However, the "one shoulder" that follows makes more sense with "serve". Probably both are in view; it is not necessary to limit its semantic range here. The people will worship Yahweh, obey his commands, and perform as he directs. This constitutes their service. To keep the fuller sense of the word, "serve" is the best all purpose translation.

The idiom שְׁכֶם אֶחָד is literally "one shoulder". שְׁכֶם is used in the HB mostly to refer to the physical human shoulder. Even here, its transition to a metaphorical use is prefigured when one considers the passages that refer to someone doing work by carrying something on the shoulder (Gen 21:14, 15, 45; Ex 12:34; Josh 4:5; Judg 9:48). Ordinarily when is used to symbolize carrying a burden, it has a negative connotation (Gen 49:15; Ps 81:6 [MT 81:7]; Isa 9:4; [9:3];

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[102] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 606.

[103] Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 16:13; 21:33; 26:25; Deut 32:3; 1 Kgs 18:24; 2 Kgs 5:11; 1 Chr 16:8 (=Ps 105:1); Ps 99:6; 116:4, 13, 17; Isa 12:4; Lam 3:55; Joel 2:32 [MT 3:5].

[104] O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 258.

10:27; 14:25). In Isa 10:27 סֻבָּלוֹ מֵעַל שִׁכְמֶךָ, "burden from upon your shoulder," is parallel to וְעֻלּוֹ מֵעַל צַוָּארֶךָ, "yoke from upon your neck."

This is the only occurrence of שְׁכֶם אֶחָד, "one shoulder," in the HB.[105] While Vulg. and *Tg. Neb.* render it literally, LXX captures the sense of the idiom with ὑπὸ ζυγὸν ἕνα, "with one yoke," which conjures up an image of many people uniting their shoulders together to act as one. Though a yoke is never placed on a shoulder in the HB, I think Zephaniah's audience would have easily understood the image.

Scholars have long noticed a parallel between 3:9 and the story of the Tower of Babel. For שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה, "pure lip," *Tg. Neb.* substitutes ממלל חד, "one speech," which echoes Gen 11:1 in *Tg. Onq.*, והות כל ארעא לישן חד וממלל חד, "and the whole earth was one tongue and one speech."

In the HB the שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה, "pure lip," of Zeph 3:9 is contrasted with the שָׂפָה אֶחָת, "one lip," of Gen 11:1. Zephaniah conjures up the Tower of Babel story to provide a contrast between that earlier time and the future Day of Yahweh. At Babel, *one lip* was a symbol of their pride in desiring to make a name for themselves and their arrogance in attempting to reach heaven with their tower. Though Yahweh confused their language and scattered them through out the earth (which will be more significant in 3:10), he will bring the nations back together in the future, but as peoples of a *pure lip*.

Zephaniah 3:10

מֵעֵבֶר לְנַהֲרֵי־כוּשׁ *From beyond the rivers of Cush*. Though Cush (generally modern Ethiopia and parts of Sudan) was well known to Judah in trading and war, what was beyond it was

[105] Actually the phrase also appears in Gen 48:22, but there it means "one mountain," which is not relevant to this discussion.

unknown. Its rivers were the White Nile and Blue Nile, both of which feed Egypt's Nile River. Though Cush extended a bit beyond these rivers, no other countries further south or west were known to Judah.

For this reason, the mention of Cush is not as much because of any particular interest in that country, but because of what the phrase suggests. (1) It indicates that those who come are Gentiles, not Israelites. Samaria was exiled within the Assyrian empire which did not include Cush or anything beyond it. The future Babylonian exile likewise would send no Jews that far to the south. Nowhere in the HB are those from either Israel or Judah said to be sent to Cush, much less beyond it. (2) Further, it signifies one end of the known earth. The identical expression in Isa 18:1 describes a mysterious and otherwise unknown people. Twice in Esther (1:1 and 8:9), the ends of the Persian empire are described as וְעַד־כּוּשׁ מֵהֹדּוּ, "from India to Cush."

עֶתָרַי בַּת־פּוּצַי יוֹבִלוּן מִנְחָתִי *My supplicants, my daughter scattered ones will bring my offering*. Two key words, עֶתָרַי and פּוּצַי, are *hapax legomena*. Both the identity of these words and their grammatical function are disputed. Most EV and commentators see עֶתָרַי as a nominal form of the verb עתר, "to request" (of God), and פּוּצַי as a Qal passive participle of פּוּץ, "to scatter".[106] Berlin claims that most medieval Jewish commentaries treat these words as otherwise unknown place names, which seems unnecessary since their translation is not difficult.[107]

The identity of עֶתָרַי, "my supplicants," could be either the converted nations of 3:9 or the *scattered ones* of this verse. It describes people who make requests of Yahweh. Though many EV translate עֶתָרַי as "my worshippers," this is misleading. It never means simply "to worship".

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[106] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 198, gives infinitive or plural noun as possibilities. Even so, he acknowledges that the translation is the same.

[107] Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 135.

There is always an element of "prayer that can move God."[108] Ordinarily, when one brings a request to Yahweh, an offering is expected, as this verse anticipates.

בַּת־פּוּצַי is a construct chain which would read literally, "the daughter of my scattered ones." However, this wooden genitive masks the real meaning of the construct. On its face, *daughter* seems to have a figurative meaning; Yahweh is not only speaking to female descendants of a group. The expression parallels the appositional personification found in the expression בַּת־צִיּוֹן or בַּת יְרוּשָׁלָ͏ִם in 3:14 which I would translate "daughter Zion" and "daughter Jerusalem."[109] Similarly, the expression בַּת־עַמִּי occurs frequently in the prophets as a term of endearment by Yahweh for his people.[110]

It will be determined below that the scattered ones are other nations. Ordinarily, the endearing quality of בַּת is reserved for Israel or Judah. However, it is used in construct with other nations as well, though often in a negative reference.[111]

If בַּת is a term of endearment, then it takes on an adjectival function modifying פּוּצַי. As opposed to the more common *attributive* category (where the genitive modifies the construct noun), Waltke and O'Connor label this function *epexegetical*.[112] For both the attributive and epexegetical uses of the construct, a pronominal suffix necessarily attaches to the entire phrase. Therefore, "my daughter scattered ones" is the best English rendering that best captures the nuance of the Hebrew expression.[113]

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[108] E. Gerstenberger, "עָתַר," *TDOT*, 11:460.

[109] Also see Ps 9:14 [MT 9:15]; Isa 1:8; Jer 6:2; Lam 2:1; among dozens of others.

[110] Isa 22:4; Jer 4:11; 6:26; 8:11, 19, 21, 22, 23: 9:6; 14:17; Lam 2:11; 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10.

[111] Babylon is always negative: Ps 137:8; Isa 47:1, 5; Jer 50:42; 51:33; Zech 2:7 [Mt 2:11]. Egypt likewise always pejoratively: Jer 46:11, 19, 24. The most positive reference regards Tarshish in Isa 23:10.

[112] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 149–151.

[113] *HALOT*, 1:166. Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 142, prefers "fair" in place of "daughter", which is probably the right idea. I use "daughter" to stay more literal.

Since the two expressions עֶתָרַי and בַּת־פּוּצַי are not in construct with each other and there is no conjunction, then what is their function next to each other? If they are in apposition, then they could together be either the subject or the object of the main verb. If subject, then it becomes, "my supplicants, my daughter scattered ones will bring my offering," which is how most scholars take it. If object, then the peoples of 3:9 are presumed to be the implied subject, "they will bring my supplicants, my daughter scattered ones, as my offering."[114] In either case, the scattered ones would also be the supplicants. Yet a third possibility exists: that the first noun is the subject and the second noun the object, "my supplicants will bring my daughter scattered ones as my offering," making the supplicants equivalent to the peoples of 3:9 and the scattered ones Israelites or Judahites scattered by Assyria or Babylon.[115] This would parallel Isa 66:20, וְהֵבִיאוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֲחֵיכֶם מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם מִנְחָה לַיהוָה, "and they will bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to Yahweh."

The typical Hebrew sentence structure is verb + subject + object. Often either the subject or object is placed in front of the verb giving subject + verb + object or object + verb + subject. Gesenius also allows for a less common subject + object + verb, but acknowledges the difficulty it creates.[116] The third option listed above ("my supplicants will bring my dear scattered ones as my offering") requires not only that the subject and one direct object are placed before the verb but that a second direct object occurs after the verb. This would therefore put "my dear scattered ones" and "my offering" in apposition, but separate them by the verb. This would be a most

[114] S. M. Lehrman, "Zephaniah," in *The Twelve Prophets: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* (ed. A. Cohen; London: Soncino Press, 1948), 249. This is also the reading of *Tg. Neb.* in a much expanded form.

[115] Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 363; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 115–21.

[116] *GKC*, 456.

unusual pattern which makes it unlikely. Therefore, I think that "my supplicants" and "my dear scattered ones" should be considered appositional.

Since the two terms are in apposition, perhaps identifying the second group will help determine exactly who the supplicants are.

Some who take a diachronic approach understand בַּת־פּוּצַי as referring to the Babylonian exile. Nowhere else in the HB is פוץ used as a substantivized participle for those scattered in either the Assyrian or Babylonian exiles. The people who have been exiled or scattered are typically called either נכח or גּוֹלָה. The indicative verb appears many times to describe what Yahweh will do to Israel or Judah when he sends her among the nations, so its use here to describe those dispersed in those exiles is not impossible. However, as "beyond the rivers of Cush" does not describe Israelite territory or any destination to which they were exiled, this is unlikely. The discussion at 3:13 in chapter 3 demonstrates why no exile is in view in all of Zephaniah.

פוץ also occurs three times in the story of the Tower of Babel. The people desire to build a tower פֶּן־נָפוּץ, "lest we be scattered" (Gen 11:4). The result of Yahweh's confusing of their speech is that וַיָּפֶץ יְהוָה אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ, "Yahweh scattered them from there over the face of all the earth" (Gen 11:8, also 11:9). Therefore, if 3:9 is the reversal of the Tower of Babel, then this refers to all the nations who were dispersed by the confusion of languages.[117]

Since the scattered ones are other nations, then they are also the supplicants. Though those in Israel are also those who entreat Yahweh with their prayers, they are not newly coming to Jerusalem with offerings; they are already there. Often in appositional constructions, the more

[117] For example, Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:235; R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 129; Sweeney, Zephaniah, 183.

specific term defines the scope of the general term.[118] So even though both the remnant of Judah and the converted nations are Yahweh's supplicants, only the latter is pictured making a pilgrimage to worship.

3:10 therefore expands the *one shoulder* concept of 3:9. The converted nations will worship Yahweh, but not on their own. Rather, they will come to Jerusalem to join the remnant of Judah already there and together they will serve Yahweh. A pair of oxen when yoked together give the impact of one really large animal pulling. In the same way, the converted nations and the remnant of Jerusalem will serve Yahweh together as one.

Identification of Characters

The Parties Involved according to the Secondary Literature

In the exegesis of 3:8–9 it was determined that the addressees of 3:8 are the righteous of Jerusalem, all the nations of the earth (which will include wicked Judah) will be destroyed in 3:8, and the nations will be converted in 3:9. Among scholarship, however, this is far from settled. The options are these: (1) The addressees of 3:8 are either Jerusalem in general or only the righteous of Jerusalem. (2) Those judged in 3:8 are either foreign nations, Jerusalem, or both. (3) Those converted in 3:9 are either foreign nations, Jerusalem, or both.

Theoretically, there could be eighteen combinations of answers to these questions, but in the end, only eight possibilities suggest themselves to commentators.

1. All Jerusalem is addressed, only Jerusalem will be destroyed, only Jerusalem will be restored. Elliger, Renaud, Sabottka, Rainer Edler, and Vlaardingerbroek take this position based on source criticism. They presuppose that the original Zephaniah prophecies would not have been concerned about the nations, but only a warning to Judah and Jerusalem. Concern for

[118] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 229–32.

the nations supposedly only appeared during or after the exile. Since the final form of the text clearly speaks about destruction of the nations, Edler declares that 3:9–10 is an obvious addition. "Damit sondert sich die Einheit offensichtlich aus dem Kontext aus, da sowohl Zef 3,6–8 als auch 3,11–13 nicht von den Heiden, sondern von den Jerusalemern sprechen."[119] These scholars differ in that Renaud, Sabottka, Edler, and Vlaardingerbroek believe that a later editor changed the text to include the nations, whereas Elliger believes that Zephaniah himself added this material.[120] Vlaardingerbroek further believes that the 3:9 in its entirety is a later addition.[121]

Key to this interpretation is the belief that the redactor borrowed the final line of 3:8 from 1:18. Also, most propose two emendations: (1) עֲלֵיהֶם to עֲלֵיכֶם in 3:8, making the text read "to pour out all my wrath upon *you*,"[122] and (2) עַמִּים to עַמִּי in 3:9, making the text read "I will turn *my* people to a pure lip."[123] There is absolutely no textual evidence to support either emendation. *BHS*, which suggests both, cites no witnesses. Elliger edited Zephaniah for *BHS*.

Sabottka has no problem with כִּי beginning 3:9 as he declares it to have emphatic force, rather than connective, for no reason other than other commentators do the same.[124] Vlaardingerbroek, however, recognizes the difficulty. "Because כִּי occurs at the beginning of a new section, its force is hard to pin down; without a preceding clause, it is hard to ascribe an

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[119] Edler, *Das Kerygma des Propheten Zefanja*, 57.

[120] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 78; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 242; Edler, *Das Kerygma des Propheten Zefanja*, 109; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 179–80.

[121] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 10.

[122] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 77; Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 242; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 114–15; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 187.

[123] Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 79; Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 116–17; Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 189. Although it is curious in Vlaardingerbroek's case why he would emend the text, since for him the entire verse is a later addition. If it is late, why could it not have been about the nations as other additions were? Renaud does not emend here, translating it as "les peoples." However, he still maintains that only Jerusalem is meant by this word. Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 244–45.

[124] Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 116.

adversative meaning to it."[125] Here is a perfect example of allowing an overall interpretation to overrule philological evidence. כִּי would normally indicate connection with what precedes and should influence the interpretation. Since this is not his desired result, then the force of the particle is declared uncertain, with no grammatical reasons given.

The weakness of this position is that the texts have been emended without textual evidence. I prefer to exegete the MT, ascribing to each construction its ordinary value and force.

2. All Jerusalem is addressed, only foreign nations will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored. This position claims that all of Jerusalem is being addressed hopefully with the message that all the other nations will be destroyed.

Floyd uses form criticism to interpret each section via its genre.[126] He focuses on לָכֵן and the change from feminine singular to masculine plural in 3:7 to determine that the addressees of 3:8 must be the same as those of 3:7: "those who have recognized that the charge of failure to repent in 3:1–7 applies to them."[127] He takes the masculine plural imperative of 3:8 to refer to the same people.[128] This is unwarranted. Chapter 4 demonstrated that though the referent *could* be found in 3:7, it does not *have* to be. Other grammatical clues show that the referent loops back to 2:3.

Ben Zvi, writing before Floyd, initially pursues the same line of thinking. Eventually, he re-thinks the grammatical clues by declaring, "Moreover, nowhere else in 3:6–8 (or 3:1–8) is there a clear reference to someone in the second person, except in v. 7 when YHWH quotes a previous thought. One may conclude that 3:8, as well as 3:1–8, makes no attempt to clarify the

[125] Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 196.

[126] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:xvii.

[127] Ibid., 2:234.

[128] Ibid., 2:234.

identity of the addressees, and consequently it remains ambiguous."[129] Yet he does not identify what the rhetorical strategy for the ambiguity would be.

Although Ben Zvi and Floyd are to be commended for not reinterpreting *the nations* to mean Judah, they still miss the addressees of the imperative.

3. All Jerusalem is addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored. Eszenyei Széles, though believing Zephaniah to be a product of redaction in the exile, treats the book holistically. She still sees judgment coming upon Jerusalem in 3:8. However, since she does not resort to emendation or eliminate 3:8d, Jerusalem is just part of the worldwide destruction.[130] Eszenyei Széles, Eaton, Hobart Freeman, and Stephen Miller all base their interpretations on a proposed structure which includes this verse with 3:1–7.[131] Miller mistakenly reads 2:1–3 as an appeal to repent and then cites 3:6–7 as their failure to have done so.[132]

Though Alfons Deissler agrees with other redaction critics that עֲלֵיהֶם was changed from עֲלֵיכֶם, he prefers to deal with the text in its final form. "Allerdings werden dann in der Nachexilszeit sowohl der 'Tag Jahwes' wie der 'Völkersturm gegen Jerusalem' eschatologisiert und dabei die 'Völker' mit in das Gericht einbezogen (vgl. Ez 38 f Joël $4^{1–21}$ Sach 12, vorab 14), was bereits im modifizierten Text von Zeph 3^{8} in dem Blick kommt."[133] He does not emend 3:9 and accepts that it describes the salvation of the nations.[134]

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[129] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 220.

[130] Eszenyei Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, 105.

[131] Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 107; Freeman, *Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk*, 80; Miller, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 103.

[132] Miller, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 102.

[133] Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 249.

[134] Ibid., 249–50.

Though the nations are included, the focus of the passage for these scholars is on Judah and Jerusalem. Eszenyei Széles puts it this way, "Alongside Judah's judgment will be the disclosure of the judgment upon the peoples."[135] Kaiser believes 3:8 to be the culmination of all previous indictments and warnings. "Thus, in language very similar to Joel 3 and Zechariah 14, God promises to bring all the nations of the earth together so that He might execute His judgment against all of them. They have all failed to keep his moral laws and to execute justice, much less to believe in Him."[136] In other words, Judah is going to be judged, and since they are also wicked, foreign nations will be as well.

Though all of these scholars treat the text holistically, they fail to deal with the syntactical clues that show that only the righteous of Judah are addressed in 3:8. Though it is true that Jerusalem will be destroyed along with the nations (as made clear in Zeph 1), these scholars place too much emphasis on the immediate context to make Jerusalem the primary focus of Yahweh' wrath. If the primary focus were Jerusalem with the nations along for the ride, it seems to me that 3:8 might be worded quite differently. The lexical and grammatical structure put the focus on the nations of which Judah has become a part. They rightly notice that only the nations are spoken of in 3:9. Both Eaton and Freeman take a Christian eschatological approach and interpret the restored gentiles as the Church.[137]

4. All Jerusalem is addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, only Jerusalem will be restored. Both Elizabeth Achtemeier and Paul Wright read the text

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[135] Eszenyei Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, 105.

[136] Kaiser, *Micah–Malachi*, 236.

[137] Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 151; Freeman, *Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk*, 81.

holistically. Achtemeier accepts some redaction after the time of the prophet, but otherwise sees an integrated whole.[138]

Judah and Jerusalem are the addressees who are to wait for bad news. Wright paraphrases it as, "Wait for God to bring you trouble."[139] Judgment is not only upon Jerusalem, however, but upon the whole earth. Achtemeier writes, "Judah, like all the earth, is defiant and polluted (*rebellious* and *defiled*, v. 1). God will begin a new people and a new earth by wiping out the old."[140]

Unlike scholars of the previous position, Achtemeier and Wright do not see foreign nations as restored in 3:9. Achtemeier links 3:9 with 3:10 and then asks, "But who is the new people of God in verse 10? As we have seen in Zephaniah 2:7, 9, it is the remnant of Judah that moves out into foreign lands and inherits the earth."[141] After implying that the Christian Church (which includes gentiles) could be the fulfillment of these promises she then says, "Jerusalem! There is the center of God's work."[142] Wright sees little connection between 3:8 and 3:9, but agrees that Judah is in view. "Zephaniah saw another day of the Lord when God would purify His people and restore them to favor with him."[143]

It is difficult and almost unfair to compare this position with the others as these works are so short and critically light. It is not that they are not doing critical work or that their positions

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[138] For this reason she rejects the tripartite arrangement: "At the same time, Hebrew rhetorical structures prevent the separation of the supposed three parts of the book: 2:3 belongs inseparably with 2:4, and 3:8 joins with 3:9." Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 62.

[139] Wright, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 89.

[140] Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 82.

[141] Ibid., 83.

[142] Ibid., 83.

[143] Wright, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 89.

are invalid, but, given the nature of their commentaries, they do not show their work, only their conclusions.

5. All Jerusalem is addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be restored. Like the works in the previous section, these are mostly short and, whatever their critical work, do not show much of how they arrive at their conclusions.[144] Linda Hinton, for example, says this about 3:8, "The prophetic therefore proclaims that God has made a just case against Jerusalem and all corrupt kingdoms will face the cleansing fire of God's wrath."[145] What is the exact nature of *therefore* and why does it have to indicate both Judah and the nations? She does not say.

The difference between these commentators and those of the previous section is inclusion of the nations along with Judah in the restoration of 3:9. John Watts reasons that since this verse seems to be the reversal of Babel, the *pure lip* must indicate the nations. However, he believes that Israel also needs to be cleansed from their own "unclean lips," citing Isa 6:5.[146] Against this is that nowhere else does Zephaniah describe the wicked in Jerusalem being purified, but only destroyed.

6. Only the righteous of Jerusalem are addressed, only Jerusalem will be destroyed, only Jerusalem will be restored. This is the position of Roberts. His position suffers from some inconsistency regarding the unity of Zephaniah. In discussion of the text, he says,

> There is an explanatory gloss in 1:3, there appears to have been a secondary transposition of verses at 2:4–5, and there are two late universalizing glosses at 2:11 and 3:10. Apart from these few examples, the rest of the material in the book appears

[144] In addition to those cited in this section, see Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 114–15; and Pilcher, *Three Hebrew Prophets*, 177–79.

[145] Hinton, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 75.

[146] Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 178–79.

> to be original. It is possible that some of the oracles against the foreign nations have been shortened in the editorial process, and there may have been some rearrangement of the originally independent oracles in the editorial formation of the compositional units in the book, but these changes were part of the composition of the book, not late, secondary alterations to the composition. In general, the book may be taken as a clear statement of the message of Zephaniah.[147]

When discussing 2:4–15, he utters the words that so riled up Berlin.[148] These four oracles against nations "have been shaped into a loose compositional unity, but there are indications that that unity is not the rhetorical unity of their original oral presentation."[149] This indeed sounds as if he wants to give priority to the original context of the oracles, but when I read his commentary, Roberts treats the oracles in their final form. Consider this comment on 2:11 (one of his few glosses). "Whatever the original antecedent of the expression 'over them' in the first line, in the present context the pronoun must refer back to Moab and Ammon mentioned in the preceding verses."[150] He then continues to interpret this verse in that context. Berlin was correct to censure any method that divorces the units from the context of the book, but she was a bit unfair to Roberts.

Regarding 3:8–9, Roberts rejects the attempts of his main conversation partner, Rudolph, to emend or discard words or verses. Even so, he ends up with the same conclusion as Rudolph and other redaction critics: It is Judah who will be destroyed and it is Judah who will be restored. The nations are indeed mentioned in 3:8, but as in other prophetic books, they will be Yahweh's tools of judgment upon Judah. Like some of the other commentators already cited, he insists that

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[147] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 163.

[148] See the section "The Holistic Trend" in chapter 1.

[149] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 195.

[150] Ibid., 201.

therefore means that the judgment to be poured out must be limited to those mentioned in the immediate context, Jerusalem.[151]

Where Roberts differs from most redaction critics is the force of *wait* and the addressees. He rightly notices the change of person and number and matches it to "all you humble of the land who perform his judgment" from 2:3. Roberts notes, "One should note that the indictment in the preceding verses was directed against the ruling classes, not against the poor and oppressed of his people."[152] Roberts then paraphrases 3:8 thus,

> Therefore wait for me, you oppressed ones who follow me,
> Until I rise up as a witness against your wicked rulers,
> Because it is my judgment to gather up nations,
> And assemble kingdoms as my agents of destruction,
> To pour upon your oppressive rulers my anger.[153]

Though Roberts disagrees with Rudolph that 3:8d was an addition, he agrees that this judgment is not specifically directed against the nations but is so much collateral damage. Rather, "a judgment on Jerusalem would inevitably affect the inhabitants of its larger territory outside the city."[154] This interpretation seems forced.

When he comes to 3:9, Roberts again limits the restoration to Judah. He recognizes the connective force of the opening כִּי, and sees the referent of אָז as the day of Yahweh's arising from the previous verse. He admits the difficulty of limiting עַמִּים to Judah, but decides, "The preceding verses speak of the sin and corruption of Jerusalem and her leaders; it says nothing

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[151] Ibid., 215–17.

[152] Ibid., 215.

[153] Ibid., 216.

[154] Ibid., 216.

about the sins of the nations. Moreover, the following verses, apart from the somewhat obscure v. 10, speak exclusively of God's purifying work as directed to his own people."[155]

To get consistency, Roberts has to ignore the plain meaning of עַמִּים and thus dismiss any subsequent interpretation of what he labels the "somewhat obscure" verse 10. To be sure, 3:10 offers interpretive difficulties, but its translation is straightforward.

Roberts' key failing is in not understanding the flow and context of the book. He does well to make the connection between 2:1–3 and 3:8, but he otherwise limits his interpretation of 3:8–9 to the immediate context. He fails to expand his horizons to see how these verses fit the argument of the entire book.

Laur Reinke, writing more than a century ago, produced the same results. He simply applies גּוֹיִם and מַמְלָכוֹת to the corrupt leaders of Jerusalem.[156] Once the judgment falls upon Judah and Jerusalem, then only devout believers would be restored in 3:9.[157]

7. Only the righteous of Jerusalem are addressed, only foreign nations will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored. This is the most popular opinion. Representatives of different hermeneutical methods from different eras have expressed this combination. How they get there varies quite a bit, however.

While several claim that the addressees are the righteous or in Jerusalem/Judah, their reasons are vague.[158] Taylor merely recognizes the incongruity of all of Jerusalem being addressed by saying, "Instead, the people addressed, who now appear to be the pious in

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[155] Ibid., 216–17.

[156] Reinke, *Der Prophet Zephanja*, 124.

[157] Ibid., 127–28.

[158] Besides the others cited in this section, see Feinberg, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi*, 66; Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 366.

Jerusalem, not the shameless, are bidden to await the universal judgment day on which the Lord's wrath will be poured out not on Jerusalem, but on all the nations and kingdoms."[159] J. M. P. Smith recognizes that some think that all of Jerusalem is addressed, but, without reason, asserts that the righteous are a better fit. [160] He does not make a connection with 2:3 since he believes that 3:8–13 are added by a later redactor anyway.[161] R. Smith is vague. "But the transition between vv 7 and 8 may be so rough that those being addressed are not the nations, but the pious remnant in Judah."[162]

Others make a logical, but not grammatical, connection between the addressees in 3:8 and the "humble of the land" of 2:3. Robert Chisholm focuses on the normally positive connotations of חַכּוּ־לִי, "wait for me," which would imply an audience of the faithful.[163] Keil and Delitzsch contend that the connection with 2:3 is found in their analysis of the structure which considers 2:1–3:8 a unit. "With the summons *chakkū lī*, wait for me, the prophecy returns to its starting-point in vers. 2 and 3, to bring it to a close. The persons addressed are *kol ʿanvē hâ'ârets*, whom the prophet has summoned in the introduction to his exhortation to repentance (ch. ii. 3), to seek the Lord and His righteousness."[164]

Like Roberts, Hahlen and Ham do notice the grammatical details. "In Zephaniah 3:8, the appearance of a second person masculine plural imperative form (wait for me) might cause the reader to note the previous appearance of similar imperatives in 2:1–3 ('gather' and 'seek'). The

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[159] Taylor, "The Book of Zephaniah," 6:1030.

[160] J. M. P. Smith, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 247.

[161] Ibid., 173.

[162] R. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 140.

[163] Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 449. Also see Aglen, Warren and Jennings, *Minor Prophets*, 119.

[164] Keil and Delitzsch, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:153.

humble remnant of that passage is no doubt the intended recipient of this call to wait for Yahweh."[165]

Interestingly, Sweeney sees the grammatical connection, not with 2:3, but with 3:12–13.

> The shift is apparently based on a distinction between the character of the city itself as "the daughter of Zion" (Zeph 3:14), which is always portrayed with feminine singular references, and the "remnant of Israel," which is left inside the city and is always characterized with masculine plural forms (3:12–13). Such a view is consistent with the claims that Jerusalem would have to be purified of its apostates by sacrifice on the Day of YHWH in 1:2–18.[166]

This group of commentators takes for granted that 3:8 describes the destruction of foreign nations. This is understandable since it is the plainest reading of the text. Sweeney allows that Jerusalem is included in כָּל־הָאָרֶץ which will be wiped out in 3:8d, but contends that the city is intentionally omitted from the preceding lines.[167]

Naturally, these scholars also see foreign nations being restored in 3:9. Chisholm recognizes the reversal-of-Babel aspect of 3:9 and makes connection elsewhere in Zephaniah. "Developing a theme already introduced in 2:11b, the Lord anticipated a time when he would 'purify the lips of the peoples,' enabling them to praise the Lord in unison as they serve him (vv. 9–10)."[168] Keil and Delitzsch further explain, "The lips are defiled by the names of the idols whom they have invoked (cf. Hos. ii. 19, Ps. xvi. 4). The fruit of the purification is this, that henceforth they call upon the name of Jehovah, and serve Him."[169]

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[165] Hahlen and Ham, *Minor Prophets*, 233. One could hope for better consistency, however. First they claim (231) that 3:8–20 is addressed to all of Judah to convince them to repent. Later they state (232): "Specifically, the unit exhorts the people of Judah to wait for the action of Yahweh and explains what this divine action means for nations of the world (vv. 8–10) and for the people of Yahweh who trust in Yahweh (vv. 11–13)." When painting broad strokes, all of Judah is in view, but when they deal with the details of the text, only the righteous are.

[166] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 180.

[167] Ibid., 181–82.

[168] Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 449.

[169] Keil and Delitzsch, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:153.

This position correctly identifies the addressees and sees the *focus* of the כִּי clauses in 3:8–9 as the nations. However, it is important to see that Zephaniah also includes Jerusalem in the judgment upon foreign nations. In 3:1–7 he declares that Judah has become one of the גּוֹיִם. At the end of 3:8 he repeats a line from 1:18 which announced annihilation of all the earth including Jerusalem.

8. Only the righteous of Jerusalem are addressed, both foreign nations and Jerusalem will be destroyed, only foreign nations will be restored. Heflin, and Barker and Bailey take this position. The wicked of Jerusalem are not addressed. "To the few pious, God instructs: 'wait for me.'...The believers are to trust God, confident that He will see them through the judgment to the glad day of restoration."[170] Barker and Bailey recognize the grammatical clues. "The prophet changed from the third masculine plural to second masculine plural, which he previously used in 2:1–3. Thus he appears to be addressing the same group as here, the poor in the land who are humbled and seeking righteousness."[171]

For Heflin, Jerusalem, and especially its leaders will be under sentence. "Because all of God's invitations fell on deaf ears, judgment is inevitable."[172] The immediate context is his driving force. Because the text demands it, he includes the nations in this judgment. "The verse closes with a return to the note of universal judgment."[173] Barker and Bailey also see both the nations and the wicked of Jerusalem in 3:8. Like Heflin, foreign nations are not the focus but are

[170] Heflin, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 148.

[171] Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 484.

[172] Heflin, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 148.

[173] Ibid., 148.

additions to the judgment originally upon Judah. “Not only Judah, but also the nations stood condemned before the Lord.”[174] For both, the nations are converted in 3:9.[175]

However, outside nations are not additions to wicked Jerusalem’s destruction, but as both groups are of the same nature, they share the same fate. While these scholars get the characters right, they have a misleading emphasis derived from an incorrect structure that links 3:8 with 3:1–7 and has 3:9 starting a new section. As a result, they cannot see the illocutionary forces at work or provide any explanation for the unusual juxtaposition of 3:8 and 3:9.

So although they correctly identify the characters, this dissertation demonstrates that identification by philology and structure to point out the rhetorical implications.

Identification Based on Philological and Structural Work

As demonstrated in the translation above and in chapter 4, the addressees of 3:8 are the faithful of Jerusalem who were called “the humble of the land who perform his judgment” in 2:3. The reasons for doing so are: (1) The vocative for the masculine imperative in 3:8 is not given in the verse, which forces a search for the referent. 2:3 contains a masculine plural vocative. (2) The verb, חכה “to wait”, is always used in a positive connotation in the HB when Yahweh is the object. This leaves out the other masculine plural potential referents in 2:1 and 3:7, neither of whom would be encouraged to wait upon Yahweh. (3) It was demonstrated in chapter 4 that the return to a real (as opposed to a rhetorical) audience in 3:8 creates a loop with 2:3.

The group who receives the wrath of Yahweh is the entire earth, both foreign nations and Jerusalem. The text clearly indicates foreign nations. The attempts of diachronic scholars to emend the text are unnecessary and reflect presuppositions brought to it. However, the entire

[174] Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 486.

[175] Heflin, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 150–51; Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 487–88.

point of 3:1–7 is to demonstrate that Jerusalem has become just like the nations. Therefore, though she is not explicitly named, that city is to be included in the destruction to come.

That עַמִּים, "peoples", of 3:9 refers to foreign nations is borne out by the use of the plural of עַם in the HB (again, giving preference to MT over unsupported textual emendations).[176] עַם is used in the plural about 230 times. 177 times it is used in the absolute state as in this verse. The vast majority of the rest refer to people other than Israel. At times it is used in parallel with גּוֹיִם, "nations" (Ps 33:10, for example), or מַמְלָכוֹת, "kingdoms" (Ps 102:23). Job uses it three times to mean people in general (17:6; 36:20, 31). Four times it refers to the local crowd (1 Kgs 22:28 [=2 Chr 18:27]; Esther 1:11, 16). This standard use of the plural seriously undercuts Roberts' position that the peoples in 3:9 are Judah.[177]

To summarize, the faithful are told to wait, the nations which include Jerusalem will be destroyed, and the nations will be converted.

Summary

Chapter 2 listed the two things that would result from the analysis of 3:8–9 in this chapter: (1) the identification of the characters in 3:8–9 and (2) a basic interpretation of those verses. Following is a summary of what has been determined.

Identification

The faithful are encouraged to wait because Yahweh will pour out his judgment upon the nations which include Jerusalem. Further they are to wait because Yahweh will convert other nations to serve him along with the faithful of Jerusalem.

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[176] E. Lipinski, *TDOT*, 11:174–77, notes the various ways that עַם is used, including references to Israel, but fails to note the differences in use between singular and plural, and absolute and construct.

[177] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 216–17.

Basic Interpretation of Zephaniah 3:8–9

The coming Day of Yahweh will include both complete annihilation of the entire earth and the conversion of foreign nations who did not previously know him. Foreign peoples will call upon the name of Yahweh, serve him in one accord, and bring offerings to Jerusalem from the ends of the earth. No longer will there be any wicked in the land, but only those who do the will of Yahweh.

PART THREE

ILLOCUTION

A fair amount of locutionary examination was necessary to determine just the basic meaning of these two verses. This analysis has determined: (1) Only the faithful within Jerusalem are addressed in Zeph 3:8–9. Those to be destroyed are the nations, which now includes wicked Judah. The nations will be converted to worship and serve Yahweh. (2) These verses are an encouragement to the faithful. They are exhorted to wait upon Yahweh even in the midst of coming trouble. (3) Two motivations are given to the faithful to obey the command to wait: Yahweh will destroy the wicked world and Yahweh will convert the nations. (4) Contrary to the claims of diachronic approaches, these verses form a coherent message when read together, and show coherence within the main section of 2:1–3:13 and within the book of Zephaniah as a whole.

After all this, the original question remains: How should the juxtaposed concepts of complete destruction and universal salvation be understood, especially in relation to each other? To solve this, it is necessary to understand Zephaniah's motivations. Rhetorical analysis, most significantly speech-act analysis, will demonstrate in chapter 6 his motivation and method to accomplish his ends. Chapter 7 will examine how Zephaniah's view of the nations fits in with other prophetic books to demonstrate his use of that view to make his rhetorical point.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MEANING OF THE JUXTAPOSITION OF ZEPHANIAH 3:8–9

Secondary Literature on Interpretation

Most scholars simply do not comment on the odd juxtaposition of total destruction and universal conversion. Even if they do not make explicit comment, their interpretations yet offer what amounts to reasons for the juxtaposition.

No Purpose

For most source critics, the question is moot as 3:9 is either considered to be from the hand of a later redactor or, if from Zephaniah, is placed here by the redactor. Therefore, the section that begins with verse 9 is not considered to be part of the preceding section. Though Eszenyei Széles credits Zephaniah with these words, she lays the juxtaposition at the feet of the redactor.[1] For her, this is a completely separate prophecy. "At the end of his prophecy, (3:9–20) Zephaniah turns in another direction, signaled by 'Yea [*ki*—I declare that], *at that time*.'"[2] Note how she eliminates the connective value of כִּי by considering it—without demonstration—to be emphatic.[3]

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[1] Eszenyei Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, 106.

[2] Ibid., 71.

[3] See also Sabottka, *Zephanja*, 116; and Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah*, 196, who, because of his structural outline, has already determined that 3:9 starts a new section. Therefore, "because כִּי occurs at the beginning of a new section, its force is hard to pin down; without a preceding clause, it is hard to ascribe an adversative meaning to it."

Ambrose Edens is adamant that 3:9 is not from the same hand as what precedes and dismisses its meaning altogether. “Verse 8 appears to form a fitting close for the prophecy…. Verses 9 and 10 suggest at least an exilic if not post-exilic background.”[4] Further, “The remainder of the book seems quite inappropriate to Zephaniah, and the majority of this to his time.”[5] Taylor sees a different hand, but is more charitable than Edens. “Another spirit, more kindly and less grim, breathes through these two verses.”[6]

Langohr does not have much interest in any of Zeph 3. For him parts of 3:8 and all of 3:9 are exilic or post-exilic additions.[7] Deissler, although seeing redactional forces at work, offers his commentary on the final text. While he sees that there is a new theme, he has no comment about the juxtaposition.[8]

Rudolph, although believing that a redactor penned these lines, is still struck by the juxtaposition. “Muß man es als auffallend empfinden, daß der Prophet im jetzigen eschatologischen Zusammenhang nicht auch von der Vernichtung der Heiden redet, sondern das Negative einfach überspringt und sofort auf das Positive zu sprechen kommt.”[9] He is further at a loss as to what the redactor is doing by jumping so strikingly from judgment to restoration. “Den

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[4] Ambrose Edens, “A Study of the Book of Zephaniah as to the Date, Extent, and Significance of the Genuine Writings, with a Translation,” (Ph.D. diss. Vanderbilt University, 1953), 99.

[5] Ibid., 166.

[6] Taylor, “The Book of Zephaniah,” *IB*, 6:1031. For a similar comment, see J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Micah, Zephaniah and Nahum* , 173; and Edler, *Das Kerygma des Propheten Zefanja*, 109.

[7] Langohr, “Le Livre de Sophonie et la Critique d’Authenticitê,” 22–23. Driver, *Minor Prophets*, 105, likewise sees a later redactor as adding 3:9.

[8] Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 249.

[9] Rudolph, *Micha–Nahum–Habakuk–Zephanja*, 295.

Grund dafür kennen wir nicht (Erweis der absoluten Gottesherrschaft als eines Triumphs der Gnade?), aber der Tatbestand selbst ist nich zu leugnen."[10]

Mercy Follows Judgment

The key to this position is seeing the judgment of 3:8 and the restoration of 3:9 as separate and sequential. Hinton comments, "On the other side of judgment is the promise of renewal."[11] Achtemeier gives this as motive, "God's word never ends with judgment, for God's goal for his world is finally not death but life."[12] Kaiser says, "Just when things looked darkest during the great judgment threatened in the preceding verses, *'then'* (v. 9) Yahweh would assume center stage and the long awaited redemption promised by so many prophets would commence."[13]

W. J. Deane sees a bit more connection. "When his judgments have done their work, God will bring the heathen to the knowledge of him."[14] He defines this *work* as, "not for utter extermination, but to bring them to a better mind (Isa. xxvi, 9; Joel iii. 11, etc.)."[15] This is not quite judgment-as-purification, the next position to be considered, but more like a beat-into-submission judgment.

Ben Zvi, though not explicitly using the word *purifying*, recognizes the strong link of judgment with conversion and treats both seriously. He sees a progression not only in time, but

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[10] Ibid., 295. Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 78–79, sees Zephaniah himself, not a redactor updating the thrust of the message from Judah to the nations, but has no comment on the odd juxtaposition.

[11] Hinton, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 75.

[12] Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 82.

[13] Kaiser, *Micah–Malachi*, 235–36. Also see Feinberg, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi*, 66: "After His wrath is poured out upon the ungodly among the nations, then in the program of His mercies He will bestow upon the Gentiles a pure language in order that they may call upon the name of the Lord and serve Him unitedly."

[14] Deane, *Zephaniah*, 50.

[15] Ibid., 50.

also in result. “As a result, the universal announcement of judgment in 3:8 turns out to be the first act of the divine action that leads to universal salvation.”[16]

Alone among those using diachronic approaches, Renaud assigns a purpose to the redactor’s placement of these verses. “Ceci explique que l’éditeur ait placé, en tête de son esquisse d’avenir, la conversion des peuples. Le jugement des nations (3,8) ne pouvait pas représenter la fin de l’histoire. Les voici, elles aussi appelées à entrer dans la grandé assemblée liturgique.”[17] The destruction of the nations is not the end of the story as God will bring them into the eschatological worshipping community.

It is true that God is merciful and will not punish forever, but is that what Zephaniah really wants us to understand and what is the force behind the way he states it? Further, does insisting that mercy must eventually follow potentially blunt the impact of the judgment message?

Judgment Is Purification

This position posits that the main purpose for Yahweh pouring out judgment (whether on Judah or the nations or both) is to purify them. Heflin states, “It becomes clear that the purpose of the Day of the Lord is not simply the destruction described so vividly in 1:2–3:8. The terrible day has a constructive purpose as well; it will be a time for purification and restoration.”[18] Maillot says, “Cette route débouche alors sur une double promesse: universaliste tout d’abord: tous les peuples vont recevoir des lèvres pures; particulariste ensuite: Israël, ou ce qui en reste, va enfin devenir un peuple fidèle et humble.”[19]

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[16] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 320.

[17] Renaud, *Michée–Sophonie–Nahum*, 247.

[18] Heflin, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 150.

[19] Maillot, *Jonas, Sophonie*, 126.

It would be helpful if commentators would give a reason why the text of Zephaniah itself demands such a solution, but most do not.[20] Rainer Albertz draws attention to the surrounding context as evidence that 3:9 refers to a purging.

> But the elite of Jerusalem did not learn their lesson (3:2) as YHWH hoped they would do (3:6–7). To the contrary, they continued with their cruel and corrupt activity (3:3–4); so God in his justice (3:5) decided to [pour out his anger over this arrogant upper class (3:8abα) and remove it from Jerusalem (3:10). After this last purifying judgment, YHWH would start a new history with the "humble and poor people," who were left in Jerusalem (3:11). So, at the end of his composition, the FPR [Four-Prophets-Redactor] draws an ideal picture of a totally purified society without any officials, palaces, fortified cities, arms, and idols. This purified society would have learned to trust only in God and to avoid any deceit and injustice (3:12).[21]

This overlaps with the concept of the remnant to be considered next. One element of the purification of the nations and Israel is the removal by destruction of evil elements. Those who remain will either be already righteous or converted. Keil and Delitzsch paraphrase Yahweh as saying, "My justice, i.e., the justice which I shall bring to the light, consists in the fact that I pour out my fury upon all nations, to exterminate the wicked by judgments, and to convert the penitent to myself, and prepare for myself worshippers out of all nations."[22]

Sweeney also sees purification as the solution. "Finally, v. 9b points to the goal of the punishment and the purge of the nations, so that they might all call on YHWH and serve YHWH with one effort."[23]

It is unwise to assume that the concept of purification that is present in 3:9–13 is considered to be the result of the judgment event in 3:8. To do so is to give greater weight to

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[20] See Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 115; Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 449; Hahlen and Ham, *Minor Prophets*, 184; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 181–84; Wright, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 89 for additional support for this position.

[21] Rainer Albertz, "Exile as Purification: Reconstructing the Book of the Four (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah)," in the *SBL Seminar Papers, 2002* (SBLSP 41; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 2002), 223.

[22] Keil and Delitzsch, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:154.

[23] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 184.

historical background over the literary message. While Yahweh's punishment of the earth, Judah, or both would certainly have purifying aspects, it does not follow that this is the reason that Zephaniah presents his material as he does. Literary analysis will yield a different result.

A Remnant Will Be Restored

The juxtaposition raises another question: Who will be converted if everyone is destroyed? For some, a remnant solves that problem.

This theory takes seriously the connecting words that begin 3:9. Roberts comments, "Verse 9 is introduced by the causal conjunction *kî* and followed by the temporal adverb *ʾaz*, which refers back to the day of Yahweh's rising mentioned in v. 8. The clause so introduced gives a positive reason for the pious to wait on Yahweh's intervention."[24]

In Roberts' case, he believes that only Jerusalem and Judah are referenced in these verses. Salvation is in being part of the remnant. "This phrase and the preceding 'all' emphasizes that in the restored Jerusalem, all the people will serve Yahweh. The oppressive rulers and judges, and the impious prophets and priests (vs. 3–4), not to mention the servants of Baal and other foreign deities (Zeph. 1:4–6), will all be gone, and the remnant will all be devoted to Yahweh."[25]

By contrast, Martin Holland sees the judged and restored peoples as from the nations, yet he has a remnant theology. He further particularizes the remnant concept by denying that it is nations as entities who will be converted, but only individuals within them.

> Manche Ausleger deuten die Verheißung global auf alle Menschen und lehnen die individuelle Rettung der einzelnen ab. Das Heilswerk Gottes beträge alle Menschen, gleichgültig, ob sie die Liebe Gottes annehmen oder nicht. Zwar heißt es in V.9 daß

[24] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 216.

[25] Ibid., 217. Also, see Pilcher, *Three Hebrew Prophets*, 177–79 who limits these verses to Judah.

den Völkern die Vergebung geschenkt wird, aber in V.10 wird verdeutlicht, wer diese alle sind: die Anbeter; V.11 spricht eindeutig von Scheidung.[26]

There is clearly a remnant theology in the book of Zephaniah. The question is whether it has any application to 3:9. As was seen in chapter 5, for Zephaniah the remnant consists only of Israelites and Judahites. Converted Gentiles will come to Jerusalem to worship as well, but they are not part of the remnant of Yahweh's people. Since it is not Judah who is converted in 3:9, but the nations, Zephaniah's remnant motif does not apply to 3:9.

The Juxtaposition Is Motivation

Floyd correctly sees the two main כִּי clauses as motivations for why those in Jerusalem should *wait* for Yahweh, "because the nations will then be chastised (v. 8b) in order to restore the primal unity that the human race once enjoyed among themselves and in relation to Yahweh (v. 9)."[27] He further comments, "This expectation is based on the recognition that Judah can have hope despite the prospect of widespread destruction, not only because the destruction entails the breakup of the international order that has oppressed them, but also because it entails the future possibility of a new and more just existence for all peoples."[28] Note Floyd's outline of 3:8–13.[29]

I. Exhortation to wait for Yahweh to act	3:8–10
A. Introductory adverb: therefore	
B. Command	3:8a
1. Wait for me!	3:8aα[1]
2. Oracle formula: says Yahweh	3:8aα[2]
3. [Wait] for the day when I arise as a witness!	3:8aβ
C. Motivation	3:8b–10
1. Yahweh's decision to destroy the world order	3:8b
a. Yahweh's decision: to gather nations and pour out my anger	3:8bα
b. The effect of carrying out his decision: all the earth shall	

[26] Holland, *Die Propheten Nahum, Habakuk und Zephanja*, 139–40.

[27] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 2:203.

[28] Ibid., 2:236.

[29] Ibid., 2:233.

be consumed	3:8bβ
2. Yahweh's goal: to create a new world order	3:9–10
a. Yahweh's action: I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech	3:9a
b. The effects of this action	3:9b–10
1) Basic description: all will call on Yahweh's name and serve him with one accord	3:9b
2) Specific example: from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my supplicants will bring me an offering	3:10

Floyd is correct in seeing the motivational force of the כִּי clauses. I disagree in four areas, however: (1) Without using the phrase, his statement—"the nations will then be chastised in order to restore"—sounds a lot like the judgment-as-purification scenario. (2) His portrayal of Yahweh's work as "to restore the primal unity" or "breakup of the international order" is an unwarranted recasting of the Biblical message in modern terms. It ignores any concept of Yahweh's covenant with his people, highlighted by the key use of מִשְׁפָּט and the repeated description of Judah as עַמִּי or עַם יְהוָה. The nations will indeed be converted to Yahweh and the curse of Babel will be reversed, but Zephaniah does not portray it as a return to pre-Israelite days. Instead the Gentiles will join in the true worship of Yahweh as practiced by the pure in Jerusalem. (3) He seems to indicate that the text exempts Jerusalem from destruction which ignores the message of Zeph 1. (4) Since Floyd believes that all of Jerusalem is addressed, the motivation of these statements are not the removal of evil, but only of that Jerusalem's security and position in the world will be established.[30] Floyd has the wrong motivation for the wrong group.

Hyperbole

Craigie treats the כִּי clauses as sequential and calls the complete destruction hyperbole.

[30] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 181, also calls them "reasons why the audience should wait for YHWH," but he does not spell out why they should motivate. Further, as seen earlier in this chapter, he adopts the judgment-as-purification answer.

> The prophetic passion for justice could, if taken too literally, signal the end of the human race in the final judgment. But Zephaniah, and those who followed him, also had deep insight into the mercy of God. He refers to love and mercy only a few times, but his vision of the surviving remnant beyond the judgment provides a clue to his insight concerning the eternal compassion of God. The divine purpose in the creation of mankind would not be frustrated; whatever the cosmic climax of human evil, there would continue to be human life on earth.[31]

While everyone would agree that a prophet speaks hyperbolically,[32] all Craigie does is explain away the seeming contradiction. Other than a quick reference to the remnant, he does not explore what purpose might be served in this construction.

Unresolved Tension

Robertson notes the unresolved nature of the tension.

> But how can the prophet speak of the salvation of a remnant both from the nations as well as from Israel? Already he had declared that the entirety of the universe was to be overturned on a scale comparable to the destruction that occurred with the flood in Noah's day (1:2–3). The fire of Yahweh's wrath would consume the entire earth (1:18; 3:8). If the day would bring this cosmic destruction, what is the meaning of the reference to a fresh start for humanity?
>
> …Zephaniah simply does not resolve explicitly the tension that might be felt among various aspects of his message. He saw a destruction in judgment beyond any proportions that the world had experienced previously. He saw also a wondrous conversion among the nations of the world as well as among the scattered people of Israel. He does not explain how cosmic judgment and far-reaching salvation coordinate, but he faithfully proclaims both elements.[33]

Robertson is correct. Zephaniah does not resolve the tension he creates. Commentators who try to mitigate one verse or the other or else merge them into a single purposed event rob these verses of their powerful rhetorical impact. For that reason, Robertson is right to demand that the

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[31] Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, 129.

[32] "The prophet is human, yet he employs notes one octave too high for our ears….He is neither 'a singing saint' nor 'a moralizing poet,' but an assaulter of the mind." Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 10

[33] Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 327.Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 487, concur.

tension remains in interpretation of the text. Unfortunately he does not pursue further the purpose of the tension.

Liturgical Use

Eaton believes that the book of Zephaniah was a liturgical document used in the worship of Jerusalem. First he comments on the sudden change of theme.

> Modern readers have sometimes found the sudden brightness of these passages inconsistent with what has gone before. Even when the divisions of the book and its corresponding movement of thought have been carefully noted (which has not always been the case), we could wish for a more reasoned and detailed account of the great drama which is here portrayed. But ancient thought was pictorial and poetic rather than logical. Moreover the prophets at Jerusalem worked within a tradition which furnished a framework of ideas which could be largely assumed….And if the patterns of prophetic thought were originally grounded in the dramatic liturgy of the Temple, they would naturally become more obscure and abrupt when isolated from that setting.[34]

To be sure, modern readers are not privy to the workings of the ancient liturgy of Israel. However, he does not explore the possible liturgical meanings of these verses. Instead, Eaton takes a stab at interpretation that has nothing to do with a liturgical setting, but instead evokes a remnant theology.

> But a paradox appears when it is recognized that while all mankind is guilty and must utterly perish, converted mankind must yet have a place in the new order. The difficulty is partly eased by the concept of the Remnant. Although it is never explicitly declared that the Remnant is the link between the two aspects of the Day, we may reasonably assume it on the strength of the term itself and of a number of other clues, especially the story of the Flood (Gen. 6.5f.)….
>
> Where will God find the Remnant fit to serve as nucleus of the new mankind, since relatively righteous Noahs, as the sequel of that story itself confirms, will not suffice?
>
> No answer has been given, except the Christian.[35]

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[34] Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 150. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 178, has a similar, if less detailed view.

[35] Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 151.

He is correct in stating, “It is never explicitly declared that the Remnant is the link between the two aspects of the Day,” but I find his solution unconvincing.

Summary

Scholarship has not been able to adequately explain the juxtaposition. Though Floyd (and to a lesser extent Sweeney) sees these clauses as motivational, he still does not explain how the motivation works and why these seemingly irreconcilable concepts exist back-to-back.

Speech-Act and Interpretation of Zephaniah 3:8–9

Illocutionary Force as Confirmation of Locutionary Meaning

Speech-act theory does not itself interpret a text but takes the locutionary meaning of a statement and identifies what it is trying to do. Besides other clues (context, voice inflection, etc.), the force of a statement is mostly contained in its form and its content. Alston describes it thus, “Sentence meaning is illocutionary act potential.”[36]

The basic interpretation of Zeph 3:8–9 has already been established through normal exegetical means. Speech-act analysis was not used. The unusual juxtaposition in these verses, however, suggests that there is a purpose that has not yet been ascertained. Knowing this purpose will provide the reason that they are presented as they are.

There is a difference between the meaning of the content of a sentence and the reason that it is being uttered. Alston identifies this difference with the terms *speaker meaning* and *linguistic meaning*.

> Now there is an obvious and intimate connection between what the speaker said, and both speaker meaning (what the speaker meant by what he or she said) and linguistic meaning (in this case sentence meaning), what the sentence uttered by the speaker means. First of all, in one of the meanings of the protean expression ‘what the speaker meant’, the one under consideration here, it is just a formulation for what the

[36] Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*, 160.

> speaker said. If you are told what he said, you have all you could ask for as an answer to "What did he mean?". Thus to specify the illocutionary act performed is to specify the speaker meaning of that utterance.[37]

Thus to identify the illocutionary force of a statement is to understand the *speaker meaning* of the utterance. So when there is potential disagreement about meaning of a statement, the perceived illocutionary force can illuminate the speaker's precise intended meaning. In the case of Zeph 3:8–9, when the illocutionary force is examined, it will confirm the locutionary interpretation already offered.

Illocutionary Force as Determination of Intent

Searle defined illocutionary force as, "Whenever a speaker utters a sentence in an appropriate context with certain *intentions*, he performs one or more illocutionary speech acts."[38] Remember Vanhoozer's comment from chapter 2. "On one level, speech-act philosophy corresponds admirably with the missional model of communication as intentional action….Speech acts, as Austin and others have pointed out, have other *agendas* than transmitting information.[39]

Searle's assumption for ordinary speech is that people do not talk just to make noise—there is some purpose behind speaking. When looking at the Bible, Vanhoozer points to its *missional* character—a more specific purpose. So rather than simply let the statements of Zeph 3:8–9 just roll by, it would be good to examine their purpose within the purpose of the entire book. Analyzing the illocutionary form of these statements will give direction.

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[37] Ibid., 160–61.

[38] Searle and Vanderveken. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, 1, emphasis mine.

[39] Vanhoozer, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts," 15, emphasis mine.

The Seven Components of Illocutionary Force. Chapter 2 listed in some detail Searle's terminology description of these components. Following is a summary:[40]

1. Illocutionary point with a direction of fit
    a. Assertive—word-to-world
    b. Commissive—world-to-word
    c. Directive—world-to-word
    d. Declarative—double-direction
    e. Expressive—null-direction
2. The mode of achievement
3. The degree of strength
4. Propositional content conditions
5. Preparatory conditions
6. Sincerity conditions
7. The degree of sincerity conditions

Just the illocutionary point gives the biggest clue to purpose. However, the other factors are also important. Here are a few examples:

(1) A seemingly directive statement: "Go ahead and leave" may be tempered by insincerity, either through a sarcastic tone or a context that makes clear this is not the true intent of the speaker. In that case, the purpose will be quite different than if the speaker were sincere.

(2) On its surface "This meeting is adjourned" is a declarative statement. If the speaker has the authority to do so, his intention is simply to orderly bring an end to the meeting. If he does not have the authority (preparatory condition) then the declaration fails. He could be trying to force the chairman to close the meeting, he could be trying to incite the crowd to action, or he could be trying to place himself in authority. Other clues will need to be examined to see his intention.

(3) "I will come if it does not rain" is a commissive. However, the intention of the speaker to follow through is tempered by the propositional content condition. If it rains, he may or may not follow through.

[40] This summary is derived from Searle and Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*.

Illocutionary Forces in Zeph 3:8–9. What are the forces present in these two verses and how should they be categorized?

Therefore, wait for me—the utterance of Yahweh—for the day of my arising for prey. This is the main clause of the two verses. Each of the other statements are made subservient to it by the use of the connective כִּי. Applying Searle's seven categories to this statement yields the following data:

(1) The illocutionary point of the imperative "wait for me" is necessarily directive. Its world-to-word intent is to bring the reality of the hearers to match the desire of Yahweh.

(2) Knowing the relationship of Yahweh to his people leads to the initial conclusion that the mode of achievement is that Yahweh has authority over the hearers. But the text itself indicates more. Yahweh also gives motivation to obey based on the כִּי clauses.

(3) The simple "wait for me" itself does not indicate any particular level of strength. However, the next phrase, נְאֻם־יְהוָה, "utterance of Yahweh," is a forceful declaration that these words are to be heeded. Further, the entire book describes the terrible Day of Yahweh from which the hearers would like to escape. Therefore, even the surrounding context makes the appeal of the directive quite strong.

(4) There is no direct propositional condition. The statement is not worded, "If I do these things, then wait on me." However, the כִּי clauses are given as motivation which was determined in chapter 2 to be analogous (I will discuss their illocutionary force below).

(5) The obvious preparatory condition is Yahweh's authority over his people. Beyond that, the fear of the coming events also prepares the hearers to want to obey that authority.

(6) That Yahweh is sincere in his desire for the faithful to obey is borne out by the phrase, נְאֻם־יְהוָה, "utterance of Yahweh," which serves to draw the hearers attention to the seriousness of the sentence.

(7) His strong sincerity is demonstrated when he points out how righteous and faithful he is compared to Jerusalem's leaders in 3:5.

For my judgment is to assemble nations, that I would gather kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my fierce anger. For in the fire of my zeal all the earth will be consumed. This is the first of two motivational clauses but the first of three כִּי clauses. The second כִּי clause is not motivational. The content of this clause is essentially the same as of the first and as such, must be subservient to it. It is repeated word for word from 1:18 (with the exception of changing from third person to first). Its purpose here is mainly to link the entirety of Zeph 1 to this verse. The Day of Yahweh and all the detail that it entails is brought into 3:8 but this repetition.

Getting back to the entire clause, the following is the result of applying Searle's categories:

(1) The illocutionary form of the statement is assertive. Chapter 2 demonstrated that for a declarative sentence to be commissive requires that it is a declarative sentence which contains (1) a first person future grammatical structure, *S*, and either (2a) words of commitment, such as "promise", "assure", or "commit", *C*, or (2b) an expression that indicates benefit to the hearer, *B*.

Initially, an argument could be made that it is actually expressive, that the speaker declares his feelings on a matter. However, when Yahweh says, *my judgment is to*…, he is not describing what he feels or thinks about a matter, but is stating what he is going to do. In the exegesis of 3:8 in chapter 5, it was found that Yahweh's judgment was to be demonstrated in action. Therefore, Yahweh declares what he is going to do.

Technically, there is not a first person future verbal construction here. Even the second כִּי clause is a passive with the entire earth as the subject. However, this is quibbling. Despite the sentence structure, that Yahweh says "I will gather and pour" is the obvious surface meaning.

There are no explicit words of promise or commitment. Whether this is a promise will have to be determined by other means. Finally, there is no explicit benefit to the hearer. It has taken a fair bit of exegetical and structural examination to determine that this might be the case, because it is not obvious by the statement itself.

For an example of a statement which is explicit, just a bit later in Zephaniah the prophet declares, הִנְנִי עֹשֶׂה אֶת־כָּל־מְעַנַּיִךְ בָּעֵת הַהִיא, "Behold I will deal with all those who humiliate you at that time" (3:19). If the benefit to the audience is not clear enough by identifying those with whom he will deal as those who humiliate them, he goes on to say, וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶת־הַצֹּלֵעָה, "And I will save the lame." Therefore, Yahweh's future action in this verse extends specific benefit to the hearer.

Therefore, I contend that this first extended כִּי clause could be described as S+ C0 B? (has a first person grammatical structure, no explicit words of promise, uncertain benefit to the hearer in the statement itself). Therefore, it is not commissive in its form. As there is no imperative, it is not a directive form. Expressive has already been eliminated. This leaves assertive and declarative.

Houston was quoted in chapter 2 that these types of statements are necessarily declarative in that Yahweh is passing sentence and doing so brings it about. I argued in that chapter that he linked this decision to Yahweh's appeal to the audience to convert. There is no such appeal here. Yahweh addresses people who do not need to repent and tells them what he will do to the wicked. Therefore, Houston's logic does not apply here and it can not a declarative statement.

As a result, the illocutionary *form* of this statement is assertive: Yahweh provides the informational content of his future actions. However, as 3:8–9 forms a dramatic climax to the entire work, it seems that there is intention beyond the sharing of information. Therefore, it bears more examination for a possible primary illocution.

That there is benefit to the hearer in the action of Yahweh comes from other clues. First is the already discussed motivational value of the כִּי clause. Next, the loop from 2:3 to 3:8 by way of the repetition of מִשְׁפָּט was noted in chapter 5. The faithful are those who perform Yahweh's מִשְׁפָּט—they live it themselves and long for it in the world. Since Yahweh declares in this verse that it is his מִשְׁפָּט to destroy wickedness in the world, both he and the faithful have the same agenda. Yahweh's action benefits the hearers. Since the faithful want to see his מִשְׁפָּט and since the כִּי clause is motivational, then Yahweh's declaration of his future action to destroy the wicked earth is a promise. The faithful will not have to endure evil forever because Yahweh will remove it from their midst. Therefore, by way of implicature, this assertive formed statement is shown to be commissive in its primary illocution.

(2) The mode of achievement is Yahweh's recognized power to do whatever he wishes in the earth. This audience would have no trouble believing that.

(3) The piling up of strong terms indicates the degree of strength. Yahweh will act in fury and fire. Not some of the earth, but all of it will be consumed.

(4) There is no propositional condition.

(5) There is no preparatory condition.

(6) Yahweh's sincerity to carry out this decree is accepted by the faithful as they consider him faithful to do as he says.

(7) The strength of sincerity is evidenced by the fact that *For in the fire of my zeal…* brings all of Zeph 1 into this verse. Almost repetitiously, Yahweh declares again and again what he will do.

For at that time, I will turn upon the peoples a pure lip, that each of them would call upon the name of Yahweh, that [they] serve him with one shoulder. This third כִּי clause is the second motivational clause. This is the result of applying Searle's categories:

(1) For the same reasons discussed at length regarding the previous motivational clause, the illocutionary *form* of this sentence is assertive. Its form is not commissive as only one of the necessary conditions exist: *S*1 *C*0 *B*?. For the same reasons as before, it does not appear to be directive, declarative, or expressive either.

By way of implicature, it was determined that the first motivational clause had a primary illocution of commissive because it was in a motivational clause and it was shown why the hearers would be benefit by this action. This clause is likewise commissive. Is there also a benefit to the hearers? How do they benefit by the conversion of the nations?

Conversion of peoples not part of the covenant might be a surprising motivation. The book of Jonah might be thought of as more typical of the attitude of the average Israelite. Jonah was happy to see Nineveh destroyed but quite unhappy to see them repent and be blessed by Yahweh. Though the message of the book of Jonah seems to oppose his attitude, it was still undoubtedly common. Even the Psalms are filled with requests for Yahweh to destroy individual or national enemies. Absent are the requests to convert and bless them.

Perhaps it would be asking too much to believe that the faithful residents of Jerusalem were concerned about the well being of other nations. After all, most of the time these nations were enemies of Yahweh's people. However, they do care that Yahweh receive glory from all nations. Though there is always benefit for a people to serve Yahweh, the focus of this verse is that he is glorified because of their conversion.

Zephaniah prepared his audience for this in 2:11. Yahweh replaces the gods of the nations and is worshipped from the far reaches of the earth. He would show his superiority over other gods by starving them. Only he would be left to worship.

A verse like Ps 22:27 [MT 22:28], which longs for the ends of the earth to turn to Yahweh and worship him, does not have as its focus the benefit to the nations. Ps 22:28 [22:29] gives the

focus: כִּי לַיהוָה הַמְּלוּכָה וּמֹשֵׁל בַּגּוֹיִם, “For to Yahweh is dominion and he rules over the nations.” It is Yahweh’s glory that motivates the faithful. The faithful declare his glory to the nations (Ps 18:49 [18:50]).

Therefore, the motivational center of 3:9 is the glory that Yahweh receives. Since this also matches the desire of the faithful, they are also benefited by the action which makes it a promise. Though its form is assertive, the primary illocution is then commissive.

(2) As in the first motivation, the mode of achievement is Yahweh’s recognized power over the entire earth.

(3) Nothing in the sentence exhibits a particular degree of strength.

(4) There is no propositional condition.

(5) There is no preparatory condition.

(6) As in the first motivation, Yahweh’s sincerity to carry out this decree is accepted by the faithful as they consider him faithful to do as he says.

(7) Nothing in the sentence exhibits a particular degree of sincerity strength.

The two clauses of complete destruction and universal salvation are both commssive, that is, they are Yahweh’s promises to the faithful that he is going to act to both bring wickedness to an end and be glorified through the conversion of the nations. Even the existence of this book is a witness that there were those in Jerusalem who were a receptive audience for Zephaniah’s message; otherwise it would not have been preserved.

Therefore, not only does speech-act theory not contradict my interpretation of these verses, it further strengthens that interpretation by showing that the commissive illocutionary force of the כִּי clauses best fits the interpretation to the facts. Now it is time to apply the speech-act results to the juxtaposition problem.

Summary: The Purpose of the Juxtaposition

I still have not answered the original question posed by this dissertation. Why are these two irreconcilable statements placed right next to each other? The results of the speech-act analysis provides the answer.

That the two statements are difficult to reconcile is true only when they are approached historically. Whether one's approach places these events in the past or in the future, identifying these events in history is at the heart of the confusion.

What speech-act analysis demonstrates is that these statements are not assertive, that is, they are not spoken just to communicate content. Rather, as they are commissive promises, they are spoken to motivate the hearers to obey Yahweh's command. Two future actions, both of which gladden the hearts of the faithful are laid side by side strictly for motivational purposes. For this audience, destroying the wicked is good news. Likewise, conversion of the peoples is also good news. The true follower of Yahweh who has his מִשְׁפָּט at heart wants to see both of those things happen so that Yahweh is glorified in all the earth. Since this is the purpose of each statement individually, and since the time value of כִּי־אָז indicates that these events are simultaneous and not sequential, it is also the purpose of the two statements together.

Therefore, the two motivational clauses are not meant to be merged; they are simply to be recognized as true. The tension is left unresolved, because in a literary sense, there is none; it only exists in an historical sense. Where previous scholarship has gone wrong is to try and find a historical way of merging the two statements; therefore, they propose the various attempts at a solution that were shown earlier in this chapter.

If motivation is indeed the intention, then Zephaniah's real audience would not be concerned with the details of how this would all work out. Instead, they would be encouraged to wait upon Yahweh.

While it may be true in a historical sense that mercy follows judgment or that judgment is ultimately purifying, or that the picture of complete destruction is hyperbolic, that is not the rhetorical force or meaning of these verses. Zephaniah makes an appeal to his hearers to a particular course of action and motivates them to follow it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NATIONS IN ZEPHANIAH AND THE LATTER PROPHETS

The interpretation offered in chapter 5 demonstrates that Zephaniah's main audience is the faithful in Jerusalem, with the rest of the city allowed to overhear. The nations and the future restored Zion are rhetorical audiences. The nations, though not the focus of Zephaniah's message, figure quite prominently in the message delivered to the faithful. They will be punished for their sins on the Day of Yahweh in Zeph 1. Four specific nations are singled out as representatives of all nations for destruction in 2:5–15. The wicked in Jerusalem are declared to be one of the nations in 3:1–7. In the great climax of 3:8–9, nations and kingdoms, even the entire earth, will be judged and destroyed as Yahweh pours out his wrath on them. At the same time, he will convert peoples so that they can call on the name of Yahweh and serve him. All of this attention given to the nations is to motivate the faithful to continue in faithfulness and wait upon Yahweh through the dark days to come.

In chapter 1, Ben Zvi was quoted as speculating that the book of Zephaniah has suffered from lack of scholarly attention because he "shows few 'new ideas,' i.e., the book, or the prophet echoes ideas found elsewhere in the prophetic literature."[1] There is both truth and falsity to that statement. When surveying the other Latter Prophets, the basic content ideas that Zephaniah expresses and even his terminology can be found elsewhere, often in abundance. However, he weaves those ideas in a way that is unmatched and significant.

[1] Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study*, 29.

The Prophetic View of the Nations

Lists of Nations

At several points in the Latter Prophets, lists of nations are cited for judgment: Isa 13–19; Jer 47–51; Ezek 25–29; Amos 1:3–2:3; Zech 9:1–11:3. Only the list in Amos is as tightly presented as in Zephaniah. As in Amos, this list serves the purpose of demonstrating that Jerusalem does not act like Yahweh's people, but rather acts like heathen nations and will therefore be judged as one. Amos uses the rhetorical format of framing his condemnation of Judah and Israel in the identical form as each of the other nations; there is no ambiguity. Zephaniah adds the rhetorical wrinkle of not naming the city he is condemning but making it appear as a continuation of the judgment against Nineveh. Only gradually does the audience become aware that he is speaking about Jerusalem.

The OAN section of 2:5–15 lists four specific nations for destruction—Philistia, Moab and Ammon, Cush, and Assyria. As noted in chapter 4, scholars have long seen these nations as four points on a compass. Whatever their individual sins and judgment, they also stand in for the entire earth.

Zephaniah does not treat each of the four nations in the same manner. For Roberts, this is evidence that these oracles are pulled out of their original settings.

> The oracles reflect no common form, and there are no recurring patters to tie them together. Verses 5–7 take the form of a *hōy*-oracle, a type of oracle that is often found in series, but none of the other oracles assume this form. The only things the oracles really have in common is the announcement of a future judgment on foreign nations. It is also possible that the compositional process may have trimmed some of the individual oracles; the oracle against Ethiopia, for instance, is surprisingly brief.[2]

[2] Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 195.

When we look later at the other prophets, however, we see that this is not atypical. Only Amos has any symmetry to his treatment of each nation. The other prophetic passages are, like Zephaniah, of unequal length and differing language.

Philistia, in Zeph 2:5–7, is treated in fourteen lines. The focus is on their location; they inhabit the land of the sea which will be given over to the remnant of Judah. No sin is listed; they are simply told דְּבַר־יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם, "the word of Yahweh is against you."

Moab and Ammon are treated together in sixteen lines in 2:8–10. Here Yahweh starts with their sins: that they reproach Judah and have designs on her territory. The final lines state that this is the reason for their destruction. Ironically, Judah will come to possess their land. Unlike Philistia which they will inhabit, Moab and Ammon will be so completely destroyed that they could rightly be compared to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Cush is dealt with in a mere two lines in 2:12. No sins are listed, just a message that they will be pierced by the sword of Yahweh.

The real invective is reserved for Assyria. Nineteen highly descriptive lines are devoted to this nation in 2:13–15. The only sin charged against her is pride and self reliance. Her end is described in considerable detail. Nineveh will be so completely wiped out that only wild animals will live in the ruins. Passers by will mock her.

Characterization of the Nations

The nations are never neutral in the prophets. They fail to acknowledge Yahweh and worship other gods. They are outside of Yahweh's covenant with Israel. They are enemies of Yahweh's people and attempt to wipe them out or enslave them. As a result, they are sinners and enemies of Yahweh.

The most common term for the nations in general, גּוֹי, acquired a wholly negative, religious connotation in the Talmud.[3] This later usage may have influenced Christian interpretation as is evidenced by the preponderance of "heathen" as a translation of גּוֹי in KJV. This is probably not present in the term itself, since Israel is sometimes referred to positively as גּוֹי.[4] Other terms like עַם and מַמְלָכָה are often used synonymously with גּוֹי to refer to foreign nations. The *meaning* of גּוֹי is not "heathen", but in the hands of the Latter Prophets, its *referent* is typically described so.

In Zephaniah, the nations as a whole are characterized as sinners against Yahweh (1:17). The four nations in the OAN section are boastful (2:10), have designs on Judah's territory (2:8), and elevate themselves as gods (2:15). Otherwise their status seems to be assumed. These kinds of charges are quite consistent with other prophetic texts.

The Negative Future of the Nations

The Future Destruction of the Nations

The nations are often slated for devastation in the Latter Prophets. Often, the texts speak of Yahweh executing his wrath against them and destroying a single nation or the entire earth. Table 6 demonstrates this.

Table 6 Future Judgment against the Nations.

Text	Target	Description of Divine Wrath
Isa 2:9–22	Proud mankind	Terror
Isa 3:13–15	The peoples, Israel	Judgment
Isa 7:1–8:8	Ephraim and Aram	
Isa 8:9–10	All peoples	
Isa 10:5–34	Proud Assyria	Indignation, wrath, fury, fire, consuming

[3] Ronald E. Clements, "גּוֹי," *TDOT*, 2:432.

[4] Daniel I. Block, "Nations/Nationality," *NIDOTTE*, 4:970.

Isa 13:1–22	Mankind and Babylon	Indignation, heat of anger, fury
Isa 14:24–27	Assyria and all nations	Purpose
Isa 14:28–32	Philistia	
Isa 15:1–16:14	Moab	Fury
Isa 17:1–11	Damascus and Ephraim	
Isa 17:12–14	Many nations	
Isa 19:1–17	Egypt	Terror, purpose
Isa 20:1–6	Egypt and Cush	
Isa 21:1–10	Babylon	
Isa 21:11–12	Dumah	
Isa 21:13–17	Arabia	
Isa 22:1–25	Jerusalem	
Isa 23:1–14	Tyre and Sidon	Purpose
Isa 24:1–23	The entire earth	Terror
Isa 25:10–12	Moab	
Isa 26:20–21	Inhabitants of the earth	Anger
Isa 29:5–8	Foes of Zion	Consuming fire
Isa 30:27–33	The nations and Assyria	Indignation, burning wrath, furious wrath, consuming fire, anger
Isa 31:8–9	Assyria	
Isa 34:1–17	The nations and Edom	Enraged, burning, vengeance, judgment
Isa 47:1–15	Babylon	Vengeance
Isa 63:1–6	Edom and the peoples	Wrath, burning, vengeance
Isa 66:15–16	All flesh	Indignation, wrath, flames of fire, burning
Jer 9:25–26	Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab	
Jer 25:15–38	All nations	Heat of wrath, burning
Jer 30:1–24	All enemy nations	Heat of wrath, terror, burning, consumed
Jer 46:1–28	Egypt	Vengeance, consumed
Jer 47:1–7	Philistia	
Jer 48:1–47	Moab	Terror, judgment, consumed
Jer 49:1–6	Ammon	Terror
Jer 49:7–22	Edom	Purpose
Jer 49:23–27	Damascus	Consumed
Jer 49:28–33	Kedar and Hazor	
Jer 49:34–39	Elam	Heat of wrath
Jer 50:1–51:64	Babylon	Indignation, purpose, anger, enraged, vengeance, judgment, consumed
Ezek 21:28–32 [MT 21:33–37]	Ammon	Indignation, fire of fury
Ezek 25:1–7	Ammon	

Ezek 25:8–11	Moab and Seir	
Ezek 25:12–14	Edom	Burning wrath, vengeance
Ezek 25:15–17	Philistia	Burning, vengeance
Ezek 26:1–21	Tyre	
Ezek 27:1–36	Tyre	
Ezek 28:20–23	Sidon	Holiness
Ezek 29:1–16	Egypt	
Ezek 29:17–21	Egypt	
Ezek 30:1–19	Egypt	Burning
Ezek 30:20–26	Egypt	
Ezek 31:1–18	Egypt	
Ezek 32:1–16	Egypt	
Ezek 32:17–32	Egypt with Assyria, Elam, Meshech-Tubal, Edom, Phoenicia	
Ezek 35:1–15	Seir and Edom	
Ezek 36:5–7	The nations and Edom	Zeal, burning
Ezek 38:1–39:29	Nations of the far north	Fury, burning, holiness, zeal, judgment
Hos 4:1–3	Inhabitants of the earth	
Joel 3:1–21 [MT 4:1–21]	All nations, Phoenicia, Philistia	
Amos 1:3–5	Damascus	Consumed
Amos 1:6–8	Philistia	Consumed
Amos 1:9–10	Tyre	Consumed
Amos 1:11–12	Edom	Consumed
Amos 1:13–15	Ammon	Consumed
Amos 2:1–3	Moab	Consumed
Obad 1–21	Edom and all nations	Consumed
Mic 1:2	All peoples	
Mic 5:15 [MT 5:14]	Disobedient nations	Burning wrath, vengeance
Mic 7:13	The earth	
Nah 1:2–11	Yahweh's foes	Indignation, heat of wrath, fire, anger, burning, vengeance, consumed
Nah 2:1–3:19	Nineveh	
Hag 2:21–22	Kingdoms and nations	
Zech 1:14–21	The nations	Zeal, enraged
Zech 9:1–18	Tyre, Sidon, Philistia	Consumed
Zech 12:1–9	All hostile nations	Consumed
Zech 14:1–15	All hostile nations	
Mal 4:1–3 [MT 3:19–21]	All arrogant and wicked	

Reasons that the Nations Are Judged

Often no specific reason is given for Yahweh's judgment. Mostly the nations are just generally, but not specifically, wicked. When specific reasons are given, they tend to be these: (1) They have fought against Israel/Judah or even just coveted their land (Isa 20:8; Jer 12:14–15; 24:1–26:2; Joel 3:2–3; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; Mic 4:11). (2) They are simply arrogant or think of themselves as gods (Isa 10:7–11; Jer 28:1–5; 29:2–3; Obad 3–4).

In Zeph 1 no particular reason is given for punishing the nations other than the fact that they have sinned against Yahweh (1:17). When Jerusalem is cited, however, a host of reasons are given which mostly come down to forsaking Yahweh and perhaps seeking other gods.

No reason is given in Zeph 2 for the punishment of Philistia or Cush. Ammon and Moab are cited for reviling against Yahweh's people, which was determined to mean that they have designs upon Judah's territory. This makes them enemies of Yahweh. Nineveh is excoriated for its self deification, which equates to a refusal to acknowledge Yawheh.

Jerusalem is specifically cited in 3:1–7 for not seeking Yahweh, for judging unrighteously, profaning what is holy and corrupting the Torah, and general sinfulness and corruption. They are also proud and haughty, conditions that will be reversed on the Day of Yahweh (3:11).

No additional reasons are given for the universal destruction in 3:8. Yahweh has already made his case. Further, the purpose for even mentioning the judgment is not to justify it with reasons, but to motivate the faithful to wait upon him.

The Language of Wrath

The destruction of the nations is not a dispassionate event. God is typically pictured as wrathful and executing vengeance. Table 6 above shows how often the many terms for the anger or vengeance of Yahweh are used throughout the Latter Prophets.

Modern sensibilities tend to recoil at descriptions of God as angry or vengeful. H. G. L. Peels recognizes this problem and states, "As a result of the meaning attributed to the word 'vengeance,' intuitive or subconscious associations (e.g. with gods of vengeance) are all too easily drawn. The negative connotations of the word vengeance hinder a proper understanding of the intention and meaning of the theologoumenon of God's vengeance."[5]

In his survey of the uses of the root נקם, Peels contends that it is used in terms of Yahweh's functions as king, judge, and warrior.[6] Yahweh does not just possess titles; he is a holy and righteous king who promotes justice for all people. "The vengeance of God is an extension of his holiness and zeal, it is paired with his wrath and it stands in service of his righteousness."[7] Yahweh is right to punish the earth because it is in the best interest of Zion whom he loves.

> The fact that God's vengeance stands in the service of salvation is the most evident from the longing and joy concerning this vengeance, in which there is, incidentally, no trace of malice. The nations of the world rejoice over the vengeance of God, who brings atonement (Deut. 32:43). The vengeance prepares the way for eternal joy in Zion (Isa. 34–35) and is one part of the content of the good news (Isa. 61). The book of Nahum concludes with the universal joy. The vengeance of God brings comfort, relief and hope (Ps. 58, 79, 94), and it takes away the final barrier for the eternal praise of all creatures (Ps. 149).[8]

Raabe notes that Yahweh's wrath does not manifest itself because Yahweh is an inherently wrathful God, but because outside forces—the wickedness of people—provokes Yahweh to respond in defense of his righteousness and holiness.[9]

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[5] H. G. L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root NQM and the Function of NQM-Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 31; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 3.

[6] Ibid., 277–84.

[7] Ibid., 292.

[8] Ibid., 295.

[9] Paul R. Raabe, "The Two 'Faces' of Yahweh: Divine Wrath and Mercy in the Old Testament," in *And Every Tongue Confess: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (ed. Gerald S. Krispin and Jon D. Vieker; Dearborn, Mich.: Nagel Festschrift Committee, 1990), 288–90.

Zeph 3:8 is quite explicit in its devastation of the nations as a result of Yahweh's wrath. The terms he uses are also used in the other prophets.

Yahweh will pour out (שָׁפַךְ) his indignation (זַעַם). זַעַם is used to describe Yahweh's wrath in several passages against the nations, but never with שָׁפַךְ. Typically it is חֵמָה, "burning", that is poured out. Though this pairing is unique, both terms figure in other prophetic descriptions.

Both חֲרוֹן, "heat", and אַף, "wrath", are used in many contexts of judgment. The construct chain is used for both judgment on the nations (Isa 13:9, 13; Jer 25:37, 38; 30:24; 49:37; 51:45; Nah 1:6) and upon Israel/Judah (Jer 4:8, 26; Hos 11:9).

Both אֵשׁ, "fire", and קִנְאָה, "zeal", are used in reference to the nations. Only Ezek 36:5 and 38:19 use them in a construct chain as here.

Zephaniah's focus on Yahweh's מִשְׁפָּט, discussed in chapter 5, brings to the forefront the concept presented earlier in this chapter regarding his wrath. He is not a wrathful God, but is moved to action by the sinfulness of mankind. Wrath is the zealous application of his מִשְׁפָּט in all the earth. For the faithful, wrath is good news since it will be directed against those who live wickedly.

Yahweh's Wrath Consumes

Table 6 includes the root אכל, "to consume". This is a common term for the elimination of individual nations, whether by literal fire (Isa 29:6; Jer 49:27; Amos 1; Nah 3:13) or metaphorically by Yahweh himself (Isa 31:8; Nah 2:14). Isa 24:6 says the entire earth אָכְלָה, "is consumed" by a curse. The root אכל ordinarily means "eat". From this basic meaning arise metaphorical uses. Fire *consumes* and the sword *destroys*.[10] In the context of Yahweh's

[10] Magnus Ottosson, "אָכַל," TDOT, 1:236–39.

judgment, though אֵשׁ mostly refers to literal fire, as in the burning down of cities, it is also used to describe the intensity of Yahweh's wrath. When Yahweh's fire consumes or when enemies are visited by his consuming fire, a mental image is created of a fire that burns up everything in its path. Nothing can stop it—not strong towers nor the wealth of the nations, as Zephaniah declares in 1:16–18. This is how the prophets, and especially Zephaniah, want their audience to picture the destruction of the nations.

Destruction of the Entire Earth

Though Yahweh often deals with his people or specific nations in the Latter Prophets, the destruction of the entire earth is a not uncommon theme. At times the entire earth is referenced to focus on individual nations as seen in the previous section. At other times no specific nation is in view (Isa 49:22–26; Zech 12:1–10; 14:1–15). In these cases, the salvation of Israel is the context for Yahweh's actions upon the entire earth.

Beyond referencing *all the earth* one of the more picturesque ways to describe its completeness is the elimination of "man and beast" (Jer 7:20; 9:9; 21:6; 32:43; 33:10–12; 36:29; 50:3; 51:62; Ezek 14:13–21; 25:13; 29:8–11; 32:13).

Zephaniah likewise paints a picture of utter and total destruction. Nothing will be left standing anywhere on the face of the earth. Man and beast and bird and fish will be eradicated (1:3). It will be כָּלָה, "complete" (1:18). There will be no inhabitants left (2:5; 3:6). Cities will be so devastated that only wild beasts could inhabit them (2:14–15). The compass point orientation of the OAN section indicates that the entire earth, not just these four nations, is to be destroyed.

From the Entire Earth to Individual Nations

The move in Zeph 1 from general or widespread judgment to the smaller individual group is a common move in the Latter Prophets. It is "a convention of prophetic discourse."[11] It functions to ground "the fate of one place or of one group of people in a more all inclusive phenomenon. In contrast to an ad hoc accidental occurrence, the particular disaster was shown to be a predictable and understandable instance of a general reality."[12]

There are large scale moves that can be seen on the chart (Isa 2; 13–19; 24–25; Joel 4). Raabe also points out the much smaller moves where all nations or the entire earth is mentioned in just a line or two as an introduction to specific nations (Isa 3:13–15; 10:22–23; 30:27–33; 34:1–5; Ezek 7:2–3; Mic 1:2–5).

The examples above all move from the general to the particular. Raabe also cites examples where either the order of presentation is from the general to the particular and then back to the general (Isa 14:26–27) or where the mention of the general judgment is in the middle or end of the particular judgment oracle (Isa 10:23; 23:8–9; 28:22; Jer 12:12–13; Obad 15–16).

The tight construction of Zephaniah shows this same trend but with a unique twist. He does not make just a single move from general to specific or even the move from general to specific and back to general. Rather he oscillates somewhat like an accordion back and forth repeatedly between the general and specific to weave his message. Table 7 demonstrates this.

Table 7. Widening and Narrowing of Zephaniah's Focus on the Nations.

Text	Focus
1:2–3	All mankind
1:4–13	Jerusalem and Judah

[11] Paul R. Raabe, "The Particularizing of Universal Judgment in Prophetic Discourse," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 671.

[12] Ibid., 671.

1:14–18	All the earth
2:1–4	Jerusalem
2:5–10	Philistia, Ammon and Moab
2:11	The ends of the earth
2:12–15	Cush, Nineveh
3:1–5	Jerusalem
3:6	Nations
3:7	Jerusalem
3:8–9	All the earth
3:10–20	Future Jerusalem

This almost dizzying change of focus in such a tightly bound book is unprecedented in the Latter Prophets. It effectively indicates that when Zephaniah speaks of the entire earth, he means every individual nation. When he speaks of the individual nations, this will be the fate of all of them. As Raabe notes, "The move has the effect of emphasizing that a particular place or group is not exempt from what will happen to everyone else. It will not be treated in a special or unique way by Yhwh but in the same way as all the nations."[13]

In the constant back and forth Zephaniah has more in mind than simply making sure Jerusalem realizes what happens worldwide will also happen to her; the movements in Zeph 1 alone accomplish that task. Zephaniah, however, uses the changes in focus to make his rhetorical points. After the prologue of Zeph 1 which warns of the coming day of Yahweh, he begins his main appeal by summoning his specific audiences: Jerusalem and more specifically the faithful within her. The move from a declaration of judgment to a call to gather and listen casts Yahweh's appeal in a serious tone.

Next he moves the focus in 2:5–15 from Judah to nearby nations, one at a time. The look at these nations is motivation (the כִּי clause that begins 2:5) for the faithful to remain true to

[13] Ibid., 671.

Yahweh as they see what will be transpiring in the world around them Even though each of only four nations are singled out, which seems to be a narrow focus, there are two clues that a wider look is envisioned: (1) the already noted compass point orientation as a symbol of the entire earth and (2) the intrusion of 2:11. This verse unexpectedly widens the lens quickly and briefly to the entire earth before narrowing down to specific nations. This switch of focus is one reason that commentators speculate that this verse is a redactional interpolation that is misplaced (see chapter 3 for this discussion). Therefore, the switch from the narrow focus upon Jerusalem to the wider world is a reminder of what they need to be hidden from.

At 3:1 the look is brought in from the outside to Jerusalem. Zephaniah's rhetorical purpose, as seen in chapter 5, is to demonstrate that the wickedness seen in the outside world also exists in Jerusalem's leaders. Likewise, the punishment due the entire earth will come home to Judah. Once again, the focus quickly and briefly widens to all nations in 3:6 before returning to Jerusalem in 3:7. The purpose for this look is quite explicit: the wish that the wicked of the city would learn from the destruction of the nations and repent.

While addressing the faithful in Jerusalem in 3:8, Zephaniah widens the lens again to the entire earth. All nations—including Jerusalem who has now become one of the גּוֹיִם—will be destroyed. At the same time the nations will be converted and Yahweh will be glorified (3:9). From the ends of the earth, the earlier dispersed ones of Israel will return (3:10). This last verse, all by itself, begins to bring the focus back from the world to Jerusalem, where it continues through the end of the book.

This is a remarkable use of a prophetic convention that at each point has its own rhetorical purpose to contribute to the overall message.

Destruction as a Result of Yahweh's Judgment

The column for descriptions of Yahweh's wrath in Table 6 above also includes references to his מִשְׁפָּט, "judgment". Yahweh rises to judge all peoples, especially the elders of Israel (Isa 3:14). The sword of Yahweh is judgment upon Edom (Isa 34:5). Moab's devastation is also called judgment (Jer 48:21, 47). The leveling of Babylon is recognized by those who see it as judgment (Jer 51:9). The destruction of the entire earth is a result of Yahweh's judgment (Ezek 39:21). מִשְׁפָּט is used much more often to refer to Yahweh's judgment of Israel or Judah.

The Psalms likewise link מִשְׁפָּט with punishment of the nations. The wicked in general are judged (Ps 1:5). Unnamed enemies likewise receive judgment (Ps 76:10). Even other nations are singled out for Yahweh's judgment (Ps 9:15–17; 149:9).

Table 6 also lists several passages that speak of Yahweh acting due to his עֵצָה, "plan" (also used is the verbal root יעץ, "to decide" or "to plan"). This further reinforces the concept of judgment when it is remembered that "to decide" is part of the semantic range of מִשְׁפָּט. Just as important is seeing that judgment is not external to Yahweh. The continual references to "his" מִשְׁפָּט demonstrates that Yahweh, through his holiness, sets the standard of righteous judgment. This further reinforces the concept that the destruction of the nations is due to the judgment decision of Yahweh.

Just as Yahweh's מִשְׁפָּט is behind the destruction of the nations in other contexts, chapter 5 demonstrated the role that מִשְׁפָּט plays in Zephaniah.

Israel as One of the Nations

The nations of Israel and Judah are condemned for their sins, have judgment pronounced upon them, and are called to repent throughout the books of the prophets. Often this is done without reference to any foreign nations.

At other times, the prophets link the destruction of Yahweh's people to that of other nations (see Table 8 below). Isa 13–27 is a long section dealing with the nations. Isa 22 includes Jerusalem in a section of doomed nations, juxtaposing Jerusalem and Tyre in Isa 22 and 23.

Amos 1:3–2:8 is particularly noteworthy in that a very similar format and language is used for each nation. After six other nations are judged, Judah and Israel are each judged in language similar to that of the other nations. Each of the eight oracles begins with "For three sins of…[place name]…and even four, I will not turn back." This clearly marks the behavior and resulting punishment of Yahweh's people as identical to that of foreign nations.

The shifting back and forth between a wide and narrow focus in Zephaniah is a strong rhetorical tool to demonstrate that Jerusalem will be dealt with in the same manner as the rest of the nations. This point is further illustrated by the parallel הוי passages. This word begins the OAN section of 2:5–15. Then it begins the oracle against Jerusalem in 3:1–7. As noted in chapter 4, the ambiguity of 3:1 initially leads the audience to think Nineveh is still the subject. The mention of Yahweh as God of the city in 3:2 surprisingly identifies the city as Jerusalem. Zephaniah's audience would not miss his point: Jerusalem is one of the גּוֹיִם!

Another feature of Zephaniah's description of the inclusion of Jerusalem is in the already noted prophetic convention of changing focus from large to small. Raabe also notes that 1:3–6 exhibits what he calls a "biological taxonomy."[14] Below is his chart.

[14] Raabe, "The Particularizing of Universal Judgment in Prophetic Discourse," 670.

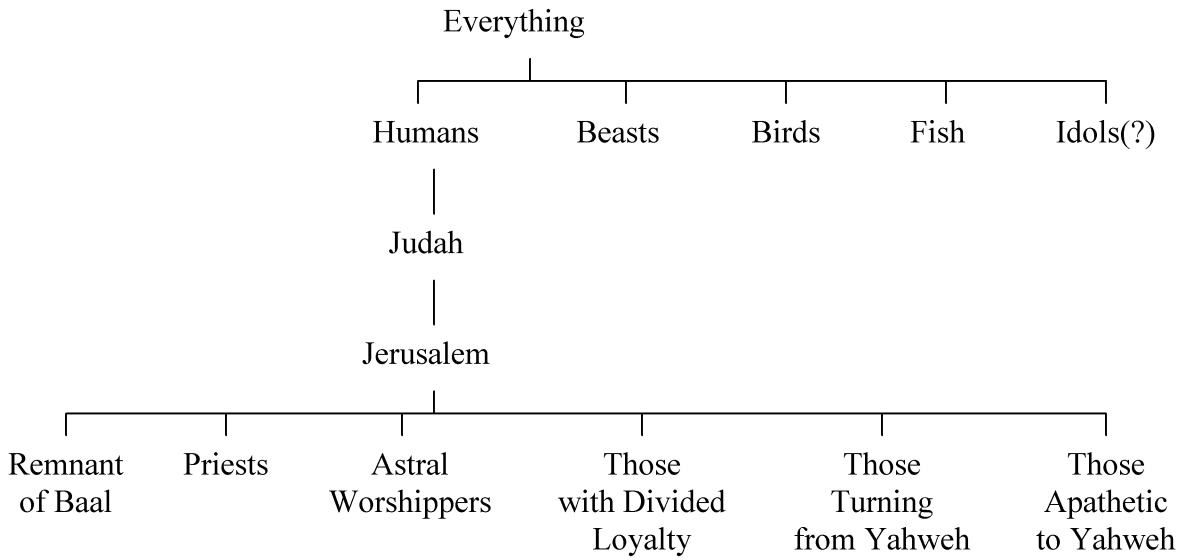

Figure 2. Narrowing of Focus in Zephaniah 1:2–6.

This represents the ultimate in narrowing the focus. When Zephaniah means Jerusalem, he means every sinful category within it, lest anyone think that he might be immune. This specification has two purposes then: (1) Bring judgment down to the smallest unit within the city and (2) together build up the picture of everyone.

Table 8. Israel Included with Foreign Nations in Judgment.

Text Citing Israel/ Wider Context of Nations	Yahweh's Nation	Foreign Nations
Isa 22/ Isa 13–26	Jerusalem	Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Cush, Egypt, Babylon, Dumah, Arabia, Tyre
Jer 9:25–26/ Jer 9:25–26	Judah	Egypt, Edom, Ammon, Moab, desert dwellers
Jer 25:15–38/ Jer 25:15–38	Jerusalem	Many other nations
Amos 2:4–5/ Amos 1:1–2:8	Judah	Assyria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab
Amos 2:6–8/ Amos 1:1–2:8	Israel	Assyria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab
Amos 9:7–8/ Amos 9:7–8	Israel	Cush, Philistia, Aram

The Positive Future Regarding the Nations

Table 9 below lists the many passages in the Latter Prophets which deal with the future of the nations, individually or as a group, in a positive manner. There is a wide variety of descriptions regarding that future.

To Yahweh's Glory

Some passages focus on Yahweh receiving glory. Ezek 25 does not say that the nations will be converted or that they will worship Yahweh, merely that they "will know I am Yahweh." In Isa 40:5 all flesh will see his glory. Nations will bring tribute to Yahweh in Zion (Isa18:7; 23:18; 45:14; Hag 2:6–9). Foreigners will become Israel's slaves (Isa 61:5). Jer 46–49 lists nations which will be restored as national entities after they are judged.

In none of these cases does the prophet declare that these foreign peoples are saved, that they worship Yahweh, or that they live under his peace. As these statements come within judgment passages this is not particularly surprising. In these contexts, the nations are vanquished foes who recognize that Israel's God has done this to them.

What is the meaning behind these declarations? I think it is to glorify Yahweh. The focus shifts from the nations and their need for punishment to Yahweh who will receive glory. Though Yahweh is the God of Israel and Judah, the prophets do not view him as a mere tribal god. Rather he is the creator of the earth and all that is in it. One of the failings of foreign nations is that they do not recognize this fact. One of the outcomes of Yahweh's judgment of the entire earth, then, is that he would be restored to his proper place as the only God over the entire earth.

Therefore, when I say that the nations are referred to in a positive manner, the nations may not view the outcome as positive for them. They could be bringing tribute grudgingly and may know that Yahweh is God without liking the fact. The outcome of what happens to the nations is positive in that the glory of Yahweh is recognized in all the earth.

What is sometimes subtly implied in the other prophets is made explicit in Zephaniah: that the focus of the positive future of the nations is not upon the nations but is upon Yahweh. 2:11 declares that Yahweh will be worshipped in place of other gods from the ends of the earth. 3:9 focuses the conversion of peoples to be for the purpose of serving and glorifying Yahweh. Further, 3:10 describes them bringing offerings to Yahweh in Jerusalem.

Salvation of the Nations

In other texts in the Latter Prophets, however, the nations explicitly receive merciful treatment from Yahweh. Again there is a wide range of the scope of that treatment.

In certain texts, the nations will merely know Yahweh, which is an expression of covenant (Isa 9:10–11). Other passages even indicate that they will be counted as part of the people of Yahweh (Isa 19:24–25; Amos 9:11–12; Zech 2:11). The future Davidic king will rule over the nations and bring peace (Isa 11:9–10; 16:1–5; Mic 5:4 [MT 5:3]; Zech 9:10).

In other texts, the nations will actually turn to Yahweh and receive his salvation (Isa 19:18–23; 45:22–23; Jer 12:14–16; Joel 2:32 [MT 3:5]; Mic 5:4 [MT 5:3]). The mission of Yahweh's servant will be extended to the nations (Isa 25:6–10; 42:1–17; 49:1–26; 52:13–53:12).

Even more significant for the treatment in Zephaniah, a few texts indicate that the nations will be converted as they will forsake their gods and idols and gladly worship Yahweh and offer him sacrifices (Isa 17:7–8; 19:18–23; 56:3–7; 66:18–23; Zech 8:20–23; 14:16).

Though the focus is still on the glory that Yahweh receives through these acts, it is worth noting that the nations benefit from this as well. Not only do they come to the saving knowledge of the true creator God, they will live under his righteous judgment and in peace with God and the rest of the earth.

Like the last listed category of texts in the Latter Prophets, Zephaniah is clear that the nations will not be merely vanquished people who are slaves to Israel and bring their wealth to

Yahweh. Rather they are converted. They acquire a pure lip, that is, their speech is changed to glorify Yahweh rather than blaspheme. They call upon his name. The worship him rather than the idols they used to worship.

As shown in chapter 6, this action of 3:9–10 is the reversal of the Tower of Babel. At Babel the people were of one speech but were arrogant toward Yahweh. Therefore, he confused their language and scattered them throughout the earth. On the Day of Yahweh, whatever language the peoples speak, it will be in praise of Yahweh and they will worship both in their own lands and at Jerusalem.

Zephaniah shows the nations being converted by the power of Yahweh rather than just repenting on their own as in Isa 56:3–7. Like Isaiah and Zechariah, Zephaniah actually imagines the nations becoming part of the people of Yahweh.

Zion as the Center of the Earth

Prevalent in all of the future positive outlooks is the centrality of Jerusalem/Zion. David Gowan's thesis is that texts that were written more than one hundred years before its destruction, texts that were written to predict or describe its destruction, and texts written after its destruction all still see Zion as the center of Yahweh's future restorative work.[15] His survey concludes, "The eschatological Zion is thus widely distributed in the prophetic literature, although the distribution is admittedly uneven, with a heavy concentration in Isaiah and Zechariah and a relatively small number of references in Jeremiah and Ezekiel."[16] He further notes the lack of mention in the northern prophets Amos and Hosea. However, Amos 9:11 describes the future of the nations

[15] Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

[16] Ibid., 9.

under the restored house of David. The center of David's kingdom is Jerusalem even if not named here.

A restored Jerusalem in Jeremiah and Ezekiel is especially noteworthy since the focus of so much of those books is the ruination of Jerusalem. Though they could speak of the elimination of the city as it stood in their time, they still described the future of Israel and Judah—and even the entire earth—as centered in that restored city.

Exceptions to Zion as the one place of worship are few. Isa 17:7–8 declares that nations will trust in Yahweh rather than idols (implying worship) without mentioning Jerusalem. Isa 19:19–21 declares that Egypt will sacrifice to Yahweh at an altar built within its borders. Though it seems possible that Yahweh (but only Yahweh) might be worshipped at a place other than Jerusalem, the rule of the Davidic king from there over the entire earth still marks Zion as the new center of all lands.

Zephaniah is consistent with this theme. Though Zephaniah. 2:11—the first hint of Gentile salvation in the book—states that each man will bow down to Yahweh מִמְּקוֹמוֹ, "from his own place", 3:10–13 explicitly declares that they will also worship Yahweh on his holy mountain of Zion. The nations will not worship their own gods at home, but wherever they are only Yahweh will be the object of their worship. The epilogue 3:14–20 names the future restored city of Jerusalem as where Yahweh will be with his people.

Table 9. Positive Future Involving the Nations.

Text	Nation	Envisioned Future
Isa 2:2–4	All nations	Flow to Zion, learn from Yahweh, peace
Isa 11:9–10	Nations	Knowledge of Yahweh, seek Davidic king
Isa 16:1–5	Remnant of Moab	Seek refuge in Zion under Davidic king
Isa 17:7–8	Mankind	Looks to Yahweh, not idols
Isa 18:7	Cush	Tribute to Yahweh in Zion

Isa 19:18–23	Egypt with Assyria	Worship Yahweh who saves and protects them
Isa 19:24–25	Egypt with Assyria	Made part of Yahweh's people
Isa 23:18	Tyre	Pays profits to Yahweh
Isa 25:6–10	All peoples	Enjoy feast on Zion, no more death
Isa 40:5	All flesh	Sees Yahweh's glory
Isa 42:1–17	Nations	Benefit from mission of Yahweh's servant
Isa 45:14	Egypt, Cush, Sabeans	Bring wealth to Zion
Isa 45:22–23	All corners of earth	Turn to Yahweh and be saved
Isa 49:1–26	Nations	Benefit from mission of Yahweh's servant
Isa 52:13–53:12	Many nations	Benefit from mission of Yahweh's servant
Isa 55:4–5	All nations	Will come to Israel
Isa 56:3–7	Foreigners who give allegiance to Yahweh	Joyful in Zion, sacrifices accepted
Isa 60:1–22	Nations	Come to Zion
Isa 61:5	Foreigners	Will serve Israel
Isa 66:18–23	All nations, all flesh	Come to Zion, declare Yahweh's glory to others, worship Yahweh
Jer 3:17	All nations	Gather to Jerusalem before Yahweh
Jer 12:14–16	Hostile neighbors	Receive Yahweh's compassion, restored within Israel if they follow Yahweh
Jer 46:26	Egypt	Restored after judgment
Jer 48:47	Moab	Restored after judgment
Jer 49:6	Ammon	Restored after judgment
Jer 49:39	Elam	Restored after judgment
Ezek 25:5, 7	Ammon	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 25:11	Moab	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 25:14	Edom	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 25:17	Philistia	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 26:6	Tyre	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 28:22–23	Sidon	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 29:6, 7, 16	Egypt	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 30:8, 19, 25–26	Egypt	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 32:15	Egypt	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 36:23, 36	Nations	Knows that I am Yahweh
Ezek 38:1–39:29	Nations	Knows that I am Yahweh
Joel 2:28 [MT 3:1]	All flesh	Yahweh's spirit poured out
Joel 2:32 [MT 3:5]	Everyone who calls on Yahweh	Saved
Amos 9:11–12	Remnant of Edom and all nations	Belong to David's house, called by Yahweh's name
Mic 4:1–4	Many nations	Flow to Zion, learn from Yahweh, peace and security
Mic 5:4 [MT 5:3]	Ends of the earth	Under rule of Davidic king

Hag 2:6–9	All nations	Bring wealth to Zion
Zech 2:11	Many nations	Join to Yahweh to become his people
Zech 8:20–23	Peoples, cities	Seek Yahweh and his favor in Jerusalem
Zech 9:10	Nations	Future king rules and speaks peace over them
Zech 14:16	Survivors of nations	Worship Yahweh in Jerusalem

Juxtaposition of Destruction and Salvation of the Nations

Zephaniah does not contain the only instance in which the nations are both destroyed and restored in somewhat close proximity (see Table 10 below). In four of the five cases (In Isaiah and Micah), the juxtaposition is not immediate. Though both concepts are in the same general context, there is no linkage between them.

Joel does place these two concepts back-to-back. If the "all flesh" of Joel 2:28 [Mt 3:1] includes Gentiles, then this section indicates the conversion of those both inside and outside of Israel.[17] Following the restoration is the declaration that Yahweh will judge foreign nations on behalf of Israel. This judgment section is headed by a כִּי clause. This seems to match Aejmalaeus' indirect causal subcategory of *explanatory*. It is an expansion of how Yahweh will deliver a remnant of Israel on the Day of Yahweh. The perfect verbs of 3:2, delivered in this future context, indicate an event that precedes the context. This makes the flow of thought: A remnant will be saved for Yahweh will have gathered the nations to judge them. The pouring out of the Spirit upon *all flesh* of a remnant follows the judgment of the nations.

[17] For purposes of the argument here, I am assuming that Gentiles are included. However, most commentators on Joel limit "all flesh" to all classes of people within Israel as is indicated in the context which follows. For a typical argument see Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; trans. Waldermar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); trans. of *Dodekapropheton 2 Joel and Amos* (BKAT 14:2; Moers: Neukrichner, 1969), 67.

Joel, then, shows a logical and even temporal relationship between restoration and destruction. However, there seems to be no rhetorical purpose to his juxtaposition. Zephaniah, however, uniquely places these two concepts immediately next to each other with no qualifying or explanatory language.

Zeph 3:8–9 has a different structure and flow of thought. Both judgment and conversion are headed with כִּי clauses. However the second clause is not subservient to the first but parallel with it. Both clauses combine to form a motivation for the audience to obey Yahweh's directive. There is no logical or temporal sequence, but a rhetorical purpose.

It is precisely this rhetorical purpose that make Zephaniah unique among the prophets. The juxtaposition is not accidental or the result of confused sources. Rather it is a device to spur the faithful to wait upon and trust in Yahweh. The purpose is not to relate the two actions to each other, but to tie each of them into the desires of the faithful to motivate them to trust.

Table 10. Juxtaposition of Destruction and Restoration of the Nations.

Destruction Text	Destruction Target	Restoration Text	Restoration Target
Isa 2:9–21	Proud mankind	Isa 2:2–4	All nations
Isa 24:1–23	Entire earth	Isa 25:6–10	All peoples
Joel 3:1–21 [MT 4:1–21]	All nations	Joel 2:28–32 [MT 3:1–5]	All flesh
Mic 4:13	Many peoples	Mic 4:1–4	Peoples, many nations
Mic 5:15 [MT 5:14]	Disobedient nations	Mic 5:4–5 [MT 5:3–4]	Ends of the earth

Summary

Zeph 3:8 forecasts the total annihilation of all nations and kingdoms while 3:9 foresees the nations serving Yahweh with pure worship. Both of these scenarios and the accompanying terminology appear regularly in the Latter Prophets. The fact that Zephaniah juxtaposes them

together is not only unique but significant. Its uniqueness calls attention to the possibility that there is rhetorical purpose, which confirms the analysis of chapter 6.

CONCLUSION

The perplexing juxtaposition of complete destruction followed by universal conversion took a lot of different tools to solve. What was learned from this exercise and what are its implications?

The Importance of Philological Work

Paying attention to the small details of lexicography and grammar yielded so much consistent and useful data. I started with the ordinary meaning of words, gave connecting words their full force, and paid attention to the person, gender, and number of verbs and pronouns. With just this step, I was able to determine (1) Neither 3:8 nor 3:9 could start entirely new sections. (2) The addressees of 3:8 could not be the wicked or entire city of Jerusalem. (3) "Wait for me" is hopeful. (4) The nations are the target of Yahweh's destruction in 3:8. (5) The nations, not Judah, are converted in 3:9.

This examination did not answer the original question but it cleared up many of the problems that kept scholars from having enough of a consensus to even consider the question.

The Proper Method to Determine Structure

It was shown that the way that a book is believed to be structured can greatly affect interpretation. I was able to show that in some cases, scholars constructed their structure based on hermeneutical presuppositions. In many other cases, the commentator's understanding of the content seemed to be the only determinant of how the book is structured.

I began constructing my structure by looking at philological clues. The keys in Zephaniah were discovered to be: (1) the presence of imperatives; (2) the use of key syntactical markers, הוֹי and לָכֵן; and (3) the recognition that כִּי must connect what follows with what precedes.

Next literary clues were applied: (1) analysis of the person, gender, and number of verbs, which showed that the referent of the imperative in 3:8 had to be the same group addressed in 2:3 and (2) recognition of the change of speaker and addressee.

Only then was what seemed to be logical content brought in, but made to serve the philological and literary data. While the resulting structure looks different than what some others construct looking at content alone, my structure was shown to be consistent with the content.

At the end of this step, the results of the philological examination were confirmed with the additional result that the judged nations of 3:8 also include the wicked of Judah. The original question of the dissertation was still not answered, however.

The Value of Speech-Act Theory

I noted that speech-act theory does not by itself classify a statement. What it does, however, is provide a framework of questions to bring to the text. After I classified and interpreted the main imperative of 3:8, the same questions were applied to the כִּי clauses. It was here that it was discovered that these clauses were motivation for the main imperative. At this point, not only was the earlier interpretation confirmed, but the reason for the juxtaposition came into focus.

I showed in chapter 2 that there has been more discussion of the value of speech-act theory than actual application of it in Biblical studies. I hope that I have done my work well enough in this dissertation to demonstrate the value of speech-act so that others may be encouraged to do the same.

Zephaniah's Place in the Latter Prophets

Zephaniah's prophecy is located at a time when the end was truly near. Unlike eighth century prophets, he issued no call to repentance; it was too late. In fact, his prophecy was not directed at the wicked at all. Rather he wrote to encourage and strengthen the faithful in the face of what was to come.

Zephaniah used common prophetic themes and conventions to make his case. He described the coming Day of Yahweh as a day of judgment and destruction on the entire earth. He used the language of wrath to describe Yahweh's actions. Every concept regarding the future of Jerusalem and the nations has multiple parallels in other prophetic books.

His exhortation to the humble of the land has echoes in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The difference is that these prophets encouraged the people after the capture of Jerusalem and the exile of many of its people. They wrote to people who were in the middle of hard times that those times would not last forever but that Yahweh would deliver them. Zephaniah, however, wrote to people who had not yet faced those hard times or even knew exactly what to expect.

Therefore, all those things that Zephaniah has in common with the other Latter Prophets become tools for him to motivate the faithful to seek Yahweh and wait upon him. So while he is firmly within prophetic tradition, he has his own unique wrinkle for his particular audience.

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Current Memberships in Academic Societies

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