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Zephaniah

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Zephaniah

1 These are the messages that Yahweh spoke through
Zephaniah during the time when Josiah, the son of Amon,
was the king of Judah. Zephaniah was the son of Cushi. Cushi
was the son of Gedaliah. Gedaliah was the son of Amariah.
And Amariah was the son of King Hezekiah.

2 Yahweh says,
"I will completely destroy creatures all over the earth."
3 Yahweh says,
"I am going to destroy the people and animals
that live on the earth.
I am going to destroy the birds that fly in the sky
and the fish that swim in the sea.
I am going to destroy the idols that represent false gods,
and I am going to destroy the people who
worship those idols.
I will do this so that there will not be wicked
people on the earth.
4 I am going to punish the people who live in the
city of Jerusalem and in other places
in the kingdom of Judah.
I am going to destroy everything in Jerusalem that is
related to the worship of the false god Baal.
No one will even remember that there used to be
priests of Baal in Jerusalem.
And no one will remember the priests descended from
Aaron who helped people worship Baal.
5 I am going to punish the people who have been going
up onto the flat roofs of their houses
in order to worship the sun, moon, and stars.
I am also going to punish the people who
claim to worship me
but who swear oaths in the name of the
false god Milcom.
6 Finally, I am also going to punish the people who used
to worship me but no longer do.
I am going to punish the people who no
longer ask for my help or ask me to tell
them what they should do."
7 Yahweh is the God whom you should worship.
Soon he will judge and punish people,
so show your respect for him by keeping quiet.
Be respectful, because Yahweh is getting ready to
destroy the people of Judah.
He has decided to allow the enemies of Judah
to come and destroy them.
8 Yahweh says, "At the time when I destroy
the people of Judah,
I will punish their officials and the king's sons
and all those who worship foreign gods.
9 At that time, I will punish all the officials who force
their way into people's homes
and take away what they own in order to
make themselves rich."
10 Yahweh also says, "At the time when I destroy
the kingdom of Judah,
people will cry out in distress at the Fish
Gate of Jerusalem.
People will wail with sorrow in the Second
Quarter of the city.
People will hear a loud crash of buildings collapsing
in the towns on the hills that surround the city.
11 Your enemies are going to slaughter all those who
buy and sell goods for money,
so all you people who live in the market area
of Jerusalem should wail.
12 At that time, it will be as if I light lanterns and search
even in the darkest places in Jerusalem
to find wicked people and punish them.
I am going to punish the people who do not even care
that they are doing wicked things.
They wrongly think that I, Yahweh, do not make
people experience the consequences
of their actions.
13 So an enemy army is going to come and destroy
their houses completely.
Then that army will carry away their
valuable possessions.
This will fulfill what I told the Israelites would
happen if they disobeyed me:
'The people will build houses,
but they will not live in them.
They will plant vineyards,
but they will not be able to make wine from
the grapes and drink it.'
14 It will soon be the terrible time when I, Yahweh, destroy
the people who have sinned against me.
Yes, I am going to do that very soon.
The people of Judah will cry out in sorrow at that time.
Then even the strong soldiers who are trying to
defend them will wail in despair.
15 That will be a time when I, Yahweh, show
that I am very angry.
It will be a time when people experience much trouble.
At that time, an enemy army will destroy many things.
It will be a very sad time.
People will feel the way they do when black
clouds cover the sky.
16 It will be a time when soldiers blow ram's horns and
shout to call other soldiers to come and fight.
Your enemies will tear down the walls around your cities
and the high towers at the corners of those walls.
17 Because you have sinned against me, Yahweh,
I am going to cause you people of Judah
to suffer greatly.
As I told the Israelites would happen if they sinned against me,
'You will wander around, not knowing where
to go, as if you were blind.'
Your enemies will stab you with their weapons
so that your blood and your insides pour out
in great quantities.

18 At the time when I, Yahweh, show how
angry I am with you,
you will not be able to save yourselves by giving
silver or gold to your enemies."
Because Yahweh is very angry that people have
worshiped false gods,
he is going to destroy wicked people all over the world.
Indeed, he is soon going to destroy wicked people no
matter where they live in the world.

2 You people of Judah ought to be ashamed of your sins!
You should certainly gather together *and ask
Yahweh to be merciful to you*.
2 *Gather together and pray for mercy*
before Yahweh punishes you as he has said he will.
Otherwise he will destroy you completely,
just as the wind blows chaff away entirely.
Yahweh is very angry with you,
and if you do not repent, he will punish you.
3 All of you people in Judah who are
willing to humble yourselves,
worship Yahweh and obey what he has commanded.
Try to do what is right
and make sure that you stay humble.
If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will protect you
when he punishes other people for their sins.
4 *When Yahweh punishes the Philistines,*
the cities of Gaza and Ashkelon will lose all
of their inhabitants.
An army will attack the city of Ashdod in broad daylight
and drive away all of its people.
An army will also drive away the people
of the city of Ekron.
5 Terrible things will happen to you Philistine
people! You live near the sea.
Yahweh has said that he will punish you Philistines
who live in that part of the land of Canaan.
He will punish you until everyone who used
to live there is dead.
6 There will no longer be any cities in the
seaside land of Philistia.
There will only be grass.
Shepherds will keep their sheep there so that
they can eat the grass.
7 The Judean people who survive will go and
live in that land.
They will graze their sheep in those pastures.
They will move into the houses that the Philistines
have abandoned in the city of Ashkelon.
This will happen because those Judeans will worship
Yahweh once again as their God.
Yahweh will take care of them and make
them prosperous again.

8–9 Yahweh is the commander of the heavenly armies and the God of the Israelites. He says this:

"I have heard the people of Moab and Ammon
insult my people.
I have seen them stealing territory from my
people. So now I swear that I am going
to destroy Moab and Ammon
as completely as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.
Crops will no longer grow on their land, only weeds.
The only way people will be able to make a living
from that land will be to dig in the ground to
get salt from the salt deposits there.
No one will ever rebuild the buildings that were there.
My people who survive will take away all the
valuable possessions that once belonged
to the Moabites and Ammonites.
Those people will be the ones who own that land."
10 The people of Moab and Ammon will get what they
deserve for having been so proud.
They should not have insulted the people who
belong to Yahweh, the commander
of the heavenly armies.
They should not have tried to take away their land.
11 The people of Moab and Ammon will be greatly
afraid when Yahweh punishes them.
He will do that so powerfully that people will
stop worshiping all other gods.
People in every nation will worship Yahweh instead.
Each person will do that in his own country.
12 Yahweh has also said that he will slaughter the
people of Ethiopia.
13 Yahweh will also punish and destroy the
people of Assyria.
They live in a land that is northeast of us.
He will cause an enemy army to destroy their
capital city of Nineveh.
It will become a place where no plants
grow, like the desert.
14 Groups of many different kinds of wild animals will
live where Nineveh used to be.
Various kinds of owls will make their nests on top of
the columns of its destroyed buildings.
Those owls will sometimes perch on the sills of
empty windows and hoot.
Rubble will block the doorways.
Rain and sunlight will ruin the valuable cedar wood
that the Assyrians used to build their buildings.
15 The people of Nineveh used to be proud.
They thought that no other country could
conquer them.
They said to each other,
"Our city is the greatest city!
No other city is as great as ours!"
But an enemy army will completely destroy Nineveh.
It will become a place where wild animals
make their dens.
People who go by that area will often make
hissing sounds
and shake their fists to show how much
they hated that city.

3 The people who live in the city of Jerusalem
have rebelled against Yahweh.
They have committed terrible sins, and this has made
them unacceptable to Yahweh.

They have treated others violently.
As a result, terrible things are going to happen to them!
2 The people of Jerusalem have not paid attention
to the prophets whom Yahweh has
sent to correct them.
The people in Jerusalem do not believe in Yahweh,
their God, and they do not worship him.
3 The leaders of the city treat its people violently,
like lions that roar as they attack their prey.
Their judges are greedy. They are like wolves that
have not eaten all day and so devour
an entire animal that they kill.
4 The prophets in Jerusalem say what they think
people want to hear.
They do not honestly give the people
messages from Yahweh.
The priests in Jerusalem do things that the
law of Moses forbids.
As a result, they have made the temple there unholy.
5 But Yahweh is still in the city, and he always
does what is right.
He treats people justly, day after day, without fail.
Still, wicked people are not ashamed *when
they do what is wrong*.

6 So Yahweh says this:

"I have destroyed many nations.
I have destroyed their strong city walls and towers.
I have destroyed the streets in those cities. No
one walks on them anymore.
Those cities are in ruins. All the people who used
to live in them are now dead.
7 I said to myself,
'The people of Jerusalem will certainly honor me
and allow me to correct them.
If they do that, I will not destroy their city. I will not do
all the things that I said I would do to them.'
But even though the people of Jerusalem knew that I
had punished other nations,
they eagerly did even more wrong things."
8 So this is what Yahweh declares:
"You can confidently expect that an enemy
army is going to conquer you and take
away your possessions.
I have decided to judge all of the people groups
on the earth at the same time.
I am going to punish them severely because I am very
angry with them for being so wicked.
Because I am very angry that people have worshiped
false gods, I am going to destroy wicked
people all over the world.
9 But after that, I will make the people groups
do what is right and say what is right.
That way all of them will worship me, Yahweh.
I will be the only God whom any of them worship.
10 Enemy armies will take some of the people who
worship me away to other countries.
They will take them as far away as the place
where the Nile River begins.
But even from that far away,
my people will come back to Jerusalem,
bringing offerings to me.
11 When I restore you, you will no longer feel shame
for disobeying me and doing many wrong things.
Many of you boasted about how great you
thought you were.
But I will punish those people,
and then you will always come humbly to
worship me in my temple.
12 Then the people who live in Jerusalem will be
poor, but they will be humble.
They will depend on me, Yahweh, to help them.
13 Then the people of Israel who survive will
not do wicked things.
They will not tell lies or say things to deceive others.
They will not be afraid that an enemy army
will conquer them,
so they will be able to eat and sleep peacefully."
14 You Israelites who live in Judah
should sing and shout loudly!
You people who live in Jerusalem should celebrate
because you are feeling very happy!
15 *You should celebrate because* Yahweh is not going
to punish you any more.
He is going to keep enemy armies far away from you!
Yahweh himself, who is the true king of you Israelites,
is going to live among you.
You will never be afraid again that others
will harm you.
16 At that time, prophets will say to the people
who live in Jerusalem,
"You people who live on Mount Zion
should not be afraid!
No, you should not become discouraged.
17 Yahweh your God lives among you!
He is mighty, and he will protect you.
He will be very happy about you.
He will not say anything harsh to you, and you will
know how much he loves you.
He will sing loudly to rejoice about you."
18 Yahweh says, "Enemy armies took some of you
Judeans away from your homeland.
Those people became very sad because they could no
longer gather with others to worship me.
They felt shame because of what had happened to them.
But I am going to bring them back to Judah.
19 You can be certain that I will severely punish all
those who oppressed you.
When I do that, I will rescue those who had to make a
long journey to go and live in other countries.
They felt shame when they had to do that.
But now I will make the people of those countries
praise and honor them.
20 When I act to help you, I will gather you together and
bring you back home to Israel.
Then I will cause all the people groups in the world
to praise and honor you greatly.
You will be able to see that I am making
you rich again."

This is what Yahweh has promised!