

Tzefanyah

Introduction

Tzefanyah (640-622 B.C.E.) prophesied between the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah, roughly 626 B.C.E. near the time of Jeremiah's call to the office of prophet. Tzefanyah's preaching helped (with Jeremiah's) to spark King Josiah's revival (621 B.C.E. — see 2Kgs 23) after the wicked reigns of Manassah and his son Amon had left the people of Judah in need of a spiritual awakening. We know he prophesied before Ninevah was destroyed in 612 B.C.E. (see 2:13). Mankind is in danger of being swept off the face of the earth (1:2-3). Backsliders, if they don't repent, will be destroyed (see 1:6). For the great, dark, terrifying Day of the L-rd is karov (near, 1:7,15-16) and hastening fast (1:14). The superstitious (1:9) and those syncretists who try to mix the faith with Canaanite, Ammonite, and Assyrian religion (1:4-5) will be destroyed, as will the complacent (1:12).

¹ The Devar HASHEM which came unto Tzephanyah ben Cushi, ben Gedalyah, ben Amaryah, ben Chizkiyah, in the yamim of Yoshiyahu (*Josiah*) ben Amon, Melech Yehudah.

² I will utterly sweep away
all things from off the adamah,
saith HASHEM.

³ I will sweep away Adam (*humankind*) and Behemah (*beast, animal, cattle*);

I will sweep away Oph HaShomayim (*Birds of the Air*)
 and the Dagim of HaYam (*Fish of the Sea*),
 and the michsholim (*stumbling blocks, what causes to fall into sin*) with the resha'im;
 and I will cut off adam from off the adamah,
 saith HASHEM.

⁴ I will also stretch out Mine hand against Yehudah,
 and against all the inhabitants of Yerushalayim;
 and I will cut off from this place
 the she'ar HaBa'al (*remnant of Ba'al*),
 and the shem (*name*) of the Kemarim (*the idolatrous priests*)* with the [idolatrous] kohanim;

⁵ And those that worship the Tz'va HaShomayim (*Army of Heaven, star g-ds*) upon the rooftops;
 and those that worship and that swear [oaths] by HASHEM,
 but also swear by Milcom;†

⁶ And those that turned back from following HASHEM;
 and those that have not sought HASHEM,
 nor inquired of Him.

⁷ Hold thy peace (*keep silent*) at the presence of Adonai HASHEM:
 for the Yom HASHEM is at hand;
 for HASHEM hath prepared a zevach (*sacrifice*),
 HASHEM hath consecrated His guests.‡

* **1:4** See 2Kgs 23:5 † **1:5** i.e., their King [Ba'al] ‡ **1:7** i.e., made HaKeru'im (*the Invited ones*) of Him His Mequddashim (*Consecrated ones*), i.e., the nations set apart to consume His apostate people, see Isa 13:3

⁸ And it shall come to pass in the Yom Zevach
HASHEM,
that I will punish the sarim (*princes*),
and Bnei HaMelech,
and all such as are clothed with malbush nochri
(*foreign apparel*).

⁹ In the same Yom also will I visit to punish
all those that leap over the threshold,[§] which fill
their masters' batim (*houses*)
with chamas (*violence*) and mirmah (*deceit*).

¹⁰ And it shall come to pass in that Yom, saith
HASHEM,
that there shall be the noise of a cry from Sha'ar
HaDagim,
and a wail from the Second Quarter of the city,
and a loud crash from the hills.

¹¹ Howl, ye inhabitants of HaMakhtesh,*
for all the merchants are cut down;
all they that weigh out kesef are cut off.

¹² And it shall come to pass at that time,
that I will search Yerushalayim with nerot
(*lamps*),
and visit to punish the [proud] men
that are [complacently] settled on their lees;†
that say in their lev: HASHEM will not do tov,
neither will HASHEM do rah.

¹³ Therefore their goods shall become a booty,
and their batim a desolation;
they shall also build batim, but not inhabit them;

§ 1:9 See 1Sm 5:5 * 1:11 a locality in Yerushalayim † 1:12
wine dregs

and they shall plant kramim (*vineyards*), but not drink the yayin thereof.

¹⁴ The Yom HASHEM HaGadol is near,
near and hastening quickly;
the sound of the Yom HASHEM is mar (*bitter*);
there the gibbor (*mighty man, warrior*) cries
aloud.

¹⁵ That Yom is a Yom Evrah (*day of wrath*),
a Yom Tzarah and Metzukah (*a day of trouble and
distress, pressure*),
a Yom of Sho'ah (*catastrophe*) and Meshoah (*deso-
lation*),
a Yom of Choshech and Afelah (*gloom*),
a Yom of Anan and Arafel (*thick darkness*),

¹⁶ A Yom of the Shofar and Teruah (*battle cry*)
against the fortified cities,
and against the high battlements.

¹⁷ And I will bring distress upon adam,
that they shall walk like ivrim,
because they have sinned against HASHEM;
and their dahm shall be poured out like dust,
and their bowels like dung.

¹⁸ Neither their kesef nor their zahav
shall be able to save them in the Yom Evrat
HASHEM
(*Day of HASHEM's Wrath*);
but kol ha'aretz (*the whole earth*) shall be de-
voured
by the eish of HASHEM's kina (*jealousy, zeal, pas-
sion*);
for He shall make a complete end, a terrible end,

of kol yoshvei ha'aretz (*all them that dwell on the earth*).

2

¹ Gather yourselves together,
yea, gather together, O shameful nation;

² Before the decree brings forth,
before the day passes like the chaff,
before the charon af HASHEM comes upon you,
before the Yom Af HASHEM (*Day of HASHEM's Anger*) comes upon you;

³ Seek ye HASHEM, all ye anvei ha'aretz (*humble of the land*),

which have wrought His mishpat;
seek tzedek, seek anavah (*meekness, humility*);
it may be ye shall be hid in the Yom Af HASHEM.

⁴ For Azah (*Gaza*) shall be abandoned,
and Ashkelon a desolation;
they shall drive out Ashdod in broad day,
and Ekron shall be uprooted.

⁵ Hoy (*Woe*) unto the inhabitants of the seacoast,
the nation of the Keretim (*Cretans*)!
The Devar HASHEM is against you,
O Kena'an, eretz of the Pelishtim (*Philistines*).
I will even destroy thee,
that there no inhabitant remains.

⁶ And the seacoast shall be dwellings
and meadows for ro'im (*shepherds*), and pens for
tzon.

⁷ And the coast shall be
for the she'erit Bais Yehudah;
they shall feed thereupon;

in the batim (*houses*) of Ashkelon shall they lie
down in the erev;
for HASHEM Eloheichem shall visit them,
and restore their fortunes.

⁸ I have heard the reproach of Moav,
and the revilings of the Bnei Ammon,
whereby they have reproached My nation,
and magnified themselves against their territory.

⁹ Therefore as I live,
saith HASHEM Tzva'os, Elohei Yisroel:
Surely Moav shall be as Sodom,
and the Bnei Ammon as Amora (*Gomorra*h),
a place of weeds and salt pits,
and desolation ad olam;
the She'erit Ami shall plunder them,
and the remnant of My nation shall possess them.

¹⁰ This shall they have in return for their ga'on
(*pride*),
because they have reproached and magnified
themselves
against the Am HASHEM Tzva'os.

¹¹ HASHEM will be terrible unto them;
for He will reduce to nothing all the elohei ha'aretz
(*g-ds of the land*);
and men shall worship HASHEM, everyone from
his place,
even all the coasts and islands of the Goyim.

¹² Ye Ethiopians also,
ye shall be slain by My cherev.

¹³ And HASHEM will stretch out His hand against
the tzafon (*north*),

and destroy Assyria;
and will make Nineveh a desolation,
a dry waste like a midbar.

¹⁴ And herds shall lie down in the midst of it,
every beast of the Goy;
both the desert owl and the screech owl
will roost on her columns;
their voice shall hoot in the windows;
desolation shall be in the thresholds;
the beams of cedar will be exposed.

¹⁵ This is HaIr HaAlizah (*the rejoicing city*) that
dwelt carelessly,
that said in her lev:
I am, and there is none beside me;
how is she become a desolation,
a place for beasts to lie down in!
Every one that passeth by her
shall hiss, and shake his fist.

3

¹ Hoy (*woe*) to her that is filthy and polluted,
to the oppressing city!*

² She obeyed not the voice;
she received not musar (*correction*);
her bitachon (*trust*) was not in HASHEM;
she drew not near to her G-d.

³ Her sarim (*princes*) within her are roaring
arayot;
her shofetim are evening wolves;
they leave nothing for the boker (*morning*).

⁴ Her nevi'im are arrogant, anshei bogedot
(*treacherous persons*);

* **3:1** i.e., Jerusalem

her kohanim have profaned the kodesh,
they have done violence to the torah.[†]

⁵ HASHEM Tzaddik is in the midst thereof;
He will do no injustice;
boker by boker doth HASHEM dispense mishpat;
He faileth not;
but the unjust knoweth no boshet (*shame*).

⁶ I have cut off the Goyim;
their towers are desolate;
I made their streets waste,
that none passeth by;
their cities are destroyed,
so that there is no ish (*man*), that there is no
inhabitant.

⁷ I said: Surely thou wilt fear Me,
thou wilt accept musar (*correction, instruction*);
so that her dwelling place should not be cut off,
despite everything for which I punished her;
but they rose early,[‡]
and corrupted all their doings.

⁸ Therefore wait ye upon Me, saith HASHEM,
until the Yom that I rise up for a prey;
My determination is to gather the Goyim,
that I may assemble the mamlachot,
to pour upon them Mine indignation,
even all My charon af;
for kol ha'aretz (*all the earth*) shall be devoured
with the eish of My kina (*jealousy*).

⁹ For then will I restore to the people

[†] **3:4** T.N. which they were ordained to faithfully observe and teach [‡] **3:7** i.e., eagerly

a safah berurah (*pure language, purified lip*), that
they may all call upon the Shem HASHEM,
to serve Him with shekhem echad (*one shoulder,
one accord*).

¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My suppli-
ants,
even the daughter of My dispersed,
shall bring Mine minchah.

¹¹ In that Yom shalt thou not be ashamed
for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed
against Me;
for then I will take away out of the midst of thee
them that rejoice in thy ga'avah (*pride*),
and thou shalt no more be haughty
because of My Har Hakodesh.

¹² I will also leave in the midst of thee
an afflicted and poor people,
and they shall take refuge in the Shem HASHEM.

¹³ The she'erit Yisroel shall not do iniquity,
nor speak lies;
neither shall a leshon tarmit (*tongue of deceitful-
ness*)
be found in their mouth;
for they shall feed and lie down,
and none shall make them afraid.

¹⁴ Sing, O Bat Tziyon;
shout, O Yisroel;
be glad and rejoice with all the lev,
O Bat Yerushalayim.

¹⁵ HASHEM hath taken away thy judgments,
he hath cast out thine enemy.

The Melech Yisroel, even HASHEM, is in the midst
of thee;

thou shalt not fear evil any more.

¹⁶ In that Yom it shall be said to Yerushalayim:

Fear thou not;

and to Tziyon: Let not thine hands hang limp.

¹⁷ HASHEM thy G-d in the midst of thee is gibbor;

He will save,

He will rejoice over thee with simchah;

He will quiet [you] in His ahavah (*love*),

He will joy over thee with singing.

¹⁸ They that mourn I will gather for the mo'ed
(*time of the feast*),

who are of thee [O Tziyon],

to whom the cherpah (*reproach*)§ presses upon
them.*

¹⁹ Hinei, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee;

and I will save her that is lame,

and gather her that was driven out;

and I will get them praise and fame

in every land of their boshet (*shame*).

²⁰ At that time will I bring you again,

even in the time that I gather you;

for I will make you a shem and a tehillah

among Kol Amei Ha'aretz (*all the peoples of the
earth*),

when I turn back your captivity and restore your
fortunes

before your eyes, saith HASHEM.

§ 3:18 of the Golus * 3:18 See 2C 7:10

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