

Exegetical Notes on Zephaniah 3:14-18a

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The reading from the Old Testament which is assigned to the Third Sunday in Advent in Series C of *Lutheran Worship* consists in four and a half verses of the third chapter of the Book of Zephaniah. (The exegesis of these verses below is, in answer to several enquiries, in no way designed to promote the use in the main service of the week of the three-year series provided in *Lutheran Worship* nor of any other modern selections from the gospels and epistles in such a context. This exegete, on the contrary, would continue to urge, on various grounds, fidelity to the pericopal tradition inherited from the ancient church by the church of the reformation and modified only slightly by the Blessed Reformer of the Church, if one is speaking specifically of the gospels and epistles to be read in the main (eucharistic) service of the week. No comparable series of readings, on the other hand, from the Old Testament was either handed down from the ancient church or bestowed on us by the Blessed Reformer; nor, indeed, is there such a program of readings from the New Testament to be used in all the possible additional offices of any given week. In such cases, therefore, even such a traditionalist as this exegete is able, with consistency, to make use of any pericope drawn from the region of Holy Scripture desired.)

THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SETTING

The superscription identifies the author as Zephaniah ben-Cushi and, indeed, as "Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah" (1:1). Zephaniah's genealogy, which traces his ancestry back four generations, is the longest in any superscription. This device, therefore, surely indicates a noble lineage; we may accept, therefore, as historically reliable the Jewish tradition which equates the "Hizkiah" cited in the superscription as the prophet's great-great-grandfather with the famous king Hezekiah who reigned as *primus rex* of Judah from 719 to 686 B.C. Thus, Zephaniah's father Cushi and Josiah, the contemporary king of Judah, were second cousins.

The name which the Authorized Version renders "Hizkiah" in Zephaniah 1:1 (in a relatively close approach to the *Hizqiyyah* of the original) is precisely the same form which denominates King Hezekiah in the Massoretic Text of 2 Kings 18 (seven times, in verses 1, 10, 14, 15, 16) and Proverbs 25:1. Several variants of the same monarch's name are, on the other hand, seen elsewhere both in the historical books (2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles) and in the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Micah) [BDB, 306a]. Some versions now read "Hezekiah" also in Zephaniah 1:1 (as does the New Kings James Version) [NKJV].

Considering that Josiah himself was but eight years of age on his accession to the throne, Zephaniah must himself have written this book in his youth. As a member of the royal family he was probably a denizen of Jerusalem from the first. The name "Zephaniah" presumably means "the Lord has hidden" or "the Lord has treasured" [BDB, 861a]. Since, however, no reason exists, in any case, to suppose that Zephaniah was specially named by God, any extrapolations from his name of auctorial or thematic significance are baseless and so undesirable (deductions, for instance, as to the personality or biography of Zephaniah or as to the purpose or theme or occasion of his book).

The Book of Zephaniah proves to be the last book to added to the canon before the Babylonian Exile. The superscription (1:1) restricts the ministry of Zephaniah to the reign of Josiah, son of Amon. Josiah's succession to the throne of Judah in 640 B.C. thus provides the *terminus a quo* of the book.

Verses 4 and 5, on the other hand, condemn gross idolatry of several kinds. Such phenomena would have to antedate the institution of the Josianic reformation of Judah in the twelfth year of his reign. Similarly the depiction of Assyria as secure in her hegemony of the Near East (2:15) requires a date before the Scythian invasion of the region which swept aside Assyrian control. These two considerations both fix 628 B.C. as the *terminus ad quem* of the book.

The exemption of the king himself from Zephaniah's condemnation of the royal family in general probably implies Josiah's personal conversion to the true religion in the eighth year of his reign at the age of sixteen (632 B.C.). A date closer to 630 B.C. than to 640 is also favored by the improbability of Zephaniah being any older than the youthful Josiah in view of the familial relationship between them already described. Thus, the Book of Zephaniah, in the final form passed down to all ensuing generations, came into existence, in all probability, *circa* 630 B.C.

The occasion was quite possibly the conversion of King Josiah to the One True God with consequent proposals of a national reformation. The original addresses were in general all the inhabitants of Judah (1: 1, 4a, and *passim*). Special attention, however, is understandably paid to the denizens of the Jerusalem as the political and religious hub of the nation (1:4 and *passim*).

The purpose of Zephaniah in writing his book, as already in his preaching, was to bring the people of Judah to repentance (2:1-2) and so, in accord with the efforts of Josiah the King, to a reformation of the life of the nation. The theme, correspondingly, of the Book of Zephaniah may be stated thus: The day of the Lord is at hand (1:7 and *passim*). This phraseology, although it is certainly used and is even of significance elsewhere, is more pivotal in Zephaniah than in any other book of the canon.

The book consists exclusively in poetry of the oracular genre. The basic division of the book follows the basic distinction between law and gospel. The structure of the legal section is tripartite, sandwiching oracles against four Gentile nations between condemnations of Judah.

The book relays, certainly, much more law than gospel (forty of the initial forty-one verses as opposed to the final twelve verses and Zephaniah 2:7). The reason is, of course, that Zephaniah is preaching to a generally apostate nation with the hope of convicting its people of sin and the justice of divine condemnation. The penitents in Judah, however, needed also the reassurance of the gospel, lest they despair in the midst of the forthcoming destruction of the nation.

The following outline emerges, therefore, of the body of the Book of Zephaniah, with special emphasis on the section containing the verses currently before us:

I. The Universality of God's Judgment

(1:2-3:8)

A. The Condemnation of Judah (1:2-2:3)

1. The future doom (1:2-18)

2. The contemporary implications (2:1-3)

B. The Condemnation of Gentile Nations (2:4-15)

1. Philistia (2:4-7)

a. The comprehensiveness of its doom (2:4-6)

b. The limitations on its doom (2:7)

2. Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)

3. Ethiopia (2:12)

4. Assyria (2:13-15)

C. The Condemnation of Judah (3:1-8)

II. The Universality of God's Grace

(3: 9-20)

A. The Blessedness of the Gentiles in the Church of the New Testament (3: 9-10)

1. Its Origin in God (3:9a)

2. Its Divine Goal as the People of God (3:9b)

3. Its Catholicity (3:10)

B. The Blessedness of the Church of the New Testament in General (3: 11-17)

1. Its Holiness (3: 11-13)

a. Its Guiltlessness (3: 11-12)

(1.) The Forgiveness of Sins (3:11a)

(2.) The Basis in Repentance (3: 11b-12)

(a.) Penitence (Contrition) (3: 11b-12a)

(b.) Faith (3:12b)

b. Its Righteousness (3:13)

(1.) The Forgiveness of Sins (3:13a)

(2.) The Basis in the Ministry of the Gospel (3:13b)

2. Its Joy (3: 14-15)

a. An Exhortation to Joy (3:14)

b. The Rationale of Joy (3:15)

(1.) The Justification of the Church (3:15a1)

(2.) The Overthrow of Satan (3:15a2)

(3.) The Incarnate Presence of the Lord (3:15b1)

(4.) The Security of the Church (3:15b2)

3. Its Fearless Service (3: 16-17)

a. An Exhortation to Fearless Service (3:16)

b. The Rationale of Fearless Service (3:17)

(1.) The Presence of the Lord (3:17a1)

(2.) The Salvation of the Church (3:17a2)

(3.) The Loving Joy of Messiah in His Church (3:17b)

C. The Blessedness of the Jews in the Church of the New Testament (3: 18-20)

1. The Initial Assertion of the Truth (3: 18-19)

a. The Inclusion of Repenting Jews in the Church (3:18)

b. The Salvation and Inclusion of Jews (3:19a)

c. The Exaltation of Jews in the Church (3:19b)

2. The Concluding Reiteration of the Truth (3:20)

- a. The Inclusion of Jews in the Church (3:20a)
- b. The Exaltation of Jews in the Church (3:20b1)
- c. The Salvation of the Jews (3:20b2)

The four verses, then, currently before us all fall within the evangelical section which concludes the Book of Zephaniah with prophecy of the universality of the grace of God in the era of the new testament. Verse 18, however, crosses the dividing line between the main subsection within this portion of Zephaniah, which speaks of the church in general (verses 11-17), to the final subsection which speaks of the believing Jews in particular (verses 18-20).

Verses 14-15 and 16-17 form balanced depictions of the church as rejoicing in the Lord (verses 14 and 15) and fearlessly serving Him (verses 16 and 17). Both duos of verses contain the reassurance of the incarnate presence in His church of the God who has become man in the Messiah Jesus (verses 15 and 17). The first duo, moreover, begins by exhorting the church to rejoice in the Messiah who saves, while the second duo, conversely, concludes with the rejoicing of the Messiah in the church which He has saved.

A LITERAL TRANSLATION AND COMMENTS

14. Cry thou forth a ringing cry, O daughter of Zion!

Shout ye in triumph, O Israel!

Be thou glad and so exult thou in triumph

with wholeness of heart,

O daughter of Jerusalem!

The phrase "cry thou forth a ringing cry" in the translation above renders the qal feminine singular imperative of *rnn*, which has "give a ringing cry" as its primary meaning (BDB, 943a). With but three exceptions (Lamentations 2:19 and Proverbs 1:20 and 8:3), the connotation of the verb is uniformly indicative of joy [BDB, 943a-b]. Such is, certainly, the connotation of the form in this verse.

Of all the words denotative or connotative of joy here in verse 14 and subsequently in verse 17, the most general are the verb *smch* used here and the noun derived therefrom and found in verse 17. The verb *smch* occurs 154 times in the Old Testament, of which 126 are in the qal, one in the hiphil, and the remaining times in the piel [BDB, 970a-b]. Although Brown-Driver-Briggs gives "rejoice" the prime billing in defining the word, "be glad" is immediately attached thereto [BDB, 970a]. After noting such concepts as "take pleasure in" and "exult" in the use of the qal, "cause to rejoice, gladden" is given as the meaning of the piel and hiphil [BDB, 970b]. The feminine noun *simchah* is broad enough to encompass, not only true joy, but also such forms of gladness as "mirth" and "gaiety" and, indeed, "pleasure" even of foolish and malicious varieties [BDB,

970b]. The rendition, therefore, of *smch* as "be glad" and of *simchah* as "gladness" allows a maximum of consistency in dealing with these words themselves and provides a nuance of differentiation from the root *gil* and its derivatives.

The second imperative is the hiphil of a less common verb, *rw'*. All of its forty appearances in the Old Testament are in the hiphil excepting one polal in Isaiah and three specimens of the hithpoel in the Psalms [BDB, 929b]. Its basic meanings of "raise a shout" and "give a blast with clarion or horn" are applied to such diverse phenomena as "a war-cry" or "alarm of battle" (as in Joshua 6:10), "a signal for war or march" (as in Leviticus 10:7), "applause" (as in Zechariah 9:9), "religious impulse" in the course, especially, of public worship (as in Psalm 98:4), and "distress" (as in Isaiah 15:4) [BDB, 929b]. The specific meaning which the lexicon assigns to the verb in Zephaniah 3:14, together with Jeremiah 50:15 and Psalm 41:12, is "shout in triumph over enemies" (as also to the hithpoels in Psalms 60:10 and 108:10) [BDB, 929b].

There is, however, no real reason to distinguish the significance of *rw'* here from the religious shouting heard in Isaiah 44:23 and various psalms (47:2; 66:1; 81:2; 95: 1-2; 98:4, 6; 100:1; as also the hithpoel in Psalm 65:14) [BDB, 929b]. The nature, to be sure, of the shouting of which *rw'* speaks varies considerably from place to place, but there is, nevertheless, the initial connection with war which should lead us to assume some martial connotation in the absence of any contrary indications. The instances of *rw'*, therefore, in all the verses cited in the penultimate sentence may be assigned the significance of "shout in triumph over enemies" as easily as the one in Zephaniah 3:14.

The number and gender of three of the four imperatives in verse 14 are feminine singulars. This usage corresponds to all the feminine singular verbal forms and pronominal suffixes found in verses 15-18. In the case, however, of the second imperative in verse 14 the number and gender changes from the feminine singular to the masculine plural: "Shout ye in triumph!" The variation results, of course, from the nature of the church as a corporate entity which consists in innumerable individual believers in the Messiah.

The feminine singular, nevertheless, predominates in the pericope now under study. Such forms are, of course, often used in referring to the church both in the biblical languages and in traditional English, as is altogether reasonable. For the church is, as the Bride of Christ, theologically feminine in relation to the essential masculinity of God and, indeed, the actual maleness of the God-Man, the Messiah. Here, in a related way, the epithets of "daughter of Zion" and "daughter of Jerusalem" are applied to the church.

All the people of the True God, anywhere in the world, constitute the "Israel" which is the "daughter of Zion" or the "daughter of Jerusalem" in this era of the new testament. The church of the new testament is the "daughter of Zion" and the "daughter of Jerusalem" because, for one thing, she was born in the city of Jerusalem as predicted in the Old Testament and fulfilled on the Feast of Pentecost. The term "Zion" is used frequently as a poetic alternative to "Jerusalem" by virtue of Mount Zion being the original site of the Jebusite city which King David captured and made the political and religious capital of Israel.

The phrase "and so" before "exult thou in triumph" in the translation above indicates the *waw* which conjoins the imperative of *'lz* to the preceding imperative of *smch*. The phrase represents, then, the idiomatic use of the standard conjunction connecting two imperatives to indicate a logical consequence desired by the speaker. The significance of the verb *'lz*, which is a parallel to *'ltz*, goes beyond joy to exultation, which is to say the enthusiastic expression of joy [BDB, 759b; and, on *'ltz*, 763a]. The same thing, to be sure, is true of *sws* or *sys* in verse 17 [BDB, 965a]. The nuance of difference, however, between *'lz* and *sws* or *sys* is the connotation of "triumph" which attaches to the former root [BDB, 759b].

The basic idea, then, of the second half of verse 13 is the following: The Messiah desires His church to exult with all her heart in His triumph over her enemies (above all, the sinful flesh and the devil). The Messiah simultaneously assures His church that such exultation will necessarily follow from gladness in His saving work. The gladness of Christians, in other words, will inexorably express itself in worshipping the Lord within His church and in bearing witness to Him in the world.

15. The LORD has turned aside the judgments against thee,

He has cleared away thine enemy.

The King of Israel, the LORD, is in thy midst;

Thou wilt fear evil no more.

Verse 15 provides four interrelated reasons why the church should indeed rejoice as she has been exhorted to do in the preceding verse. The first clause cuts directly to the heart of the Old Testament. For the theme of the Bible as a whole is justification by grace through faith in Christ, whom also the church of the Old Testament knew as God the Son who, as a man with no human paternity, was to suffer unto death to make amends for all the sins of all people (as is stated in CHEL, VI.A.10, as also VI.B.B.5).

The pronominal suffix on the plural of *mishpat* (literally, "thy judgments") is clearly objective in significance rather than subjective ("judgments made regarding thee" rather than "judgments made by thee"). They are, more specifically, "judgments against thee" if the church is to rejoice in the Lord removing them. The "judgments" here, then, are the condemnations of the law of God, by which all sinners are justly convicted of numberless crimes against the Judge of All Himself. To have judgments of condemnation "turned aside" (using the *hiphil* perfect of *swr*) is to change verdicts of guilty to verdicts of innocence. To tell, therefore, the church of the new testament that the Lord has turned aside "the judgments against" her is to say that those believing in Christ have been acquitted of all the crimes which they have committed against God. They have, in other words, been pronounced righteous, which is to say justified, by grace through faith in Christ.

The second reason which the church is given to rejoice is the defeat of Satan. Some massoretic manuscripts add a *yodh* to the *qal* participle of *'yb* (before the *kaph* of the pronominal suffix) and provide a plural vocalization to produce "thine enemies" (as appears from the textual apparatus

in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*). There is, however, no compelling cause to yield the singular form ("thine enemy") found in Codex Leningradensis and the majority of the massoretic manuscripts. The reference, therefore, is to Satan as the archenemy of the church from the Garden of Eden to the end of history.

The third cause of ecclesial joy listed here is the incarnate presence of the "LORD" (representing the Divine Name, YHWH) in the midst of His church of the new testament. The incarnation was essential, in His state of humiliation, to the vicarious obedience to the law of God and the vicarious suffering unto death whereby the Messiah satisfied the demands of divine justice with regard to all us sinners. Now the incarnate Lord, in His state of exaltation, has taken up His kingship of the church -- wherefore He is here called "the King of Israel" -- in His session at the right hand of God the Father. In the era of the new testament He makes full and continuous use of the divine omnipresence and omnipotence which belong also to the human nature which He assumed in the womb of a virgin. He is, therefore, "the King of Israel" in the "midst" of His church as both God and man, exercising His divine powers always and everywhere on behalf of His fellow-men.

The fourth reason which the church is given to rejoice provides a transition from this duo of verses (14-15) to the ensuing duo (16-17) with its initial exhortation to stop fearing anyone or anything. Here, however, instead of exhortation, we receive assurance, once again, of cause to rejoice. The qal imperfect (second feminine singular) of *yr'* may be construed without difficulty [BDB, 431a, in 431a-b], according to the most common use by far of the imperfective aspect on its own [as is stated in CHEL, II.B.2.A.1.a.]. The significance, in other words, is the simple future: "thou wilt fear no more" (as opposed to the more emphatic "thou shalt"). Two massoretic manuscripts have *thir'iy*, which would constitute a form of *r'h* (meaning "see" [BDB, 906a, in 906a-909a]), as opposed to *yr'* [as appears from the textual apparatus in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*]. No attraction, however, in this reading entices us away from Codex Leningradensis and the majority of witnesses in the original tongue.

16. In that day it will be said to Jerusalem:

Stop fearing, O Zion!

Stop letting thy hands droop!

The church was addressed in the penultimate verse as the "daughter of Zion" and the "daughter of Jerusalem" for the reasons recounted in its exegesis. Now she is addressed, quite simply, as "Jerusalem" and "Zion" *per se*. The church of the new testament succeeds to the titles of the mother who gave her birth by the will of God. In verse 14 she was urged to rejoice in the Lord; here she is urged on to fearless service to the Lord.

The verbal forms in this verse are both imperfects being used with jussive force. The form of *yr'* here is the same as the imperfect already discussed in the final clause of the preceding verse, excepting the vowel under the *resh* here. The lengthening of the usual shewa (as in verse 15) all the way to a qametz is merely a pausal phenomenon resulting from the place of the *'athnach* (the major disjunctive accent inside the verse) under the feminine singular here in verse 16.

The imperfect of *rphh*, on the other hand, is the masculine plural of the third person despite its subject being the feminine dual *yadhayikh*. This deviation from the customary rule of agreement between subject and predicate is symptomatic of a general slighting of the feminine plural of the third person in Biblical Hebrew [GKC, 465: 145.p]. The verb *rphh*, which has "sink" as its underlying meaning, is used idiomatically with "hands" (explicitly or implicitly) in various passages employing, not only the qal as here, but also the piel and the hiphil [BDB, 951b-952a]. To "lose heart" or "energy" is the basic significance of the idiom [BDB, 951b].

Whereas *lo'* precedes the imperfect of *yr'* in verse 15, the imperfects of *yr'* and *rphh* here in verse 16 follow *'al*. Both *lo'* and *'al* are, to be sure, particles of negation (meaning, in effect, "no" or "not"). The more general *lo'*, however, is used to negate both indicative statements and continuous mandates. The particle *'al*, on the other hand, before imperfects and breviatees of jussive force, serves distinctively to negate mandates of immediate application. In the absence, indeed, of contrary contextual indications, this usage may be equated, as here, with a command to stop doing something which one is currently doing or a jussive to stop letting something go on which is currently the case.

17. The LORD, thy God, is in thy midst;

A Mighty Man will save.

He will exult over thee with gladness;

He will be silent in His love;

He will rejoice over thee with a ringing cry.

Verse 17 provides three interrelated reasons why the church should live in the way in which she is exhorted to live in the preceding verse, namely, in fearless service to God. The first clause reiterates the presence of the "LORD" in His church which has already been asserted in the penultimate verse, employing again the Divine Name, YHWH. Here, however, the presence of God the Father and the Holy Spirit is intimated in conjunction with the incarnate presence of God the Son by means of the plural form of *'elohayikh* ("thy God").

All three persons of the Holy Trinity work conjointly in all things done outside the Godhead, although each in His own way. The traditional maxim of the church, "opera ad extra indivisa sunt" ("the external works are indivisible"), is necessary to the pure doctrine of God. By virtue, moreover, of the way in which each of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity possesses the same Divine Essence in full and the phenomenon which we traditionally call the hypostatic perichoresis, wherever one of the three persons is present and active, there too are the others present and active.

The second reason which the church is given to serve God fearlessly is her salvation. The necessity, once again, of the incarnation to achieving this salvation is stressed by calling the Messiah a *gibbor* ("Mighty Man") [BDB, 150a]. This nomenclature was already associated with

the Messiah in the minds of the original audience of Zephaniah by virtue of such passages as the one in which Isaiah calls Him the "God who is a Mighty Man" (Isaiah 9:5 MT; 9:6 EV).

The third basis of fearless service listed here is the joy which the Messiah takes in the church which He has made His own by suffering Himself the ultimate sadness of separation from God. The way in which this truth is iterated and reiterated in the final three clauses of verse 17 balances beautifully the joy which the church was urged to take in the Messiah in verse 14. The verbs employed here differ from those used above, but conjoined with the new verbs are two nouns which derive from the verbs of verse 14.

In the first clause the verb is *sws* or *sys*, *which, like 'lz* in the aforesaid verse, goes beyond joy to exultation, which is to say the enthusiastic expression of joy ("exult, display joy") [BDB, 965a]. Here, indeed, the native significance of *sws* is even strengthened by its connection with *simchah* by means of the prepositional prefix *beth*. The noun *simchah* is the chief derivative of the verb *smch*, found in the midst of verse 14, and so has "gladness" as its basic significance [BDB, 970b].

The majority of translators and commentators are eagerly desirous of altering the verb in the ensuing clause in some way. The verb *chrsh* has "be silent" as its basic significance and is predicated of God as well as of man [BDB, 361a]. The only difference, ordinarily, between the *qal* and the more common *hiphil* (found here in the imperfect) is the latter's nuance of a more observable external display of the basic notion (with the one exception of a causative significance in Job 11:3) [BDB, 361a]. The lexicon, therefore, suggests "exhibit silence" as the connotation of the *hiphil* elsewhere, including several passages in which God is the subject (Habakkuk 1:13; Isaiah 42:14; and Psalm 50:21) [BDB, 361a]. Many, to be sure, wish to change the medial *resh* in *chrsh* in Zephaniah 3:17 to a *daleth* so as to produce a proposition which they consider more suitable: "he will renew his love" [BDB, 361a].

In actuality, however, there is no problem with the place of *hrsh* here either textually or contextually. Theodore Laetsch commendably rejects any textual emendation and captures the basic idea of the clause, although one could improve on his interpretation by focusing even more finely on the person and work of the Messiah (379-381). The phrase, for example, "anthropomorphism describing" should be simplified to "description of" in this otherwise insightful observation: "It is a bold but very effective anthropomorphism describing the profoundness of God's joy" [379b]. For the subject of the verb here (as also in the clauses preceding and following) is specifically the "Mighty Man" of the penultimate clause, which is to say the Messiah.

The phenomenon depicted, in fact, despite the mystification of the critics, is common enough in ordinary observable human affairs. Thus, a loving bridegroom displays his joy in his beloved bride as much by contemplating her beauty in spellbound silence as by singing her praises. The Bridegroom Messiah, likewise, not only sings the praises of His own beloved bride, but also contemplates in spellbound silence the beauty of His church. This beauty consists, firstly, in His own holiness which is hers too in the sight of God (by His imputation) and, secondly, in the life, empowered by Him, of holy service to God which we call sanctification.

In the final clause the predicate is the verb *gyl*. Of all the words denotative or connotative of joy here in verse 17 and previously in verse 14, *gyl* is the one which "rejoice" fits most distinctively and uniformly as a definition [BDB, 162a]. Here, as in the penultimate clause, the native significance of the verb is greatly strengthened by its connection with *a noun* by means of the prepositional prefix *beth*. In this case the noun is *rinnah*, which is the chief derivative of the verb *rnn*, seen at the beginning of verse 14, and which, in consequence, has "ringing cry" as its uniform significance [BDB, 943b].

18. Grieved ones from an appointed place will I gather;

From thee shall they be

Whose reproach is a burden upon her.

The syntax of this verse requires, to be sure, careful study. By no means, however, is there any need to allege textual corruption and resort to emendation in the fashion of so many scholars. Nor is there even the need to make as many insertions in the verse as are made in most translations.

The rendition of the verse above adds but two words to the original Hebrew, both in the final clause. One is the usual insertion of the copula ("is") which is required by the English language. The need, secondly, to add a relative pronoun ("whose" in this case) is quite common in the poetry of the Hebrew Bible, which often dispenses with any relative particle to indicate the beginning of a relative clause. Here the identity of the final clause as a relative clause appears clearly from the feminine pronominal suffix on the preposition '*al*' ("upon her"). Although bordered by feminine nouns on both sides (meaning "burden" and "reproach" respectively), the only feminine entity to which the suffix on the preposition can be referring back is the one who is addressed as feminine in the preceding clause (by means of the pronominal suffix on the preposition *min*: "from thee"). The reference, in other words, is to the church, as is the case so frequently in the preceding verses.

The reference in verse 18 changes, as explained in the outline above, from the church as a whole to the Jewish believers within the church of the new testament. Such Jews are described, quite reasonably, as deriving from the church of the old testament, which is the original audience of these words (and so is addressed as "thee"). For the *mimmekh* ("from thee") of the second clause sufficiently clarifies the *mimmo'edh* ("from an appointed place") of the initial clause [BDB, 417a-418a].

More specifically, indeed, the Jews in view here are defined as belonging to the repenting church of the old testament. For the "grieved ones" of the initial clause are, correspondingly, those who come "from thee" whose "reproach is a burden upon her" in the ensuing clauses [BDB, 387a, which, however, as the commentators generally, misunderstands the niphil participle of *ynh* as speaking "of exiles"]. The "reproach" which is a "burden upon" the true church of Judah and so makes its members "grieved ones" is the divine condemnation of the nation *qua* nation by virtue of its general rejection of the One True God revealed in the Messiah.