

### Manasseh Repents (c. 648–645 BC)

2 Chronicles 33:11–17

11 So Yahweh brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria upon them, and they took Manasseh captive with hooks, and they bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.

12 And when he was in distress he entreated Yahweh his God and greatly humbled himself before the God of his ancestors

13 and prayed to him. And God responded to him and heard his plea and let him return to Jerusalem to his kingdom. And Manasseh knew that Yahweh was God.

14 Then afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of the Gihon in the valley, and for the entrance into the Gate of the Fishes. And it encircled the Ophel and raised it very high. Then he placed strong commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah.

15 And he removed the foreign gods and the carved image from the house of Yahweh and all the altars which he built on the mountain of the house of Yahweh and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside the city.

16 And he restored the altar of Yahweh and offered sacrifices of peace offerings and thank offerings upon it. And he commanded Judah to serve Yahweh, the God of Israel.

17 Nevertheless, the people offered at the high places, but only to Yahweh their God.

### The Death of Manasseh (643t BC)

2 Kings 21:17–18

2 Chronicles 33:18–20

17 The remainder of the acts of Manasseh and all that he did and his sin that he committed,

*are* they not written on the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Judah?

18 Then Manasseh slept with his ancestors and was buried in the garden of his palace, in the garden of Uzza. Amon his son became king in his place.

18 Now the remainder of the words of Manasseh

and his prayer to his God and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel,

behold, they *are* in the words of the kings of Israel.

19 And his prayer, and *how* he responded to him, all his sin and his unfaithful acts, and the places where he built the high places and set up Asherahs and idols before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the words of the seers.

20 And Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in his house.

And Amon his son became king in his place.

### Amon, Manasseh's Son, Assumes the Throne of Judah (643t BC)

2 Kings 21:19–22

2 Chronicles 33:21–23

19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. The name of his mother *was* Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz from Jotbah.

20 He did evil in the eyes of Yahweh as Manasseh his father had done.

21 He walked in all of the way which his father had walked, and he served the idols which his father had served and bowed down to them.

22 He abandoned Yahweh the God of his ancestors and did not walk in the way of Yahweh.

21 Amon *was* twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem.

22 And he did what *was* evil in the eyes of Yahweh as Manasseh his father had done.

And Amon sacrificed to all the idols that Manasseh his father had made, and he served them.

23 And he did not humble himself before Yahweh, as Manasseh his father humbled himself, but Amon himself multiplied *his* guilt.

### Amon is Assassinated by His Servants (641t BC)

2 Kings 21:23–26

2 Chronicles 33:24–25

23 The servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his palace.

24 But the people of the land killed all who conspired against the king and made Josiah his son king in his place.

24 And his servants conspired against him and killed him in his house.

25 But the people of the land struck down all who conspired against King Amon.

And the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place.

25 The remainder of the acts of Amon that he did, *are* they not written on the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Judah?  
 26 They buried him in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, and Josiah his son became king in place of him.

### Josiah, Amon's Son, Assumes the Throne of Judah (641t BC)

2 Kings 22:1–2

2 Chronicles 34:1–2

1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. The name of his mother *was* Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath.  
 2 He did right in the eyes of Yahweh, and he walked in all of the way of David his ancestor and did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

1 Josiah *was* eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.  
 2 And he did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and he walked in the ways of David his ancestor and did not deviate *to* the right or *to* the left.

### Zephaniah's Prophecy to Judah – The Day of the Lord (c. 635–630 BC)

Zephaniah 1–3

1:1 The word of Yahweh that came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah.

#### Judgment on the Entire Earth

2 "I will surely destroy everything from the face of the earth"—a declaration of Yahweh.  
 3 "I will destroy humanity and beast; I will destroy the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked. And I will cut off humankind from the face of the earth"—a declaration of Yahweh.

#### Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem

4 "And I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal, and the name of idolatrous priests with the priests, and those who bow down on the rooftops to the host of heaven, and those who bow down, swearing to Yahweh but *also* swearing by Milkom, and those who turned back from following Yahweh, and who did not seek Yahweh, and did not inquire of him."  
 7 Be silent before the Lord Yahweh, for the day of Yahweh draws near, for Yahweh has provided a sacrifice and has consecrated his guests.  
 8 And it shall be *that* on the day of the sacrifice of Yahweh, I will punish the officials and the sons of the king and those who dress in foreign clothing.  
 9 And on that day I will punish all who leap over the threshold, who fill up the house of their master *with* violence and deceit.  
 10 "And there shall be on that day"—a declaration of Yahweh—

“a loud outcry from the Fish Gate,  
and a wailing from the Second District,  
and a loud crashing from the hills.

- 11 The inhabitants of the Mortar shall wail,  
for all the traders have perished;  
all who trade with silver have been cut off.
- 12 And it shall be *that* at that time  
I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
and I will punish the men  
whose senses are dulled from drinking,  
who say in their hearts,  
‘Yahweh will not do good, nor will he do evil.’
- 13 Then their wealth shall be as plunder,  
and their homes as desolation.  
And they shall build their houses and not inhabit them,  
and they shall plant vineyards and not drink their wine.”

#### Judgment at the Great Day of the Lord

- 14 The great day of Yahweh draws near;  
*it is* near and *coming* very swiftly.  
The sound of the day of Yahweh *is* bitterness;  
there, a warrior cries out!
- 15 That day *will be* a day of wrath,  
a day of trouble and distress,  
a day of disaster and ruination,  
a day of darkness and deep gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick clouds, [[Joel 2:1–2](#)]
- 16 a day of trumpet and *trumpet* blast  
against the fortified cities  
and against the high corner towers.
- 17 And I will bring distress to all humankind,  
and they shall walk about like the blind,  
for they sinned against Yahweh;  
their blood shall be poured out like dust  
and their entrails like dung.
- 18 Moreover, their silver and their gold  
will not be able to save them  
on the day of the wrath of Yahweh.  
And in the fire of his zeal,  
the whole land shall be consumed,  
for a terrifying end he shall make  
*for* all the inhabitants of the land.
- 2:1 Gather yourselves together! Now gather together,  
O nation having no shame!
- 2 Before the birth of the decree,  
the day flies away like chaff;  
before the fierce anger of Yahweh overtakes you;  
before the day of the anger of Yahweh overtakes you.
- 3 Seek Yahweh, all you afflicted of the land  
who have fulfilled his law;  
seek righteousness;  
seek humility.  
Perhaps you will be concealed  
on the day of the anger of Yahweh.

#### Judgment on Philistia

- 4 For Gaza will be abandoned,  
and Ashkelon as a desolation.  
*As for* Ashdod, at noon they will drive her away,

and Ekron shall be uprooted.

- 5 Woe *to you*, inhabitants of the region of the sea,  
people of the Kerethites!  
The word of Yahweh *is* against you,  
O Canaan, land of the Philistines.  
I will destroy you until there is no inhabitant.
- 6 And you, O region of the sea, shall become  
pastures *and* meadows *for* shepherds  
and sheep pens *for the* flocks.
- 7 And it shall become a region  
for the remnant of the house of Judah;  
upon them they shall graze,  
and in the houses of Ashkelon  
they shall lie down in the evening.  
For Yahweh their God shall be mindful of them,  
and he will restore their fortunes.

#### **Judgment on Moab and Ammon**

- 8 I have heard the reproaches of Moab  
and the scorning of the Ammonites,  
*with* which they have taunted my nation  
and made boasts against their territory.
- 9 “Therefore, as I live”—a declaration of Yahweh of hosts,  
the God of Israel—  
“Moab shall be as Sodom,  
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah,  
a place of weeds and salt pits  
and a desolation forever.  
The remnant of my people shall plunder them,  
and the remainder of my nation shall possess them.”
- 10 This *shall be* for them in place of their pride  
because they mocked and boasted  
against the people of Yahweh of hosts.
- 11 Yahweh *will be* awesome against them,  
for he will destroy all the gods of the earth  
and all the lands of the nations;  
each in its place will bow down to him.

#### **Judgment on Cush**

- 12 You also, O Cushites,  
they shall be killed by my sword.

#### **Judgment on Assyria and Nineveh**

- 13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north,  
and he will destroy Assyria  
and will make Nineveh a desolation,  
a dry wasteland like the desert.
- 14 Herds shall lie down in her midst,  
every wild animal of a nation;  
even the desert owl and the screech owl  
shall lodge on her capitals.  
A voice shall hoot in the window;  
rubble on the threshold;  
for the cedar *is* laid bare.
- 15 This *is* the city of rejoicing  
that lived securely;  
the one saying in her heart,  
“I am, and there is none besides me.”  
How she has become a desolation,

a lair for wild animals!  
 Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist.

#### **Jerusalem's Future—Destruction of the Rebellious**

- 3:1 Woe *to you*, O rebellious and defiled one!  
 The oppressing city!
- 2 She listens to no voice;  
 she does not accept correction.  
 In Yahweh she does not trust;  
 to her God she does not draw near.
- 3 Her officials in her midst *are* roaring lions;  
 her judges *are* evening wolves;  
 they leave nothing until the morning.
- 4 Her prophets *are* arrogant men of treachery;  
 her priests have defiled *that which is holy*;  
 they do violence to *the law*.
- 5 Yahweh *is* righteous in her midst;  
 he does not do wickedness.  
 Morning by morning he renders his judgment;  
 at dawn he does not fail,  
 but an evil one knows no shame.
- 6 "I have cut off nations;  
 their strongholds are deserted.  
 I have laid waste their streets,  
 so that none pass through.  
 Their cities have been destroyed  
*and are* without a man, without an inhabitant.
- 7 I have said, 'Surely she will fear me;  
 she will accept discipline.  
 Then her dwelling place will not be cut down,  
*nor* all that I have brought upon her.'  
 Surely they rise early;  
 they make all their deeds corrupt.
- 8 "Therefore, wait for me"—a declaration of Yahweh—  
 "for the day of my rising as a witness.  
 For my decision *is* to gather nations,  
 to assemble kingdoms,  
 to pour out my wrath upon them, all my burning anger.  
 For by the fire of my anger all the land shall be consumed.

#### **Jerusalem's Future—Deliverance of the Righteous**

- 9 Because then I will make the speech of the nations pure;  
 that all of them might call on the name of Yahweh,  
 to serve him in unison.
- 10 From beyond the rivers of Cush  
 my worshipers and the daughter of my scattered ones  
 shall bring my offering.
- 11 On that day you shall not be humiliated  
 on account of all your deeds  
*by which you have rebelled against me*.  
 For then I shall remove from your midst  
 those exulting in your pride,  
 and you shall no longer be haughty  
 in my holy mountain.
- 12 And I will leave in your midst  
 a people afflicted and poor,  
 and they shall take refuge  
 in the name of Yahweh.
- 13 The remnant of Israel

shall not do wickedness;  
 they shall not speak deception,  
 nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth. [[Rev 14:5](#)]  
 For they shall graze and lie down,  
 and none shall frighten *them*.”

#### Jerusalem’s Future—Millennial Joy

- 14 Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion!  
 Cry aloud, O Israel!  
 Rejoice and be jubilant with all your heart,  
 O daughter of Jerusalem!
- 15 Yahweh has annulled your judgments;  
 he has turned away your enemies.  
 The king of Israel, Yahweh, *is* in your midst;  
 you shall no longer fear misfortune.
- 16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem,  
 “Fear not, O Zion;  
 your hands shall not hang limp.
- 17 Yahweh your God *is* in your midst;  
 a mighty warrior who saves.  
 He shall rejoice over you with joy;  
 he renews you in his love;  
 he will exult over you with singing.
- 18 I will gather those of you grieving on account of the feast;  
 they were raising against her a reproach.
- 19 Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors;  
 I will save the lame and gather the outcast.  
 I will change them from shame  
 to glory and renown throughout the whole world.
- 20 At that time I will bring you *in*;  
 at the time of my gathering you *together*.  
 For I will make you renowned and praised  
 among all the nations of the earth  
 when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,”  
 says Yahweh.

### Josiah Begins to Seek After God (633t BC)

2 Chronicles 34:3a

3a In the eighth year of his reign, while he *was* still a boy, he began to seek the God of David his ancestor.

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#### Chronological Notes

- 1) Manasseh’s repentance.
  - A) The Assyrian ruler responsible for deporting Manasseh to Babylon was Ashurbanipal (668–627). The reference to Babylon provides a helpful chronological clue since Ashurbanipal did not bring Babylon under his control until 648.<sup>1</sup> Thus Manasseh’s repentance can be placed c. 648–645 BC.

<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 435.

2) Zephaniah.<sup>2</sup>

- A) The superscription of Zephaniah specifies that the prophecy was given during the reign of Josiah (641t–610t) and there has been little debate to the contrary. Rather, discussion concerning the date and background of the book has centered chiefly on the specific period within Josiah’s reign.
- (1) The moral and spiritual conditions mentioned by Zephaniah have been taken by many to refer to Judah’s persistent apostasy and immorality despite the Josianic reform that began in earnest after the finding of the Book of the Law (2 Kgs 22:8) in 621 B.C. (e.g., Fausset, Feinberg, Hannah, Keil, Reid, and Walker).
  - (2) Others, however, believe that such matters as Zephaniah denounces could only be true of the earlier portion of Josiah’s reign, either when the boy king was yet unable to deal with the longstanding effects of the wickedness of Judah’s two previous kings, Manasseh and Amon, or when his reformation had only recently got underway (e.g., Bewer, Bullock, Craigie, Eiselen, Eissfeldt, Freeman, Hailey, Harrison, Hummel, Kapelrud, Laetsch, Larue, Pusey, Robinson, Smith, and von Orelli).<sup>3</sup>
- B) With capable scholars on both sides of the question, one is tempted to conclude with D. A. Schneider that “the evidence is insufficient to decide this debate.”<sup>4</sup> In examining the internal data, however, several items seem to favor the earlier period in Josiah’s reign: (1) religious practices in Judah were still plagued with Canaanite syncretistic rites such as characterized the era of Manasseh (1:4–5, 9); (2) many failed to worship Yahweh at all (1:6); (3) royalty were enamored with wearing the clothing of foreign merchants (1:8) who had extensive business enterprises in Jerusalem (1:10–11); and (4) Judahite society was beset by socio-economic ills (1:12–13, 18) and political and religious corruption (3:1–4, 7, 11). Moreover, several of the specific sins (e.g., 1:4–5, 9; 3:4) would likely have been corrected in Josiah’s reforms. “Accordingly, I am inclined to side with those who prefer a date before 621 bc.”<sup>5</sup>
- C) But how much before? Some have suggested that the political situation brought about by a Scythian raid (c. 630 bc) occasioned both Zephaniah’s response to God’s call and his urgent message concerning God’s impending judgment of the world. However, because the evidence of such an invasion is now considered to be tenuous at best, “the Scythian hypothesis has now been almost universally abandoned.”<sup>6</sup> Thus the search for a precise date for Zephaniah cannot be pressed too far. Nevertheless, when one considers that Josiah was only eight years old when he ascended the throne in 641t and was dependent upon royal officials of questionable integrity (cf. 3:3), the cause for Zephaniah’s alarm is apparent. Further, that Josiah’s reforms were not instituted until the twelfth year of his reign (629t), a few years after his initial spiritual awakening (2 Chr 34:3), suggests that Zephaniah’s prophetic activities may have had a salutary effect in the reformation of that era. Thus a date of 635–630 bc is not unlikely.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah: An Exegetical Commentary*, pp. 249–250. Note that Patterson favors a date for Habakkuk of sometime in Manasseh’s reign.

<sup>3</sup> A good discussion of the setting of the book is given by F. C. Fensham, “Book of Zephaniah,” *IDBSup*, pp. 983–84. Fensham also favors a date for Zephaniah early in Josiah’s reign.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Schneider, “Book of Zephaniah,” *ISBE* 4:1189.

<sup>5</sup> Patterson, 250.

<sup>6</sup> Fensham, “Zephaniah,” p. 983. For a defense of the Scythian hypothesis, see CAH 3:295 where the somewhat fantastic elements of Herodotus’s account are duly recognized as well as the probability that the supposed Scythian sack of Ashdod was as much an Egyptian enterprise as Scythian. See also R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 940.