

Wenstrom Bible Ministries
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Zephaniah: Zephaniah 2:9c-The God of Israel Declares a Remnant from His People Will Inherit the Lands of the Moabites and Ammonites

Lesson # 50

Zephaniah 2:8 “I have heard the taunting of Moab and the revilings of the sons of Ammon, with which they have taunted My people and become arrogant against their territory. **9** Therefore, as I live,” declares the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “surely Moab will be like Sodom and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah— A place possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them and the remainder of My nation will inherit them.” (NASB95)

“**The remnant of My people will plunder them**” is composed of the following:
(1) feminine singular construct form of the noun *šē'ērîṭ* (שְׁאֲרִיית), “**the remnant**”
(2) masculine singular construct form of the noun *'am* (עַם), “**people**” (3) first person singular independent personal pronoun *'ānî* (אֲנִי), “**my**” (4) third person masculine plural qal active imperfect form of the verb *bāzaz* (בָּזַז), “**will plunder**”
(5) third person masculine plural form of the pronominal suffix *hēmâ* (הֵמָּה), “**them.**”

At this point in Zephaniah 2:9, the figure of asyndeton is being employed by the writer in order to emphasize with the reader the prophetic declaration that the remnant of God’s people will plunder the Moabites and Ammonites.

The noun *šē'ērîṭ* means “remnant” since it pertains to that which is left over from a whole or that which is a part of a whole and here it speaks of that which has survived after a previous elimination process or catastrophe.

Here it refers to those Jews in the kingdom of Judah who would survive the day of the Lord in Zephaniah’s day.

The noun *'ām* is in the singular and means “people” in the sense of a large group based on various cultural, physical and geographical ties.

The first person singular independent personal pronoun ^ā*nî*, “**my**” refers of course to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Therefore, the noun *ʿām* is speaking of those members of the kingdom of Judah who possessed a covenant relationship with God and composed the remnant that would return from Babylon.

The verb *bāzaz* means “to plunder” since it pertains to carrying off spoils of war, to carry off goods from a conquered people by force after battle and is very closely connected with obedience to God.

“**And the remainder of My nation will inherit them**” is composed of the following: (1) conjunction *w* (ו), “**and**” (2) masculine singular construct form of the noun *yeter* (יֶתֶר), “**the remainder**” (3) masculine singular noun *gôy* (גוֹי), “**nation**” (4) third person masculine plural qal active imperfect form of the verb *nāḥal* (נָחַל), “**will inherit**” (5) third person masculine plural form of the pronominal suffix *hēmâ* (הֵמָּה), “**them.**”

The conjunction *w* is introducing a prophetic declaration that is explaining specifically for the reader the meaning of the previous prophetic declaration that asserts that the remnant of Judah will plunder the Moabites and Ammonites.

The noun *yeter* means “remainder, remnant, survivors” since it pertains to that which is left over.

The noun *gôy* means “nation” since it refers to a large group of people based on various cultural, physical, and geographical ties, extending to clan relationships and refers to a group of people that form a political entity.

Here it is used with reference to the citizens of Judah living during the sixth and seventh centuries B.C. who were conquered by Babylon and is used in a derogatory sense since it is usually the word the Hebrews used for unregenerate pagan nations.

The verb *nāḥal* means “to take possession as an inheritance” since it pertains to receiving a transfer of property from a deceased parent or a living authorized source, implying possession is legitimate according to proper standards.

The third person masculine plural form of the pronominal suffix *hēmâ*, which means “them” refers to the Moabites and Ammonites and contains the figure of metonymy meaning that the people of Moab and Ammon are put for their land.

Therefore, this verb *nāhal* indicates that the survivors from the nation of Judah will inherit the land of the Moabites and Ammonites and expresses the idea that these survivors from the nation of Judah will take possession of their lands.

This action is legitimate since God established an unconditional covenant with the progenitors of the nation of Judah, namely Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which promised them these lands as their possession and their descendants.

Zephaniah 2:9 “Consequently, I existing eternally, the Lord ruling over the armies, the God ruling over and in a relationship with Israel declares: Moab’s people will be like Sodom’s people likewise Ammon’s citizens like Gomorrah’s people. A place overrun by weeds as well as salt pits, indeed, a desolation forever and ever! The remnant from My people will plunder them. Specifically, the survivors from the nation will inherit their territory.” (My translation)

Both of these prophetic declarations were fulfilled in history.

However, the remnant of Judah which returned from the Babylonian exile did not plunder the Moabites and Ammonites as a result of achieving a military victory over them.

Rather, they inherited their land and possessions after returning from Babylon since it was Babylon which conquered these two nations.

Medo-Persia conquered Babylon and decreed for the remnant of Judah to return to their land as well to occupy the lands previously held by the Moabites and Ammonites.

This was a legitimate transfer of possession since God established a covenant with the progenitors of the kingdom of Judah, namely Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in which He promised these men and their descendants that they would possess the lands previously held by the Moabites and Ammonites.

As we noted, the “Palestinian” covenant is in fact an extension of the “Abrahamic” covenant, which is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3.

The Lord's promise of land to Abram and his descendants in Genesis 13:14-17 is an "extension" upon His promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1 and is thus related to the "Abrahamic" covenant.

The "Palestinian" covenant was a confirmation and enlargement of the original "Abrahamic" covenant and amplified the land features of the "Abrahamic" covenant (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18).

The "Palestinian" covenant was confirmed to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4) and Jacob (Gen. 35:12), reiterated to Moses (Ex. 6:2-8) who described the geographical boundaries of the land in Numbers 34:1-12 and who prophesied the fulfillment of this covenant during the millennium in Deuteronomy 30:1-9.

The land grant under the "Palestinian" covenant: (1) Most of the land in Turkey (2) Most of East Africa (3) Saudi Arabia (4) Yemen (5) Oman and Red Sea (6) Syria (7) Iraq (8) Jordan.

The land grant has boundaries on the Mediterranean, on Aegean Sea, on Euphrates River and the Nile River.

As was the case in Zephaniah 2:7, these last two prophetic declarations recorded in Zephaniah 2:9 brings into view the remnant doctrine which speaks of a remainder of righteous people of God who survive judgment or catastrophe.

In the Old Testament, in relation to the nation of Israel, a "remnant" referred to a small percentage of the population of the nation of Israel who survived divine judgment in the form of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and deportations.

The concept has its roots in Deuteronomy 4:27-31; 28:62-68; 30:1-10.

In these passages, Moses warns Israel that they would be dispersed throughout the nations for their disobedience but would be brought back to the land based upon God's grace and covenantal faithfulness.

The prophets subsequent to Moses continued this doctrine when teaching the nation of Israel during the time each lived.

The prophet Jeremiah uses the word often of the remnant in his day (Jeremiah 40:11, 15; 41:10, 16; 42:2, 15, 19; 43:5; 44:7, 12, 14, 28; 44:28; 47:4, 5; 50:20).

Zechariah also speaks of a remnant of Israelites during the millennial reign of Christ (Zechariah 8:6, 11, 12).

The prophet Micah also speaks of a future remnant of Israelites during the millennium (Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18) and so does Zephaniah (2:7, 9, 3:13).

The remnant doctrine appears in the writings of Isaiah (Isaiah 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 15:9; 16:14; 17:3; 28:5; 37:4, 31, 32; 46:3).

It is used in Nehemiah (1:3) and in the writings of Ezra of the returning Israelites from Babylon (Ezra 9:8, 13, 14, 15).

Haggai speaks of this remnant that returned from Babylon (1:12, 14; 2:2).

Paul mentions this remnant doctrine in the book of Romans (Romans 9:6, 27-29; 10:16; 11:5).

The obvious implication from these last two prophetic declarations in Zephaniah 2:9 is that God would have mercy on those in the kingdom of Judah who would survive the judgment the Lord would inflict upon the nation for their unrepentant disobedience.

God would exercise mercy towards those in the nation who repented and were faithful to Him.

He would restore them as a nation and prosper them in the future after judging the nation.

However, the Moabites and Ammonites would not be extended this same mercy implying that these nations did not repent.

Mercy is God acting upon His policy of grace which flows from His attribute of love and withholding judgment.

The mercy of God is a manifestation of Who God is and thus helps to compose His glory (Ex. 34:7; Ps. 86:15; 119:156; 145:8; James 5:11).