

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

UNIVERSALITY AND PARTICULARITY
IN THE DAY OF YAHWEH THEME
WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON
ZEPHANIAH I

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WESLEY IRWIN TOEWS

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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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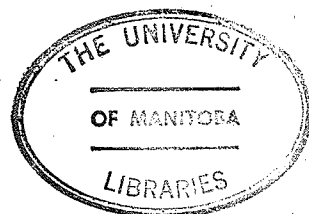


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ABBREVIATIONS

Most of the abbreviations used in this thesis are found in "Instructions for Contributors," Journal of Biblical Literature 95 (1976), 331-46.

The remaining two abbreviations are:

DY the Day of Yahweh
MT Massoretic Text

INTRODUCTION

The following investigation takes its point of departure from the results of previous literary-critical work on Zeph 1. It is usually noted that the phrase "the Day of Yahweh" (DY) occupies a central position in this chapter. Furthermore, interpreters have generally recognized that the core of the chapter (vv 4-16), with its focus on the judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, is set within a framework (vv 2-3, 17-18) which speaks of universal judgment. Several scholars conclude that the latter verses do not derive from the same author as do vv 4-16. They argue that the framework differs stylistically from the intervening material. Furthermore, they claim that Zephaniah, as all other pre-exilic prophets, spoke first and foremost to Judah and Jerusalem, and that therefore the universal perspective lay outside of his scope. These interpreters attribute the verses in question (vv 2-3, 17-18) to an eschatological redactor who worked during the exilic or post-exilic period. Thus they implicitly deny that Zephaniah could have given universal application to the DY theme.

This implicit denial requires testing. At its basis stands the claim that the universal perspective lay outside the scope of the pre-exilic prophets. This claim must also be carefully evaluated. Of course, the mere demonstration of

its invalidity will not suffice to prove the original unity of Zeph 1 since other pertinent literary-critical considerations must also be brought forward before any such conclusion can be reached. However, if the claim is shown to be invalid, this result will be sufficient to dismiss the assumption that Zephaniah, being a pre-exilic prophet, could not have given universal application to the DY theme.

However, the primary purpose of the following study is not to determine which are the authentic words of Zephaniah (although some light may incidentally be shed on that question). Nor is it our objective merely to show that Zephaniah may have given universal application to the DY theme. Rather, the central concern of this thesis is to inquire whether the dual perspective of universality and particularity as found in Zeph 1 is characteristic of the DY theme, or, stated in other words, whether the DY theme and the "pattern of universality and particularity" are closely related. Clearly the aforementioned literary-critical assumption that the universal perspective lay outside of the scope of the pre-exilic prophets would point towards a negative conclusion for this question, at least within the context of pre-exilic prophecy. This result serves to bring the question into sharper focus. Thus our special interest within the broader question concerning the relationship of the DY theme to the pattern of universality and particularity in the prophetic corpus as a whole is to inquire whether the two

themes were already interrelated in pre-exilic prophetic thought.

Initial confirmation of a linkage between the DY theme and the pattern of universality and particularity is given by the apparent collocation of the pattern with this theme in several passages outside of the Book of Zephaniah, namely, in Isa 2, 13, Ezek 7, 30, Joel 2, 4, and Zech 14. The first of two basic steps in the following investigation will be a careful examination of these texts to test whether it is plausible that in their original state they actually did exhibit the pattern of universality and particularity in connexion with the DY theme. This will give evidence as to whether or not these two aspects were closely interrelated. However, since several of these passages are certainly of post-exilic origin, it will be necessary in a second step to search for additional evidence in pre-exilic biblical literature to determine whether or not the universal dimension actually lay outside of the scope of the pre-exilic prophets. In this way support may be given to the thesis that the aforementioned pattern was already characteristic of the DY theme in pre-exilic times.

Before launching into the investigation itself it is further necessary to clarify what is meant by "the pattern of universality and particularity." Particularity shall refer to the narrowing of perspective in which a well-defined locality or group of people such as a city or a nation is

specified as the object of concern. Universality shall denote the generalizing of perspective in which precise definition of the object of concern is lacking. This general perspective is indicated by such terms as "world," "all nations," and "all the earth," or perhaps by the absence of any terms that might restrict the scope of reference. The collocation of universality and particularity shall be referred to as "the pattern of universality and particularity."

CHAPTER I
A SURVEY OF THE LITERARY-CRITICAL
TREATMENT OF ZEPH I.2-3, 17-18

The Book of Zephaniah has been subjected to severe fragmentation since the early part of the nineteenth century when proponents of the literary-critical methodology began to question the authenticity first of small sections and finally of the greater part of Zeph 2 and 3. However, the authenticity of Zeph 1 was scarcely questioned until the early years of the present century when vv 2-3 and 17-18 came under question. At present no consensus of opinion has been reached with regard to the authenticity of these verses. The purpose of this chapter is to survey past critical work on Zeph 1 in order to isolate the criteria used in the literary criticism of these verses. The procedure will be to examine selected, pertinent sources in chronological sequence.¹

As has already been stated, the authenticity of Zeph 1 was scarcely questioned during the nineteenth century. Therefore, the mention of two commentators from that time

¹I will be very selective when dealing with sources dating to the nineteenth and early twentieth century, focusing particularly on those which introduce new dimensions into the interpretation of the verses under question, but I will deal rather exhaustively with sources published in the last fifty years.

will be adequate for our purposes. C. F. Keil did not entertain any doubt with regard to the authenticity of Zeph 1.2-3, 17-18.² J. Wellhausen rejected only the latter part of v 3 on the grounds that it was "intolerably repetitious" of the first part of the verse, and that the resā'īm were an unknown class of men before the time of Ezekiel.³

Shortly after the turn of the century J. M. P. Smith voiced some doubt as to whether the destruction spoken of in vv 17-18 should really be understood as universal in scope. However, he still leaned towards the opinion that these verses, along with vv 2-3, concerned a universal judgment.⁴

Similarly, W. Nowack questioned whether the scope of vv 2-3 was universal. He deleted kōl from v 2a, deleted v 2b, and thus deprived v 2 of its universal thrust. He considered it noteworthy that hā'adāmā rather than hā'āreṣ appeared in v 3d. For him this choice of words indicated that the reference was to the prophet's own country. In vv 17-18 he judged everything after tē'ākēl to be a secondary addition.

²C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Twelve Minor Prophets, trans. James Martin, Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868), p. 126.

³Julius Wellhausen, Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1898), pp. 150-151.

⁴J. M. P. Smith, W. H. Ward, and J. A. Bewer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), pp. 207 and 185-86.

Thus, universality was to be found neither in vv 2-3 nor in vv 17-18.⁵

E. Sellin introduced the idea that Zeph 1 comprises two authentic, originally distinct poems, namely, vv 2-6, 8-13 and vv 7, 14-18. He distinguished the two poems from each other on the basis that in the first poem Yahweh speaks in the first person singular whereas in the second he is spoken of in the third person singular. The two poems were given a thematic connexion by a later writer who inserted v 7 into its present position and added references to "the day" in vv 9, 10, and 12. In this way the DY theme which was already the focus of vv 14-18 was introduced to the first poem as well.

Sellin recognized the universality and particularity of the judgment pronouncement in the first poem (vv 2-6, 8-13), but he did not associate this pattern with the DY theme because, in his opinion, the DY theme originally belonged only to the second poem (vv 7, 14-18). According to his interpretation of the second poem, the DY was not a day of judgment particularly for Judah and Jerusalem, but, rather, it was a day of judgment with a universal scope. Sellin claimed that the DY was portrayed in the same universal dimensions by the older prophets.⁶

⁵W. Nowack, Die kleinen Propheten, 3rd rev. ed., Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1922), pp. 291-92 and 296.

⁶Ernst Sellin, Das Zwölfprophetenbuch, KAT

It was G. Gerleman, as far as I have been able to ascertain, who first denied the authenticity of vv 2-3 and 17-18. Of vv 2-3 he said:

Die beiden Verse dürften nicht von Zephanja herrühren. Statt der folgenden geschichtlich orientierten Gerichtsschilderungen, wo bestimmte soziale Schichten oder geographisch angegebene Gebiete vom Gericht betroffen werden sollen, finden wir hier eine Weltgerichtsschilderung. Sie gehört in eine Zeit, wo der Gerichtsgedanke von der faktischen Geschichte losgerissen worden ist. Nur in dieser Gestalt besass für spätere Zeiten eine Gerichtsprophetie Aktualität. Hier ist die Weltgerichtsschilderung als eine stattdemotische Einleitung des folgenden eingefügt worden.⁷

Similarly, he said of v 18:

Bei diesem Vers dürfte die spätere Hälfte, 18 bc, die übrigens reine Prosa ist, von demselben eschatologischen Bearbeiter herrühren, der das Zephanjabuch mit einer Einleitung versehen hat, V. 2 und 3. Hier wie in der Einleitung ist es die ganze Erde und alle ihre Bewohner, die vernichtet werden sollen, während im übrigen Teil des Kapitels das Gericht geschichtlich und örtlich verankert ist: es gilt Jerusalem. Weiter sind die Blicke des Propheten nicht gewandert. Auch finden wir sonst überall bestimmte Gruppen des Volkes, gegen die sich der Prophet wendet: den fremdenfreundlichen Hof, die ungerechten und religiös gleichgültigen Kaufleute und vor allem die Ba'alsverehrer, welche mit völliger Vernichtung bedroht werden.⁸

It is clear that Gerleman judged the collocation of universality and particularity to be inauthentic on the basis of

(Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1922), pp. 368-79. He suggests that such a universal dimension is apparent in Isa 2.12ff and Amos 5.18f, 8.9f.

⁷Gillis Gerleman, Zephanja: Textkritisch und literarisch untersucht (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1942), p. 5.

⁸Ibid., p. 22.

his conviction that the prophets of pre-exilic times were concerned only with their own country and that the universal perspective belonged to a later time.

According to F. Nötscher, all sections of the Book of Zephaniah, aside from some unimportant additions, are authentic. A redactor brought the sections into an outward unity. Nötscher distinguishes three sections in the first chapter, namely, vv 2-3; 4-6, 8-13; and 7, 14-18. He does not indicate clearly whether or not he considers these to be units distinct from each other. Of the DY he writes that it meant terror for all nations, and that the fate of Jerusalem in particular was meant to be seen as a warning for the other nations.⁹

L. P. Smith and E. R. Lacheman have taken the most radical view with regard to the authenticity of the Book of Zephaniah. They find that only Zeph 1.4-13 fits the sixth century. The rest of the book they believe to be a pseudepigraphon authored by an apocalyptic writer around the time 200 B.C. In support of this claim they attempt to show that the book is literally and linguistically dependant on the books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Since, in their opinion, only Zeph 1.4-13 could be pre-exilic and authentic, vv 2-3, 17-18 must be of post-exilic origin.¹⁰

⁹Friedrich Nötscher, Das Alte Testament: Zwölfprophetenbuch oder kleine Propheten (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1948), pp. 127-30.

¹⁰Louise Pettibone Smith and Ernest R. Lacheman,

A. Edens, in his translation of the Book of Zephaniah, indicates that he considers all of Zeph 1, with the exception of several small glosses, to be the authentic work of Zephaniah.¹¹ He rejects Sellin's idea that universality as a motif in the DY theme had its precedent in Amos 5.18f, 8.9f, and Isa 2.12ff. Edens thinks that those passages do not have a truly universal scope. In his opinion, the description of the DY as a day of universal judgment was Zephaniah's original and most significant contribution. Though his primary concern was with Judah and Jerusalem, Zephaniah also proclaimed a universal judgment. Neither the particular nor the universal were incidental to his message.¹²

C. L. Taylor ascribes vv 2-3 to an "eschatological writer whom nothing less than universal destruction would satisfy." Furthermore, if the reading in v 17, "I will bring distress on men," were shown to be correct, Taylor would consider it together with most of v 18 to be a secondary addition on account of its universalism.¹³

"The Authorship of the Book of Zephaniah," JNES 9 (1950), 137-42. As far as I have been able to determine, the thesis advanced by these authors has found no acceptance among scholars.

¹¹Ambrose Edens, "A Study of the Book of Zephaniah as to the Date, Extent and Significance of the Genuine Writings with a Translation" (Ph. D. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1953), pp. 171-81.

¹²Ibid., pp. 130-34 and 166-67.

¹³Charles L. Taylor, "The Book of Zephaniah," IB, 12 vols (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1956): 6, 1010.

In the opinion of K. Elliger, the several small units of Zeph 1 were only brought into unity by a redactor. With reference to vv 2-6, he considers it plausible that the same speaker might have concentrated especially on Judah and included this particular concern in the context of a universal threat. The older prophets were aware of the cosmic dimensions of the DY and did not limit their prophecies concerning it to their own land. However, Elliger thinks that vv 2-3 do not harmonize metrically with vv 4-6. He explains that a redactor may have taken what were genuine words of Zephaniah and given them a universal and eschatological significance. Elliger explains the relationship between v 16 and vv 17-18 in the same way. The metre of vv 17-18 (as also of vv 2-3) is irregular, almost prosaic. In content vv 17-18 are also similar to vv 2-3. Therefore Elliger prefers to understand these introductory and concluding verses as the work of a redactor rather than as glosses or incidental additions.¹⁴

D. L. Williams claims that Zephaniah's concern was with Judah, not with other nations. Therefore, any terms or phrases that indicate universality must be the work of a post-exilic editor. In William's own words, " . . . Zephaniah's theology of the Day of Yahweh contains no overtones of a universal destruction, which would prelude the

¹⁴Karl Elliger, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, 3rd ed., ATD (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1956), pp. 59-61, 66-67.

end of the world."¹⁵ He finds the concreteness of vv 4-16 to be inconsistent with the indefiniteness of vv 2-3. The judgment of vv 4-16 seems insignificant against that of vv 2-3. Furthermore, vv 2-3 are metrically irregular. In view of these considerations Williams concludes that vv 2-3 are editorially expanded. He restores a strophe that may be translated as follows:

I will utterly destroy everything,
 says Yahweh,
 I will destroy man and beast,
 from upon the face of the ground.¹⁶

Williams also doubts the originality of v 18, especially the section following tē'ākēl which indicates a universal perspective.¹⁷

F. Horst doubts that vv 2-3 and 17-18 could be the work of a redactor. He says that Zeph 1, as it now stands, exemplifies a construction sometimes evident in oracles. A pregnant oracular kernel is spelled out in greater detail. In this case it is the "everything" of v 2 that is being detailed in vv 4-16. Horst finds it peculiar that the listing of creatures to be destroyed (v 3) is diverted into

¹⁵Donald Leigh Williams, "Zephaniah: A Re-interpretation" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1961), p. 57.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 79-91. The reconstructed consonantal text is as follows:

'sp 'sp kl
 n'm ywh
 'sp 'dm wbmh
 m'l pny h'dmh

¹⁷Ibid., p. 152-57.

a threat against the "wicked." The purpose of this diversion is to form a bridge with the verses which follow. In Horst's opinion, this bridge passage is certainly redactional.¹⁸

C. A. Keller judges v 6 to be a gloss. The rest of the chapter he considers authentic. The DY, in his interpretation, is directed not only against a particular people, but against all living persons.¹⁹

L. Sabottka does not doubt the authenticity of vv 2-3. He draws attention to other passages in the book, namely, 1.17f, 2.4-15, and 3.8f, in which he finds a similar universal dimension. He argues that other prophets, for instance, Nahum and Habakkuk, also placed their message into universal frameworks.²⁰

A. S. Kapelrud also contends that vv 2-3 and 17-18 are Zephaniah's own work. If these verses are viewed only in connexion with vv 4-13, the difference is remarkable because of the radical change in perspective. On the other hand, Kapelrud urges, the structure of the entire book must be kept in the analysis. In vv 14-16 the prophet warns of the imminent DY. This warning is first and foremost directed

¹⁸Theodore H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, Die zwölf kleinen Propheten, 3rd ed., HAT (Tübingen: J C B Mohr, 1964), p. 191.

¹⁹Carl A. Keller and René Vuilleumier, Michee, Nahoum, Habacuc, Sophonie, CAT (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1971), pp. 187 and 194-96.

²⁰L. Sabottka, Zephanja: Versuch einer Neuübersetzung mit philologischem Kommentar, Biblica et Orientalia N. 25 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972), p. 5.

against Jerusalem, but Zeph 2 leaves no doubt that the DY has serious implications for all the nations surrounding Judah. Even though the prophet does not include the whole world in his oracles against the nations, these oracles show that his scope is broad. Concerning the relationship between the universality and particularity of Zeph 1, Kapelrud explains, ". . . it was quite natural to start with a shocking utterance that the whole world was going to be gathered in and destroyed. It was a thundering fanfare which might serve to arouse the anxious interest of the prophet's audience."²¹

The most recent monograph on the Book of Zephaniah is an investigation by H. Irsigler which follows W. Richter's "literaturwissenschaftliche" method. Irsigler distinguishes the following units in Zeph 1: v 1; vv 2-3; 4-5; 6; 7; 8b-9; 10c-11; 12b-13b; 13c-f; 14-16; 17a-b, d-e, 18a; and 18b-c.²² Within these units several small additions are to be found. Irsigler uses several criteria for the separation of these units from each other and from the additions. Among these criteria are repetition, change in person, change in scope, change in theme, and change in rhythm. Thus vv 2-3 are

²¹Arvid S. Kapelrud, The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah, Morphology and Ideas (Oslo-Bergen-Tromsø: Universitets-forlaget, 1975), p. 16. See also pp. 13-31.

²²Hubert Irsigler, Gottesgericht und Jahwetag: Die Komposition Zef 1,1-2,3, untersucht auf der Grundlage der Literarkritik des Zefanjabuches, Münchener Universitäts-schriften, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 1977), p. 111.

distinguished from vv 4-5 by the change in scope and by sticho-metric considerations. Vv 2-3 are also distinguished from the DY text, i.e., from vv 7, 14-16, by the change in person of the verb. Similarly, vv 17-18 are distinguished from vv 14-16 by the change in person of the verb, and by the change in theme. Moreover, in structure the stichs of vv 17-18 are much more symmetrical than those of vv 15-16.²³

Regarding the relationship of the units to each other, Irsigler finds that the units vv 4-5, 8-9, 10-11, and 12-13 are thematically related to each other and compositionally linked with the DY units, i.e., with vv 7, 14-16.²⁴ He considers it possible that vv 7-13 may have been the first section to be compiled in the earliest stages of the formation of Zeph 1. This may have occurred during the early exilic period.²⁵ The last step in the formation of Zeph 1 would have been the addition of the units vv 2-3 and 17 a-b, d-e, 18a which are clearly secondary to vv 4-16. These units may stem from the same hand and belong to the exilic or early post-exilic times.²⁶

From the foregoing survey of past critical work on Zeph 1 it is clear that scholarly opinion on the interpretation and authenticity of Zeph 1.2-3, 17-18 has been and remains divided. Several commentators, including Sellin,

²³Ibid., pp. 100-1, 104, 108-11.

²⁴Ibid., p. 113.

²⁵Ibid., p. 458.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 112 and 459.

Nötscher, Edens, Keller, Sabottka, and Kapelrud, find little difficulty in interpreting these verses in a universal sense or in ascribing them to the pre-exilic prophet, Zephaniah. On the other hand, a significant group, including Nowack, Gerleman, Smith and Lacheman, Taylor, Elliger, Williams, and Irsigler, would deny the universal perspective to the pre-exilic prophets and, therefore, either deny the pre-exilic origin and authenticity of these verses or interpret them in a non-universal sense.

The criteria which have been advanced as a basis for a non-universal interpretation of these verses, or for distinguishing them from vv 4-16 and for questioning their authenticity include change in person (Irsigler), change in theme (Irsigler), and sticho-metric irregularity (Irsigler and Elliger). However, the criterion most often applied is that the universal scope was inconsistent with the perspective of the pre-exilic prophets. Of these criteria, the first three may be classified as literary-critical. The last will be classified as an ideological criterion because, on the part of the interpreter, it assumes a certain knowledge of the ideology of pre-exilic prophets and excises passages which are inconsistent with this assumption. The evaluation of this ideological criterion forms the basic agenda of this thesis.

Also evident from the foregoing survey is the fact that in past interpretations of Zeph 1 the pattern of