

# Devotions on the Hebrew Bible

54 REFLECTIONS TO INSPIRE & INSTRUCT

Milton Eng and Lee M. Fields, General Editors

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# Made for Praise

ZEPHANIAH 3:20

MT

בַּעַת הַהֵיאָ אָבִיא אֶתְכֶם וּבַעַת  
קִבְּצִי אֶתְכֶם כִּי־אֶתֶן אֶתְכֶם לְשֵׁם  
וְלִתְהַלָּה בְּכָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ בְּשׁוּבִי  
אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה:

ESV

“At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD.

With the shadows of divine judgment looming, Yahweh uses the prophet Zephaniah to muster tireless trust in God’s faithfulness to preserve and ultimately satisfy his believing remnant. One of the greatest motivations Zephaniah provides for “seeking” and “waiting for” God (2:3; 3:8) comes in his glorious vision of hope that is held out for all who persevere in faith.

Part of this promise is found in the last verse (3:20), which begins בַּעַת הַהֵיאָ—specifically, “at that time” of the day of the Lord (3:8) when Yahweh removes the proud and preserves the God-dependent (3:11–13), when the saving king’s irreversible victory gives rise to shouts of joy from those rescued (3:14–15), and when Yahweh both delivers and takes delight in his remnant (3:16–19). “At that time” Yahweh will rally his redeemed

together for a key reason: **כִּי־אֶתֶּן אֶתְכֶם לְשֵׁם וְלִתְהִלָּה בְּכָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ**. The NASB, ESV, and NIV all treat the admiration and acclaim (שֵׁם “name” and תְּהִלָּה “praise”) as something the remnant of Judah receives from the onlooking world: “I will give you renown/honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth” (NASB/NIV); “I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth” (ESV). Elsewhere, God promises to exalt his own before the world’s eyes. Fulfilling their original mission, his people will stand as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, mediating and displaying God’s greatness to the world (Exod 19:5–6; 1 Pet 2:9), and God will give them a new and exalted name (Gen 12:2; Isa 56:5; 62:2; 65:15; 66:22).

However, this text does not simply say that Yahweh will give his redeemed fame and acclaim. Instead, using the ל preposition, the verse declares that Yahweh will set his people in the center of the world “*for* a name and *for* praise” (לְשֵׁם וְלִתְהִלָּה). Whose name and whose praise is at the fore? The closest parallel texts suggest that *Yahweh’s worth and honor* is the ultimate goal of the new creation. It is God’s name, God’s fame that is to be exalted in the lives of his saints. As asserted by Zephaniah’s contemporary Jeremiah, Yahweh originally set his people apart in order “that they might be *for me* [לִי] a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen” (Jer 13:11). Nevertheless, in the new covenant, when sins are forgiven and loyalty is enabled, Yahweh declares that his people “shall be to me [לִי] a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth” (Jer 33:9). That is, as Ezekiel later testifies, by Yahweh’s doing a transforming work within his people by his spirit before the eyes of the nations, he will act “for the sake of my holy name” (Ezek 36:22–23).

The ultimate end of new covenant transformation is worship. All things are from God, through God, and *to God* (Rom 11:36). The new creation, now inaugurated through Christ and

his church (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), is about God. It is about his glory, his Son, his greatness, his exaltation among the peoples of the planet. May your life be marked by the matchless worth of God in Christ, that all “may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

*Jason S. DeRouchie*