

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH
Lesson 7, Chapter 3 Continued

Before we continue in our study of Zephaniah chapter 3, let's back away and briefly look panoramically at what we have been reading, and what the Prophet has been telling us. First and foremost, it reveals God's patterns that never seem to vary from book to book or era to era... from Genesis to Revelation. This is comforting to some, and frustrating to others.

Literarily speaking, the contents of this short book fall into two parts: part 1 is chapter 1 through chapter 3 verse 8, it outlines the coming judgment on the world, including Israel and the nations. Thus, today we'll complete that first part and then quickly veer to the 2nd. That second part is from chapter 3 verse 9 to the end of Zephaniah's prophecy, which comprises a promise of universal salvation... but only to a remnant. There is a topic buried there that we explore in some depth. Zephaniah's frank denunciations are directed against false worship and human-contrived religion that often masquerades itself as Torah-based. The calamity that God will bring will find everyone, even in the hiding-places of Jerusalem. Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria shall be overwhelmed by His punishment and disasters. Jerusalem in particular, having been continuously rebellious, corrupt, and disobedient to the word of Yehoveh, even though they had been commissioned to be a light of truth to the world, shall fall under His divine wrath. Yet, on the other hand, God's promise is made known to the nations... all the gentiles... that He will so purify them that their survivors of Judgment Day may call on Him, and all the remaining leaders will bring Him offerings to Jerusalem. After the storm of judgment Israel shall be humble and shall trust in Yehoveh alone. New societal conditions will arise, justice and righteousness that come from the Covenant of Moses shall prevail, so that the redeemed... worldwide... will rejoice in the Lord.

Zephaniah has shown itself to be a no-nonsense and forceful book. Its language is emphatic, dramatic and picturesque, and it reveals obvious connections and acquaintance with the earlier Prophets. The ideas most emphasized are the providential control of the nations of the world by the One God of the universe, the necessity of purity and justice as opposed to the prevalent corruption and injustice of the day, and the refining value of

judgment and suffering. He further makes it abundantly clear that, despite teachings to the contrary, God expects the nations to abide by the same laws and commands He has given to Israel. Israel is merely the people and nation He has chosen as the vessel through whom His instructions to the world were to be delivered. Thus, unlike the Christian Church message of the past 16 centuries that Jews must drop their ancient Hebrew biblical faith principles in order to follow the doctrines of gentile Constantinian Christians, in fact it is the other way around.

We ended last time at verse 7. So, let's pick up there by reading the remainder of chapter 3.

RE-READ ZEPHANIAH CHAPTER 3:7 – end

Whereas verse 6 and earlier is directed toward the gentile nations of the world and their cities, upon verse 7 the finger now points towards Jerusalem and, therefore, to the entire nation of Judah. The message is: this is what I did to the nations for their disobedience, and so, surely, Jerusalem, you will understand and grasp hold of what I'm telling you that is going to happen to you, and for essentially the same reasons. Of all people on earth, for you (remnant of Israel) to rebel against your God, your excuse is the least and your accountability is the greatest.

God says:

CJB Zephaniah 3:7 *'Surely now you will fear me, you will receive correction'; so that her place will not be cut off by all the punishments I brought on her. But no, they only grew all the more eager to be corrupt in all that they do.*

The Prophet Jeremiah says the same only slightly differently.

CJB Jeremiah 5:3 *Yehoveh, your eyes look for truth. You struck them, but they weren't affected; you [nearly] destroyed them, but they refused correction. They made their faces harder than rock, refusing to repent.*

Why would Jerusalem and Judah (just like the now scattered Ephraim/Israel) see what God has done to both their brethren and to the nations, even bringing some calamities upon Jerusalem and Judah, and still, they refuse to repent? And, yet, at the same time, they claim to be staunch followers of Yehoveh, obedient to His Torah, and quite content that as God's people they are beyond any threat of actual punishment? It's due to the dangers of manmade doctrines and traditions that twist and corrupt the same God's Word they pretend to be upholding. They do not repent because they see no need for it. It's the series of God's Prophets that are wrong... not them. I spoke in an earlier lesson on the immense power of belief and denial, and so won't repeat it other than to say it ought not be that way. It is not of God. It is also not exclusive to the Hebrews, but rather to humanity in general. It does not leave us just because we become Believers in Yeshua and God-Worshippers. All the Minor Prophets demonstrate how following our faith based on religious beliefs and denials only leads in one direction: sin and the great failures and penalties that come with it.

Sadly, as history reveals the many examples of nations great and small that have disappeared from the scene, it seems that seldom does anyone ask why? And, when historians answer that seldom asked question, typically they will say that it is climate change, invasion, or maybe a natural disaster. But that's much too shallow. It is that their demise inevitably is organically connected to their moral degradation and to the denial of the basic God dynamics of proper righteousness and justice that He first put directly into our DNA and later wrote down in a complete moral code. We are designed by the Creator to *learn* from history and life experience... not to change it to suit us or to deny it. I am impressed by God's words of "Surely you will fear Me... you will receive and accept My instruction and correction". But... no. The vast bulk of humans will not, and that included Jerusalem and Judah.

God's hope was that these punishments He had inflicted on both the nations and on Israel would have had a corrective effect. To drive at least His own chosen people back to the right path. But, it had not, except than for occasional brief moments in time. I think the question for our time is: will we learn from this? Or will we too stay deeply wedded to our beliefs and denials and refuse to return to the source of infallible truth: God's Word? We each

bear personal responsibility and accountability for this decision, and the consequences of our choice will not be overlooked no matter our sincerity.

Here's the thing: as I brought up in our previous lesson, the punishment is not only earthly disasters, it is eternal disaster. When God brings up the matter of being cut-off (**kareth** in Hebrew) as the result, by definition it includes eternal separation from Him. This is for God's people just as much as it is for the nations. So, as Paul says as He speaks to gentile claimers of Messiah Yeshua:

CJB Romans 11:19-21 ***¹⁹ So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified! ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly won't spare you!***

Does that sound anything like once-saved-always-saved? Therein lies the rub: the people of Jerusalem and Judah believed that as the branches of the metaphoric Olive tree, they had become once-attached-always-attached in their theology. They felt that as Jews they would be held harmless and would never suffer God's wrath. Yet, they were cut-off due to their lack of trust in God and His ways. Gentile Believers, we stand to suffer exactly the same. Therefore, we should not rest content; rather we ought to retain a healthy fear that we, too, can have our branches removed if that trust wanes or disappears altogether.

Verse 8 says:

CJB Zephaniah 3:8 ***Therefore, wait for me," says Yehoveh, "for the day when I rise to witness against you, when I decide to assemble nations, to gather kingdoms together, to pour on them my indignation, all my furious anger; for all the earth will be consumed in the fire of my passion.***

Verse 8 sums up what has been said to this point. It's ambiguous as to whom is being addressed here: Jerusalem or the nations. The opening word of this

verse is **la'ken**, which seems to be acting as a conjunction. So, "therefore" is a good translation as also would be the English words "thus" or "so". That is, it completes what has just been said (which is the content of verse 7). So, I take the audience to be Jerusalem and Judah.

"Wait for Me" says God to Jerusalem. Wait for what? **"For the day when I rise to witness against you"**. "Wait for Me" (**chakku li** in Hebrew) is sort of sarcastic in that it more or less means to "stay just like you are". It's like the fed-up parent that says: "keep on doing what you're doing and watch what happens". There is an inevitability to it because the parent knows that the child is simply not going to change... they are just too stubborn in their nature.

I said in an earlier lesson that we need to understand all that is going on with the nations are as an aftereffect, or perhaps for the cause of, what happens to Judah. For God to "witness" against Jerusalem means to be the witness in a trial... this is referring to a judicial setting. Thus, this is speaking of the Day of Judgment. What the remainder of this verse does is to more or less repeat what we're told in chapter 1 regarding the nations. The devastations Israel will suffer will be the result of God assembling the nations to come and battle Israel. He is assembling them both to destroy them and to punish Israel terribly by means of the nations' actions against Israel. It's the same God-pattern as was used to disassemble and scatter Ephraim/Israel and would shortly be used to disassemble and exile Judah to Babylon. God uses the nations to punish His people and then He punishes those nations because they are not God-fearing. A repeat of this is what will happen in the End Times.

I want to point out that not all Bible versions agree about the matter of God rising to be a witness against Judah. Rather, a good example of an alternative translation is the YLT.

YLT **Zephaniah 3:8** ***Therefore, wait for Me -- an affirmation of Jehovah, For the day of My rising for prey, For My judgment is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them Mine indignation, All the heat of Mine anger, For by the fire of My jealousy consumed is all the earth.***

The early Church Father Jerome, who was always prone to interpreting the Bible to make Messiah front and center even when plainly He was not, says this should read: "For the day of Jehovah rising up forever". And, since "forever" is involved, then the reference must be to Jesus as Jehovah, He says. He is wrong because the Hebrew cannot possibly translate to "forever". Strangely enough, I think Calvin (still with some of the leanings of Jerome) grasped the better overall meaning by saying this: "Just as lions seize, tear in pieces, and devour; so, will I do with you (Judah) because hitherto I have spared you with too much humanity and paternal care". Therefore, characterizing God as "rising for prey" rather than "rising as a witness" is the superior choice.

Remembering that some measure of Zephaniah's own personal style of poetic narrative is at play, then the pairing of "to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms" is just that: a typical poetic parallel or couplet. There is no extra meaning in saying nations versus kingdoms. The reality at that era of human society was that all nations were kingdoms. All were ruled by monarchs. God's indignation upon ALL the nations of the earth, is going to bring ALL the heat of God's anger, in order for the fire of God's passion or jealousy to consume ALL of the earth. I want to point out something here that the Jews who created the Masoretic Text (the Hebrew Bible text that is the most complete text that we have in Hebrew and Aramaic in our day), noticed something unique in this verse that happens nowhere else in a single passage in the Bible. Every letter of the Hebrew alphabet is used. Zephaniah used this technique probably to emphasize the notion of totality, inclusiveness, the fullest scope, the universality of what is being said in verse 8. It is an all, every, no one spared meaning. No exceptions to the rule. Every inhabitant, every city, every nation will experience God's fiery wrath. I don't know how much clearer this picture can be made. And, yet you can count on individuals, groups, congregations, denominations, nations, and even Israel assuming it must not apply to them. Let us not be so much in denial that we, too, cannot accept what is guaranteed by God.

Just when doom and gloom and the seeming end of everything and everyone looms on the horizon, verse 9 pops up to save they day!

CJB Zephaniah 3:9 *For then I will change the peoples, so that they will have pure lips, to call on the name of Yehoveh, all of them, and serve him with one accord.*

Finally, a ray of hope. The first words of this verse are **ki az**. “For then” is the common and almost universal translation of this Hebrew opening. And it is a good translation. Even so, the sense of it sounds like “as a consequence of”. That is not what it means. It more leans to “after that”. That is, something that follows what has been described. So here, after all that God has said will happen, happens... the Day of Judgment... the world being purified by fire to the destruction of most but the salvation of many... a huge change is going to happen. In the CJB where we read the word “change”, which is **haphak**, the much more literal meaning is “to turn”. I realize that on the surface, to “change” and “to turn” seem so close in meaning that either works equally well. The issue is this: nearly all Bible commentators will immediately say that this verse and what follows is, therefore, about the “conversion” of all the survivors to Believers. To convert *is* to change. But to convert is *not* the same as to turn. I want to dwell on this for a few minutes.

I’m going to draw heavily on research and a teaching I did many years ago about this subject of conversion that might seem less than important at first glance, but the great impact this misunderstanding has had on the Believing faith community is something that needs to be remedied. And the meaning of verse 9 here in Zephaniah will be impacted by this detour we’re about to embark upon.

Very simply, I’ll begin by saying the obvious: words have meaning. Words create mental pictures that lead to assumptions and conclusions that we make often without consciously realizing it. While I don’t know what we’d do without the written word of God, on the other hand, unless one is versed in the original languages, what nearly all who read the Bible are reading is translations. In fact, most of our Bible translations aren’t even directly from the original Hebrew or Greek to English. Depending on your Bible version it could involve a translation path that goes from the Hebrew to the Greek, then the Greek to Latin, and then the Latin to English.

But that's only the beginning of the issue of knowing the meaning of "words". The meaning of words changes with time. English words used in the KJV Bible don't necessarily mean how we take those same words to mean in the 21st century. Goodness, during my lifetime there are many English words that I used in my childhood that have completely different meanings today. And there are English words that exist today that didn't when I was a youth.

Thus, for you who have followed Torah Class over the years, you know that one of our basic tenets is that we must try to understand what those words written in the Bible meant to the authors and to the people those authors were directing their words towards, in their time and in their ancient Middle Eastern cultural setting. This historical reconstruction is crucial in extracting proper meaning from the words that we read in Scripture. But more, there are certain words in Hebrew especially, that represents large or complex concepts that have no identifiable or close parallels in other societies and therefore those Hebrew words are difficult to express in other languages in ways that create in our modern minds the same mental picture it created in the minds of the author or of his ancient audience. What must also be admitted is that some of those ancient Hebrew concepts have been tragically misunderstood (and at times purposefully misrepresented) and so mistranslated into English words that give us the wrong impression of their intent.

There are a few biblical words, though, that have had greater impact on Christian theology, doctrines and philosophy than others and one of those key words is the term "conversion". This is true especially as the word "conversion" applies to the Apostle Paul. I propose to you today, as we walk the same scriptural ground of the Old Testament that Paul did 1900 years ago, that this word "conversion" needs to be retired from our vocabulary and removed from our Bibles because it doesn't belong there. It gives us an entirely wrong impression about what it was that Paul did in reaction to his experience with Yeshua, and what he expected of the disciples that he made on behalf of Messiah... both Jew and Gentile.

The traditional scholarship over the past several centuries has concluded that the 1st generation Believing community after Yeshua had already become a distinct religion that was separated from the Hebrew faith. Basically, the idea

is that Paul had rejected his former faith in favor of Christianity, and along with it he had decided to condemn as worthless servitude any attempt for new Believers to follow the Law of Moses and the Prophets that were the very heartbeat of the Hebrew faith. The term that was coined by later gentile Christian leaders to describe what this well studied Jewish Rabbi did in his extreme change from a follower of the Torah into an anti-law Christian, was to “convert”.

But what does being converted mean? A.D. Nock says that conversion means a deliberate and great change is involved, whereby the old was wrong and the new is right. **Arthur Darby Nock** was the Frothingham Professor of the History of Religion at Harvard University. He was for years one of the world's leading authorities on the religions of later antiquity. He also was the author of *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background*, and *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*. And indeed, it is the crux of Christian doctrine to prove that Paul decided that his Hebrew faith that obeyed the Torah was wrong, and his membership in a new religion called Christianity that abolished the Torah was right.

In the mid 1970's a Bible academic named Krister Stendahl urged his fellow scholars to drop the term conversion altogether and instead use the word “call”. **Krister Stendahl** was dean of Harvard Divinity School who also served as a bishop in the Church of Sweden. So, neither Nock nor Stendahl were Jewish or Hebrew Roots followers, or anything other than excellent mainstream Bible academics steeped in original languages and biblical scholarship. His contention was that the English word “call” more accurately portrays to the modern mind what was true for Paul: and it is that Paul did NOT see himself as having left His biblical Jewish faith roots nor as someone who abandoned the Law and the Prophets. The word “call”, he felt, softened the contrast between the Jewish Pharisaical faith Paul had been practicing and this new and spreading movement that made Yeshua of Nazareth the focus because He was the Messiah that all of Israel had been waiting for. In other words, says Stendahl, for Paul, what he came to practice after his experience with Yeshua was a type of his long-standing Jewish faith; not a new anti-Judaism or anti-Torah religion.

Of course, there was much push back from the traditional Christian community against both Nock and Stendhal that wanted there to be more than a sharp contrast between Torah-based faith and this new Christianity, but rather insisted Christianity had been based on maintaining a complete break from the faith of the Hebrews. Let me say that again: in a near consensus of Christian biblical scholars of all walks and denominations, the foundational premise is that Christianity is a 100% different religion that the biblical faith practiced by the Jews since Mt. Sinai. Besides, says many of these academics, the words of the Bible are so mysterious that the meaning of the original words continually and magically transform to meet whatever new meaning the passing of time and evolution of new cultures and societies might produce. So, for them, whatever those biblical terms might have meant 2000 or more years ago, or whatever the author of that Bible book might have intended in 1000 B.C., or 50 A.D., doesn't matter. For these mainstream, traditional Christian academics the TRUE meaning of the words of the Bible is whatever that meaning is for us in modern times and in modern societies using modern vocabularies.

Not only is that position untenable on its face, but it makes the Holy Scriptures into a constantly evolving living document with the only limits being the imagination of the human mind. This is why nearly all Bible teaching and Pastoral preaching has become allegorical in nature rather than exegetical. Such a position necessarily holds that there is no firm eternal truth, no eternal foundational principles or standards, and thus the concept that there could be for Christians still-existing laws and commandments from the days of Moses is a viewpoint that only the backward and ignorant would adopt. This thought process is essentially based on the Christian notion of **conversion**; the idea that Paul converted from the Jewish faith to Christianity. And, therefore, there was now a different governing body than what the Jews had known for hundreds of years. That is, he is painted as discovering that the traditional Torah-based religion of the Hebrews was wrong, and now he would follow the new Christianity that in his day had no holy book whatsoever. So, if the new Christian Paul now denied the validity of the Torah and the Prophets, and there was no New Testament yet in his time, and there wouldn't be for the better part of 2 centuries, what "Scriptures" did Paul consult? Such a line of reasoning has to admit that he would have had none, and this again proves

what a dead-end doctrine it is to claim that when Paul accepted Yeshua as His Messiah that he **converted** from Judaism to Christianity.

Further if Paul “converted”, then why does he continue going to the Temple in Jerusalem, and making sacrifices there? Why does he continue to engage in the vow rituals of first allowing one’s hair to grow, and then cutting it and offering it at the Temple upon conclusion of the vow terms? Why does he continue to engage in the Biblical Feasts ordained in Leviticus?

But getting beyond Paul, how do we deal with the two groups that are routinely said to be Paul’s converts: Jews who practice Judaism, and Gentiles who practiced a pagan religion? On the surface it would certainly seem to be correct to say that Gentiles indeed made a sharp move from A to B: from the worship of their traditional pagan gods and idols to the worship of the God of Israel. Here’s the reason why the term “convert” still is inappropriate and misleading even to this situation. In Paul’s worldview (which was representative of the general Jewish worldview) the world consisted of two religious communities: Israel’s and everybody else (called “the nations”, ***goyim***, in the Hebrew scriptures). The common term used for “everybody else” is Gentile.

So, did the Jews make a distinction between Gentiles and pagan Gentiles? No, they didn’t. That kind of thought is nowhere present during Paul’s era. A culture or ethnicity and their god were one in the same. So, if you are an Israelite, you automatically worship the god of Israel; if you are Gentile, you automatically worship some other god. End of story. Thus, in the Book of Galatians chapter 5 Paul speaks against other missionaries preaching Yeshua who are telling the local Gentiles that if they receive a Jewish circumcision, then they’ll be responsible to keep the “whole law” (meaning the Torah **and** the entire body of Tradition that all national Jews followed). In other words, between having a circumcision and agreeing to live a completely Jewish lifestyle, such a Gentile has converted; they have literally and legally, religiously and governmentally, changed their identity from being a Gentile to becoming a Jew. And surprise! Paul was against this. He was against conversion in any way it can be properly defined. He did not want Gentiles to give up being Gentiles to become national Jews. His Gentiles were to stay

Gentiles. Yes, they must turn from worshipping their other gods and now bow only to the God of Israel. They were NOT to convert (Christianity calls what these Missionaries were doing that Paul was fighting against as Judaizing). So, in Paul's mind, the only true converts were those Gentiles who became nationalized Jews as the Judaizing missionaries were insisting upon.

You see, the problem in using the word convert or conversion is that it confuses the situation that is being described in the Bible. The term **convert** entangles us in the idea that in Paul's day Christianity was new religion created by Christ. And, that it was something new and bold for people to convert to by leaving Judaism and going to something else. In fact, most modern Bible academics agree with what I told you earlier; despite the terrible redactions made in the New Testament (especially as concerns the city of Antioch) that the term Christianity did not yet exist in Paul's time.

So, if Gentiles were NOT to convert and become Jews, and there was no Christianity to convert to, then what was Paul's thought about what had happened to him and what he was asking these Gentiles to do? What mental picture did he have that he was urging them to accept and adopt? When you look at Paul's writings in Greek, he regularly uses certain derivations of the Greek word **strephe** and they all have something to do with "pointing to" or "turning to". For example, in 1Thess 1:9 we hear Paul say: "You turned to God from idols (you **strephe** to God from idols), in order to worship the true and living God". Interestingly when the Greek got translated into Latin, the Latin word chosen was converso; and then when the Latin got translated into English the word chosen was convert and these two consecutive translations only compounded the error.

So, the better and more accurate idea is that one does not covert, but rather one turns, when we accept Yeshua as Messiah. If a Gentile converted that means he would become a Jew, follow Jewish Tradition, and be obligated to follow Jewish ancestral customs. But as Paul said in 1Thess. 1, a new Believer is only to turn from his false gods to following the one true god: The God of Israel.

Paul in further trying to explain exactly what it is that he is asking Gentiles to do says that upon one's faith in Messiah Yeshua, the Holy Spirit enters the Believer and a kind of family connection is made between Gentiles and the Jewish people; but it is a SPIRITUAL connection, not a physical one. And to illustrate this, Paul likes to use the Roman concept of adoption (after all he is talking to Gentiles). The adopted person does NOT have actual physical blood or genetic connection to his or her adoptive family; nonetheless, in a real legal way and by means of a state of mind this person becomes part of the family by mutual agreement and by a voluntary change of identity. The adopted person makes a commitment to his new family, and the family imputes family status upon the adopted person. Further, as Paul says in Romans 8 and Galatians 4 that upon this status change, the adopted person can now cry out "Abba, Father" in worship. This "Abba, Father" isn't the Hebrew Patriarch Abraham nor is it Jacob, so no family connection with the historical biological fathers to all Hebrews is intended. Rather this "Abba, Father" is referring to the heavenly Father, the God of Israel and of Abraham. So just as a Roman adopted person would not claim blood relationship with his new family, he does claim legal family status and equal rights based on law and on mutual agreement.

Thus, this is how we need to view what happened to Paul on the Road to Damascus, and what Paul then expected of those Gentiles that he evangelized. He expected them to **turn** from their false gods to the true god. He expected them to see themselves as adopted into the family of Hebrews, but not as flesh and blood Israelites (or in our modern vernacular, Jews). Rather their (our) new status as members of the Kingdom of God is imputed upon us by God.

When we realize this then we can drop this concept that Paul converted from something bad to something good. Or that Paul left his Jewishness to become something else. Or that a Gentile is to leave his or her Gentile-ness to become something else (a Jew). Whatever change there is, or is being asked, is spiritual in nature. And, the change is to turn from going one direction, to another and better direction.

This also helps us to understand why the Church's insistence that if a Jew wants to worship Christ that they must "convert", is met with such stiff resistance by the Jewish community (as it should be). This is because a Jew rightly understands that by converting, the Church most certainly means that the Jew must leave his or her Jewish ancestral heritage, and Torah-based cultural customs in order to become a Christian, adopting the new Roman based customs and traditions.

Paul sums his position rather well in beginning in Romans 2:25 – Romans 3:6

CJB Romans 2:25-29 ***²⁵ For circumcision is indeed of value if you do what Torah says. But if you are a transgressor of Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision! ²⁶ Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the Torah, won't his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷ Indeed, the man who is physically uncircumcised but obeys the Torah will stand as a judgment on you who have had a b'rit-milah and have Torah written out but violate it! ²⁸ For the real Jew is not merely Jewish outwardly: true circumcision is not only external and physical. ²⁹ On the contrary, the real Jew is one inwardly; and true circumcision is of the heart, spiritual not literal; so that his praise comes not from other people but from God.***

CJB Romans 3:1-6 ***Then what advantage has the Jew? What is the value of being circumcised? ² Much in every way! In the first place, the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God. ³ If some of them were unfaithful, so what? Does their faithlessness cancel God's faithfulness? ⁴ Heaven forbid! God would be true even if everyone were a liar!- as the Tanakh says, "so that you, God, may be proved right in your words and win the verdict when you are put on trial." ⁵ Now if our unrighteousness highlights God's righteousness, what should we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict his anger on us? (I am speaking here the way people commonly do.) ⁶ Heaven forbid! Else, how could God judge the world?***

So, back to Zephaniah 3:9. The verse is: ***For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language***

The people of the nations and from Judah are not going to be changed from who they are to something else. Rather they are going **to turn** from whatever their corrupted faith had become to the one true faith of the Bible and the God of Israel as it was always intended.

We'll pick back up at chapter 3 verse 9, next time.