

Tzefania Introduction Typed Shiur

Demographic Information

Tzefania is the ninth of the Trey Asar prophets and is only three perakim long. Pasuk aleph indicates that Tzefania was the 4th generation of tzadikim. The Gemarah in **Megilah 15A** says that he was a tzadik ben tzadik. Tzefania's lineage is as follows: Tzefania ben Kushi, ben Gedalyah, ben Amaryah, ben Chizkiyah, the king of Yehudah. Since Tzefania was descended from Chezkiyah, he was from shevet Yehudah, and had royal ancestry.

Pesikta Rabasi brings that Tzefania was the teacher of Yirmiya Hanavi, and was a contemporary of Yirmiya and Chulda, the female prophetess.

Yirmiya would prophesy in the market places, Tzefania in the shuls, and Chulda to the women.

Sukka 52B counts Tzefania as one of the eight *Nessichai Adam* – princes of men - that will aid Mashiach in the final redemption.

Tzefania - the name

The Ramad Walli explains that the navi was called Tzefania because he prophesied about the good that was *tsafune*, which means hidden away for the tzadikim at the end of days, in the future redemption, just as he, Tzefania, had prophesied at the end of his nevua.

For this reason he is called ben Kushi, ben Gedaliah, ben Amaryah, ben Chizkiyah. "*Son of Kush*", as Hashem says in the pasuk "*isn't Yisrael distinct to Me like a Kushite person*", which indicates Hashem's special love for Am Yisrael. "*Son of Gedalyah*" - the word *Gedalyah* means *to make great* because in the future Hashem is going to return Yisrael to their greatness. "*Son of Amaryah*" - Amaryah means *words* because in the future Yisrael will accept God's divine words and light. "*Son of Chizkiya*" - derived from the word *chazak*, meaning *strengthen*, because in the future God is going to strengthen His chosen nation.

The Ramad Walli continues to explain that this is what was hinted when Tzefania prophesied during the days of King Yoshiah, from the word *Yiush*, meaning *despair*, because Hashem sent the prophet Tzefania to teach the nation not to despair and give up.

Historical Background

Tzefania prophesied during the reign of Yoshiah ben Amon, which was approximately fifty years prior to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and approximately 200 years since the ten tribes of Yisrael were exiled from their land.

Yoshiah was one of the greatest kings of Yehudah at that time. The pasuk in Melachim II 23:25 says: *"There was no king ever like him before or afterwards who returned to Hashem with all his heart soul and might, who followed the Torah of Moshe."* Yoshiah had risen to the throne at only eight years old, succeeding the evil king Menashe. King Yoshiah had begun to restore the nation to its original purity by getting rid of all the idols that had proliferated throughout Eretz Yisrael. Eighteen years into Yoshiah's reign Chilkia, the kohen gadol at that time, found a sefer torah, the first one seen in decades. Yoshiah went to Chulda the prophetess to interpret this event that had transpired. And indeed, it was considered a bad sign for the Jewish nation. However, Yoshiah was set on his mission to rid people of the impurity that had spread and to adapt the proper tenets of the torah of Moshe.

Most meforshim explain that the rebuke that Tzefania gave was during the first eighteen years of Yoshia's reign, prior to his bringing the nation to teshuvah, when the nation was still under the influence of the evil King Menashe.

Overview

As the role of the prophet was not only for the Jewish nation but for the nations of the world as well, Tzefania warns the Jewish nation and the surrounding gentile nations as well that the end is near. Tzefania rebukes Yisrael harshly and graphically describes the destruction of Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim.

Tzefania warns the nation to do teshuva and come close to Hashem. It is never too late, no matter what they may have done in the past. They can still come close to God and mend their evil ways. God will forgive them! Tzefania also relates that Yisrael's enemies will be destroyed. Tzefania reveals that the reason Hashem admonishes the nations of the world is so that hopefully Am Yisrael will learn to come close to Hashem before their demise.

Tzefania ends with a great vision of the final redemption, the day that they will no longer be ashamed. "Yerushalayim, sing and be happy. Do not be scared. I am with you!"

Hashem will rebuild Eretz Yisrael and bring back His lost sheep from exile, to resettle and rebuild the ancient ruins.

Thank you, Hashem, for the beginning of the fulfillment of these prophecies that were said over 2,000 years ago. As Hashem destroyed Eretz Yisrael, He, at the same time, lifted His great prophets above the confines of time and space, showing them what would occur thousands of years later.



End of Introduction. We will be starting perek aleph in the next shiur.

Thank you.