

# A new commentary in the vernacular: Zephaniah: A review with a translation in isiZulu by Riems de Haan and Thulani Hlela



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Amazwi omphrofethi  
omncane uZefaniya

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A new volume in the series of commentaries on the Minor Prophets in the vernacular (isiZulu) has recently been published by M.J. (Riems) de Haan and T.P. (Thulani) Hlela, ministers within the GKSA (Southern KZN). Just like the previous commentaries on Jonah, Malachi and Micah, this one too is a solid scholarly contribution to the literature on the Bible.

The commentary provides the reader with much needed knowledge of the 7th century BCE in which this prophetic book is situated. In this attractive 400-page book, much historical, linguistic and homiletical material is methodically studied, and concisely presented in accessible isiZulu. This book's heavily subsidised price of R120 is low indeed and very much accessible for a broad public!

It is indeed an outstanding feature that the authors succeeded in translating the academic knowledge with its scholarly jargon of commentaries in understandable isiZulu. To give a very simple example (p. 139): a figure of speech like chiasm (Zph 1:8–9) is rendered as *ukuhlelwa kwamagama aphambanayo*.

Although the book of Zephaniah starts with the ongoing or planned destruction of the city, the authors of the commentary invite the reader to look at the prophecy from the perspective of those who survived the destruction and lost everything: the 'remnant' (Zph 2:17), the 'meek' (Zph 3:12; Mt 5:5–6). Careful attention is paid to the Hebrew text and its meaning within Zulu-culture.

Quite often, key words with their allusions and echoes in different parts of the Old Testament are treated in an intertextual way. This regularly leads to own translations which are compared with the common ones. The name of God, Yahweh, a *crux interpretum* in many Bible translations, is consequently rendered as *iNkosi uNkulunkulu* (pp. 77–79).

Despite the attention paid to historical, archeological and geographic (with maps) information, this commentary distinguishes itself by a linguistic approach with detailed attention to various figures of speech employed in Zephaniah, the literary design of the book as a whole and its separate sections (1:1; 1:2–2:3; 2:4–3:13; 3:14–20), or the text's poetical features (pp. 56–62).

The commentary aims at explaining the meaning of the text in its own historical context in order to expose its significance for our own time. It is about God's judgement and salvation, as well as a new future for a remnant – relevant also among the isiZulu speakers in South Africa.

Very helpful indeed are the many blocks of information framed apart from the main text such as regarding the day of the Lord (pp. 35, 121, 125, 355), as well as many registers. The step-by-step teaching strategy, developed by the authors in the previous volumes in this series, is also employed in this very readable commentary on Zephaniah in isiZulu, even though it will be mainly beneficial for those who have received an adequate theological education.

## Incwadi ehlaziya amazwi kaZefaniya ngesiZulu

Sekushicilelwe incwadi ebizwa ngokuthi *Amazwi Omphrofethi Omncane UZefaniya*. Le ncwadi iyinxenye yeqoqo lezi ncwadi elibizwa ngokuthi '*Amazwi Abaphrofethi Abancane*'. Ezinye ezintathu zalo esezishicilelwe ngaphambili zichaza amazwi abaphrofethi uJona, uMikha,

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noMalakhi. Le ncwadi entsha ibukeka kahle, inkulu (amakhasi ayo angama-413). Ababhali u-M.J. (Riens) de Haan no-P.T. (Thulani) Hlela bangabefundisi bebandla le-Reformed laseNingizimu Afrika. Ngokubhala lezi ncwadi zokuhlaziya bangeze ebandleni ulwazi oluqinile lokufunda iBhayibheli.

Le ncwadi yokuhlaziya ikhombisa isimo sabantu uZefaniya akhuluma ngabo, ababehlala eJerusalema ngonyaka wama-700 BC. Kuchazwa okuningi mayelana nomlando wabo, indlela yokukhuluma encwadini kaZefaniya nendlela yokushumayela ngamazwi akhe. Zonke izindaba ezikhonjiswa kule ncwadi yokuhlaziya zicwaningwe, zakhonjiswa futhi zachazwa kahle ngesiZulu esiqondakalayo.

Ababhali baphumelela ukusebenzisa ulimi lwezifundo oluqondakalayo lapho bechaza izinto ezinzima ngesiZulu, yize abanye babo bekwazi ukuchaza lezo zinto ngesiNgisi kuphela. Isibonelo, ngesiHebheru kusetshenziswa indlela ekhethekile yokukhuluma ebizwa ngababhali ekhasini le-139 ngokuthi 'ukuhlelwa kwamagama aphambanayo', kanti abanye basachaza le ndlela yokukhuluma ngokusebenzisa igama lesiNgisi noma lesiLatini ngokuthi-*chiasm*.

Bacabangisa ofundayo ngabantu abafunde amazwi kaZefaniya kuqala. Amazwi kaZefaniya amemezela ukuchithwa kwedolobha laseJerusalema. Kodwa ofunda le ncwadi yokuhlaziya ucelwa ukuba awamukele sengathi aqondiswe kubantu abahlukumezekile abasinda empini, abangabizwa ngokuthi 'abasele' (kuZefaniya 2:7) noma 'abantu abathobekile nabaphansi' (kuZefaniya 3:12; kuMathewu 5:5-6). Basikhombisa kahle isimo sabantu esivele amazwini kaZefaniya, basihlanganise nesimo sabantu bamanje.

Bakhombisa amagama abalulekileyo ukuthi asetshenziswa kanjani amazwini kaZefaniya nakwezinye izincwadi zaseBhayibhelini. Ngokuhumusha la magama elinye nelinye ngendlela eyodwa, ofundayo uyasizakala ukubona isakhiwo samazwi kaZefaniya nokuxhumana kwawo nezinye izincwadi zaseBhayibhelini. Phakathi kwamagama

abalulekile kukhona amagama kaNkulunkulu. Ekuqaleni kwencwadi yokuhlaziya kuchazwa ukuthi ahunyushwa kanjani kuyo (amakhasi 77-79). Isibonelo, igama ngesiHebheru elithi YHWH, lihunyushwa kule ncwadi ngokuthi 'Inkosi uNkulunkulu'.

Bachaza okuningi mayelana nomlando wabantu uZefaniya akhuluma ngabo. Besebenzisa ulwazi oluvele ekuphenyeni izinto zasendulo, kanye nolwazi maqondana namazwe akhonjiswa amazwini omphrofethi. Besebenzisa futhi izithombe namabalazwe asizayo ekuchazeni. Phezu kwalokho, ofundayo uchazelwa kahle izindlela zokukhuluma ezisencwadini kaZefaniya, ikakhulu maqondana nobunkondlo, nesakhiwo sencwadi yonke nasezingxenyeni ezintathu zayo (Ngokokuqala ku-1:2 kuya ku-2:3; Ngokwesibili ku-2:4 kuya ku-3:13; Ngokwesithathu ku-3:14-20).

Ngokukhombisa kahle isimo sabantu amazwi kaZefaniya akhuluma ngabo, le ncwadi yokuhlaziya yenza ofundayo abone ukubaluleka kwawo esimweni sabantu bamanje. Nanamhlanje, amazwi kaNkulunkulu asaqondiswe kubantu abahlukumezekile abasinda engozini abanekusasa elingacacile, beqonda ukuthi babone isinqumo sikaNkulunkulu sokubhubhisa umhlaba wonke besaphila kodwa ngomusa wakhe.

Ababhali benza ukuthi amazwi kaZefaniya aqondakale kahle ngokukhanyisa ezinye izindaba ezinzima ezindaweni ezithile ezehlukene, njengendaba yosuku lweNkosi uNkulunkulu (amakhasi 35, 121, 125, 355). Ofundayo angathola futhi izinhla ezehlukene ezisekugcineni kwencwadi. Ababhali baphumelela ukufundisa ngendlela yokuchaza kancane kancane belungisela ofundayo ukuqonda izindaba zomlando nendlela yokukhuluma kaZefaniya ekuqaleni kwencwadi yabo (ikhasi loku-1 kuya kuma-94) ngaphambi kokuchaza amazwi kaZefaniya amagama ngamagama. Le ndlela yokuchaza iyatholakala kwezinye izincwadi zeqoqo elibizwa *Amazwi Abaphrofethi Abancane*. Yenza ukuthi namazwi kaZefaniya aqondakale kahle ngesiZulu. Nokho, kuyabonakala ukuthi incwadi enjena ingasiza kakhulu abantu asebenolwazi mayelana nokufunda iBhayibheli.