

THE PROPHET MICAH

BY

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Introduction

When the prophet Jeremiah was in danger of being put to death for his faithful testimony, certain of the elders rose up and said, "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, King of Judah; and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (Jer. 26:18). This is the testimony of the book of Jeremiah to Micah, who prophesied under the reign of Hezekiah, as well as Jotham and Ahaz. The first verse of the book of Micah gives us this information. While Jonah was a Galilean, Micah was a Judean. He came from Moresheth-Gath, which distinguishes him from another prophet of the same name, Micah the son of Imlah. (See 1 Kings 22:8; Micaiah is the same as Micah.) The name Micah means "who is like the LORD?"

Prophesying mostly in Jerusalem during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, he was contemporaneous with Isaiah. Though his name is not mentioned in the prophecy of Isaiah, his message is the same as the message of Isaiah, in describing the moral corruption of their times, and the Messianic prophecies. The following passages will confirm this:

Micah 1:9-16 and Isaiah 10:28-32;
Micah 2:1-2 and Isaiah 5:8;
Micah 2:6, 11 and Isaiah 30:10,11;
Micah 2:12 and Isaiah 10:20-23;
Micah 3:5-7 and Isaiah 29:9-12;
Micah 3:12 and Isaiah 32:14;
Micah 4:1 and Isaiah 2:2;
Micah 4:4 and Isaiah 50:19;
Micah 4:7 and Isaiah 9:7;
Micah 4:10 and Isaiah 39:6;
Micah 5:2-4 and Isaiah 7:14;
Micah 5:6 and Isaiah 14:25;
Micah 6:6-8 and Isaiah 58:6-7;
Micah 7:7 and Isaiah 8:17;
Micah 7:12 and Isaiah 11:11.

Thus the Lord gave the same witness through the mouth of these two. Of

course Isaiah was the leading figure. But Micah did not copy him, but as the Holy Spirit came upon him he uttered his prophecies bearing witness to the same truths Isaiah had spoken. The style of Micah's writings is different from the style of Isaiah. "This may be all explained by the vivacity of his own individuality, and the excited state of his mind, passing as he does rapidly from threatening to promise, from one subject to another, and from one number and gender to another." But his words are never deficient in clearness, while in other respects he comes quite near to the style of Isaiah.

The prophetic horizon of Micah is very much restricted. The magnificent sweep of Isaiah, looking forward to the great and glorious consummation in the kingdom, is lacking in Micah. The question of the exact time when Micah uttered his prophecies, what was spoken during the reign of Jotham, during the reign of Ahaz or Hezekiah, is unessential, and we do not follow it in this introduction.

His Message

The book consists of three great prophetic discourses which all begin in the same way, with the command to hear. "Hear all ye people," chapter 1:2, the first discourse. The second discourse, chapter 3:1, "Hear, I pray you." The third discourse, chapter 6:1, "Hear ye now what the LORD saith." In the first prophetic message he predicts the destruction of Samaria, the ten-tribe kingdom, and the captivity of Judah. The second message is a message of reproof of the leaders of the nation, the heads of Jacob and the princes of the house of Israel, followed by a denunciation of the false prophets. This is followed by the vision of the coming glory in the last days and the restoration of Israel. In this second discourse the coming ruler of Israel and His birthplace are announced; what He is and the kingdom He will establish in the midst of His people. Here is the message of hope and glory.

The third discourse contains a very solemn pleading with His people. Jehovah tells them again of all His loving kindness. He tells them He has a controversy with them; He speaks to them of His rightful demands. It is a most eloquent outburst. The last part contains an assurance that the Lord will surely have compassion upon His people, while their enemies will be overthrown to lick the dust. One of the greatest words of praise in the Scriptures is found in the last three verses. It contains Israel's hope and is a prophecy of the time when the Redeemer shall return and turn away ungodliness from Jacob and remember their sins no more.

The three prophetic discourses of Micah the Morasthite give a progressive message. The book begins with the threatening judgment; it leads on towards the Messianic salvation and glory, and finally the exhortation and reproof--to return unto Him, to repent, and the assurance of His compassion and forgiveness.

Analysis and Annotation

THE FIRST PROPHETIC MESSAGE

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1)
2. Judgment announced (1:2-5)
3. The destruction of Samaria (1:6-7)
4. The lamentation of the prophet over the coming judgment (1:8-16)

Verse 1. This introduction tells us two things. In the first place, we learn that this book contains the word of the Lord that came to Micah, the Morasthite; in the second place, we are told when Micah exercised his office. As stated in the introduction, he was contemporary with Isaiah, probably for about twenty-nine years. Criticism has attacked the authorship of this book also. Since criticism began, with Ewald, to question the unity of this little book, it has raged with increasing violence, until Professor Cheyne, improving on Robertson Smith in the Encyclopedia Britannica, concludes: "In no part of chapters 4-7 can we venture to detect the hand of Micah." There is no need to answer such statements. The unity of the book of Micah is fully demonstrated by the message it contains. If chapters 4-7 were not written by Micah, will the critics give us light on who the author is?

Verses 2-5. The opening message is sublime, it is an appeal to all the nations, the whole earth and all that is in it, to listen to the witness of the Lord Jehovah against them, the witness which comes from His holy temple. The other Micah (Micaiah, the same as Micah) the son of Imlah, uttered similar words (1 Kings 22:28). He next describes the Lord coming out of His place, the place where He dwells in mercy, to come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. He is coming to judge; He is coming in wrath. The nations are to hear it, that the judgment is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. On verse 4 see Psalm 18:7-10; Psalm 68:8 and Judges 5:4. The near fulfillment was the double judgment which came upon the two kingdoms, the kingdom of the ten tribes, Samaria, and the kingdom of Judah. But the description of the coming of the Lord in judgment also relates to that great future event, the day of the Lord.

Verses 6-7. The sin of Israel was Samaria, it originated there and consisted of idol worship; the sins of Judah were the high places in Jerusalem. (See Jer. 32:35.) Complete destruction of Samaria would come with this announced judgment and all her graven images would be broken to pieces, and her whoredoms burned with fire (Joel 2:3; Hosea 2:7).

Verses 8-16. Here is the lamentation of Micah as directed by the Spirit of God, not only over the fate of Samaria, but over Judah as well. He weeps for both Samaria and Judah. "I will wail and howl; I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals, and a mourning like the owls (ostriches)." It shows how these men of God entered in a whole-souled manner into the divine revelations they received. It created deep soul exercise. This must be the result of faith in the prophetic word with all His people at all times. In verse nine the prophet speaks of one who comes to execute the threatened judgment. "He is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem." This enemy is the Assyrian whom Micah beholds advancing and who came before the gates of Jerusalem. (See Isa. 10.) The Assyrian was used in ending the kingdom of Israel; Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument used against Judah and Jerusalem. Sennacherib came against Jerusalem, but it was Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, who carried Israel away into captivity. Isaiah's prophecy enters more fully into this. He describes both the Assyrian and the Babylonian power. And both will appear again at the

close of the times of the Gentiles. The little horn of Daniel's prophecy in chapter 7, the head of the confederated nations, the revived Roman Empire, corresponds with the final King of Babylon, while the final Assyrian is the other little horn in Daniel 8. (See annotations on Dan. 7 and 8).

Verses 10-13 correspond to Isaiah 10:28-34; it is a description of the advance of the Assyrian. The coming disaster is not to be published in Gath, that is, the Philistines are not to hear of it. (See 2 Sam. 1:20.) There is a remarkable play of words in these statements. It may be literally rendered as follows: "Weep not in Weep-town; in Dust-town (the meaning of Aphrah) roll thyself in dust"; then a contrast, "in Beauty-town (Saphir means beauty) be in nakedness and shame; and in March-town (the meaning of Zaanah) march not forth."

The inhabitant of Maroth waited anxiously for good, but evil came from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem (Maroth means bitterness). In the Assyrian cylinder, known as Taylor's cylinder, Sennacherib mentions the great gate of Jerusalem.

Then follows a call to Lachish to escape. "Bind the chariot to the swift beast." Lachish was a fortified city, as the excavations have shown, and was taken by Sennacherib. Here is still another play of words in the original. Lachish means "Horse-town," so that it can be translated "Bind the chariot to the horse, O inhabitant of Horse-town." It has been suggested that the sin mentioned in connection with Lachish was that "the horses of the sun" in connection with idolatry were kept there (2 Kings 23:11).

In verse 14 the prophet mentions his home town Moresheth-gath; there is to be a parting gift for she shall go into captivity. And Achzib will not keep the invader back; Achzib means a lie--the "Lie-town" shall be a lie to the kings of Israel, a false hope.

The heir who is to possess Moreshah is the Assyrian, and "the glory of Israel shall come even unto Adullam," the nobles of Israel shall gather in the cave of Adullam, like outcasts. (See 1 Sam. 22:1.)

They were now to mourn, expressed in making themselves bald (Job 1:20; Isa. 15:2; 22:12; Jer. 16:6), for they are gone into captivity.

CHAPTER 2

1. The guilt and punishment of Israel (2:1-11)
2. The future restoration (2:12-13)

Verses 1-11. In the first two verses the special sins of Israel are mentioned, the same as in Amos--idolatry, covetousness and oppression. Therefore punishment is to fall upon them. There would be a doleful lamentation: "We be utterly spoiled: he changeth the portion of my people; how does he take it away from me!" Their fields would be divided. Nor did they listen to the true prophets; they gave ear to the false prophets who flattered them. It is interesting to note that the sentence, "Prophecy ye not, thus they prophesy," literally translated is, "Do not sputter, thus they sputter." They did not give out the real message, but they sputtered out their own words. These false prophets tried to

prevent the true prophets from announcing the judgment of the Lord.

Then comes a passionate appeal: "O, thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" He still appeals to their consciences. The Spirit of God does not change, nor was it His doings, when the nation drifted into idolatry and judgment was impending. Still, if they but walked uprightly His words would surely do them good. But they had risen as an enemy against Him; and yet the Lord, in spite of all, called them "My people."

Verses 12-13. In this prophecy Christ is announced as the Breaker, the One who goes before them, clears the way, and removes every obstacle out of the way. In verse 10 we read, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." The true rest for His people Israel comes when the King comes and brings with Him the promised blessing and glory. Then the remnant of Israel will be gathered, "and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them." It is a great prophecy of the ultimate restoration of Israel. "We must not exclude all allusion to the deliverance of the Jewish nation out of the earthly Babylon by Cyrus; at the same time, it is only in its typical significance that this comes into consideration at all, namely, as a preliminary stage and pledge of the redemption to be effected by Christ."

THE SECOND PROPHETIC MESSAGE

CHAPTER 3

1. Address to the godless princes and judges (3:1-4)
2. Address to the false prophets (3:5-8)
3. The verdict of judgment (3:9-12)

Verses 1-4. The second prophetic message of Micah contains the great Messianic prophecies. But first the prophet gives a description of the degradation of the nation, the moral corruption of the leaders and judges, as well as the false prophets. It is all summed up in one sentence, "who hate the good, and love the evil." The princes and judges robbed the people, treated them like cattle (verse 3). For these unjust deeds the Lord would not hear them when they cried in the hour of their need, and would hide His face from them.

Verses 5-8. The false prophets were mostly responsible for these abominations, just as today the false in Christendom, the deniers of the faith, destructive critics and others, are responsible for the conditions in the professing Church. They make the people err. While they bite with their teeth, that is, being fed, they cried "peace" to their patrons; and those who did not support them, by putting food in their mouths, they fought and denounced. There would be night for them, with no vision; darkness would come upon them. They would be ashamed and confounded; the covering of the lips was a sign and emblem of mourning and silence. Such will be the fate of all false prophets and teachers.

The eighth verse is a magnificent outburst of God's true prophet, Micah's confession. As the true prophet he was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and thus filled he declared unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

Verses 9-12. What Micah had announced in the preceding verse he does now. He tells the heads and rulers that they build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. He speaks of the influence of money. judges acted for reward, priests taught for hire, and prophets prophesied for money. The verdict of judgment is mentioned in Jer. 26:18. This prophecy was fulfilled when Babylon conquered Jerusalem. And when finally the returned remnant rejected the Lord of Glory, their King, Zion and Jerusalem became once more heaps, as he announced, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

CHAPTER 4

1. The future of glory (4:1-5)
2. The restoration and the final victory (4:6-13)

Verses 1-5. The last verse predicted the long desolation and ruin of Zion. This is followed at once by a great prophecy of the future of glory in store for Zion. Isaiah also uttered this great prediction. Not that Micah copied Isaiah, nor Isaiah Micah, but the same Spirit gave to the men the same prophecy. It concerns the latter days, which means the coming of Messiah's kingdom on earth. These days are not yet here. To apply these words, even in a spiritual way, to the present age, or to the Church, is a serious mistake. The house of the Lord is not the Church, but the house in Jerusalem, to which in the kingdom the nations will come to worship the Lord of hosts. The nation will be judged and rebuked by Him whose glorious throne will be established in Jerusalem. Then, and only then, comes the time of universal, world-wide peace. How blind Christendom is in not seeing in what connection the favored text concerning peace on earth stands! It will be "in that day" when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." The prediction of our Lord that throughout this age, down to its end, nation would lift up sword against nation, is then ended, and another order of things begins; for then "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." What peace and prosperity will then follow! It is described in the fourth verse, "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

Verses 6-13. The regathering of all Israel then takes place. Not the boasting, proud, infidel, portion of the nation as it is today. Reform Judaism and the other apostates in the nation will suffer judgment in the future as they did in the past. But there is a feeble, God-fearing remnant, and to that remnant belong the promises. "In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted." In His grace He will make the remnant a strong nation and reign over them in the established kingdom. To Zion shall return "the first dominion," that is, the reign and power and glory that was manifested in the monarchy under David and Solomon; only it will be greater than David's or Solomon's kingdom.

All this is preceded by her sorrow and captivity. It must be noticed that verse 10 goes beyond the Babylonian captivity, for it could not be said that the Lord redeemed in that past captivity Israel from

the hands of her enemies. Nor was it true then that many nations were gathered against her. The Babylonian captivity is a type of the greater dispersion throughout this present age. When it ends, as it will end, the Lord will then redeem His people and deal in judgment with the opposing nations which finally gather against Jerusalem. (See the annotations of the last chapters of Zechariah.) He gathers the nations for the harvest time, when the sheaves are to be threshed. The daughter of Zion is to trample on them and beat them, and the grain, the riches of the Gentiles, will be consecrated unto the Lord. In connection with verses 11-13 the following Scriptures should be read and studied with the annotations: Joel 3; Ezekiel 38; Zechariah 12.

CHAPTER 5

1. The siege and the smitten judge (5:1)
2. The smitten judge: Who he is (5:2)
3. The events of the future: (5:3)
4. The Rejected One, the Shepherd of Israel (5:4-6)
5. The remnant of Jacob and the kingdom (5:7-15)

Verse 1. This interesting chapter presents difficulties, but they all vanish if we view all in the light of the future as revealed in the prophetic Word. Here it is necessary to divide the Word of Truth rightly, or we shall never find our way through this great Messianic chapter. The daughter of troops gathers herself in troops to besiege Jerusalem. It is the Assyrian army gathering before the city. But it is not the Assyrian of the past, whose invasion both Isaiah and Micah describe prophetically, but it is the Assyrian of the future, the great troubler which invades the land of Israel at the end-time, the time of Jacob's trouble, the great time of travail and final deliverance. This last invader, the king of the north (see Joel 2), besieges Jerusalem. And the reason of it all, their long history of trouble, culminating in the great tribulation, is the rejection of the judge of Israel. It is the Messiah, our Lord. They despised Him, insulted Him, smote Him with a rod upon the cheek. He is called the judge of Israel, because the judge held the highest official position in Israel; the king of Israel held this office. The smiting upon the cheek was considered the greatest disgrace; thus Zedekiah smote the prophet Micaiah upon the cheek and asked him, "Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak to thee?" (See 1 Kings 22:24 and Matt. 26:67, 68). In Job 16:10 we read Job's complaint, "They have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me reproachfully upon the cheek; they have gathered themselves together against me."

Verse 2. This great verse is a parenthetical statement, giving a description of the judge of Israel. It shows forth Him who is to be the Ruler and the Judge, the Redeemer and the King. It is the passage which the chief priests and the scribes quoted to wicked Herod, when he demanded to know where Christ should be born (Matt. 2:4-6). This great prophecy was therefore known when our Lord was born to predict the birth of the Messiah, in fact, the Jews always believed this. But after He was born and lived among them and was rejected by them they attempted deliberately to explain it away, and invented fables to accomplish this. It was Tertullian, and other prominent teachers of the early Church, who argued with the Jews, that if Jesus was not the promised Messiah, the prophecy given by Micah could never be fulfilled, for none of David's

descendants was left in Bethlehem.

But here is more than an announcement of the birthplace of Christ. We have a wonderful description of His Person. He is to be the Son of David, coming out of David's city, destined to be the Ruler in Israel. But He is more than a descendant of David, "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." Even this plain announcement has not been left unattacked by the infidel critics. Dr. R.F. Horton in his comment on this passage says the following: "We are not called on to explain away this wonderful and solemn forecast, especially when we have seen it in the Babe of Bethlehem, who came into the world out of the bosom of the Father. Micah could not understand his own deep saying; but how foolish of us to discredit it when history has made its meaning plain."

Here we have His deity fully revealed as well as His humanity; He is the God-Man. In this passage Micah's testimony harmonizes with Isaiah's in chapter 9:6, 7.

Verse 3. The meaning of this verse becomes plain if we connect it with the first verse and treat the second verse as a parenthesis. They smote the judge of Israel upon the cheek, they rejected the Lord of Glory, and as a result God gave them up. "Therefore will He give them up, until the time when she that travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel." It is often applied to the birth of Christ and connected with Revelation 12, the birth of the manchild. There can be no question that the manchild in the chapter of Revelation is Christ, and the woman described is Israel; but its exegetical meaning is in connection with the last days, when Israel will be in travail pains to give birth to the remnant, so prominently mentioned in prophecy. Since the nation rejected the Messiah they have had nothing but suffering, but the great travail pains come in the future. "For thus saith the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it, it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. 30:5-7). That godly remnant turning then to the Lord, born in that future travail, are called here "His brethren." They are the same of which our Lord spoke in the description of the judgment of nations, which He executes when sitting upon the throne of His glory. (See Matt. 25:31.) That remnant will resume their place as and with Israel, not becoming a part of the true Church, which is then no longer upon the earth, but having all the earthly Jewish hopes realized in the kingdom, of which they are the nucleus.

Verses 4-6. This refers to His second coming. He will stand and feed in the strength of Jehovah, for He is the LORD; and they (saved Israel) shall abide. Yea, more than that, "He shall be great unto the ends of the earth."

How beautiful is the opening sentence of the fifth verse! "This Man shall be peace (or our peace)." Of Him Isaiah spoke, too, as "the Prince of Peace," and that "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." David in his great prophetic psalm (72:7) concerning these coming days speaks of "abundance of peace." Zechariah likewise in predicting the future says, "He shall speak peace to the nations" (Zech.

9:10). He made peace in the blood of His cross and for all who trust in Him He is peace, "for He is our Peace."

Here it concerns the peace He has and gives to His restored people Israel. He will be the peace for them, when the Assyrian, the king of the north, enters their land, and by His power will strike down the invader. Who are the seven shepherds and the eight principal men? They will be those who will be used in that day to stem back the invading hosts. Who they are is unknown, but it will be known at the time of fulfillment. Then Assyria, the land of Nimrod, as well as all opposing world powers will be completely ended.

Verses 7-15. The restored and blessed remnant of Jacob will possess a double character. They will be used in blessing and refreshing among the nations, "as dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass." On the other hand, they will be in the midst of many people as a lion and as a young lion, to avenge unrighteousness and opposition. All the adversaries and enemies of Israel will be cut down and cut off (Num. 24:9; see exposition of Balaam's parables at the close of annotations on Numbers). All the instruments of war will be done away with, as well as witchcrafts and the soothsayers. Spiritism, Christian Science, theosophy and all the other demon cults flourishing now, and still more before He comes, will find their ignominious end. Idolatry, the graven images, and the standing images will be abolished. Before the Lord comes the evil spirit of idolatry will once more seize hold on Israel, that is, among the apostates. (See annotations on Matt. 12:43-45.) While all this refers to Israel it also includes the rest of the world. All offences will be gathered out of His kingdom. The better rendering of verse 15 is, "And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations which hearkened not." That is, during the end of the age God sent forth a testimony to the nations and those who hearkened not will fall under the wrath of the lion of the tribe of Judah.

THE THIRD PROPHETIC DISCOURSE (6-7)

CHAPTER 6

1. The words of Jehovah to His people (6:1-5)
2. Israel's answer (6:6-7)
3. The moral demands of Jehovah (6:8)
4. The Lord must judge them (6:9-16)

Verses 1-5. This chapter is cast in the form of a controversy. The utterance has been called by some the most important in the prophetic literature. It is hardly this, nor is, as critics claim, the eighth verse a definition of religion, "the greatest saying in the Old Testament."

The beginning is sublime, "Hear ye now what Jehovah saith!" The prophet is to arise and contend before the mountains so that the hills may hear his voice. The mountains and the enduring foundations of the earth are to hear the controversy the Lord has with His people and how He pleads with Israel.

Then follows the tender loving pleading of Jehovah, who still loves His people, in spite of their wickedness, "O My people, what have I done

to thee?" What matchless condescension! The Lord whom they had rejected, from whom they had turned away, does not denounce them for their sins, nor does He enumerate them, but He asks whether He had been at fault. Had He done anything amiss towards them? Had He wearied His people? He is willing that they should testify against Him. Had He done anything that they should get tired of Him? We may imagine a pause here, as if He were waiting for an answer. But there is no answer.

He continues to speak. He had brought them out of Egypt, redeemed them out of the house of bondage; He had given them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, by whom He led them. He reminded them of Balak, King of Moab, and Balaam, the son of Beor, who wanted to have Israel cursed. But what had Balaam been forced to say? "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed!" What a faithful, loving God He had been to them.

Verses 6-7. Here the people speak, but it is significant that they do not address the Lord, who had spoken to them by the prophet. They knew themselves guilty and condemned. So they address the prophet and ask what to do. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" For generations they had brought burnt offerings, thousands of rams and rivers of oil. But it was nothing but an outward worship; inwardly they remained the same. But they were willing to do more in this outward service, even to the sacrifice of the firstborn. Isaiah 1:10-18 is an interesting commentary to these questions, showing how the Lord despised these ceremonies of a people who were evil doers and corrupters. (See also Psalm 50:7-23.)

Verse 8. The prophet gives the answer of Jehovah. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Where has God made the demand? In the law. There is no more deadly error than to hold up this verse as the essence of the gospel and the one true, saving religion. Yet this we hear today on all sides. But the most loud-mouthed advocates of this "saving religion" practise what the Lord demands the least. And there is a good reason for it. Israel did not act in righteousness, nor did they love mercy, nor did they walk humbly in fellowship with the Lord. Why not? Because they were uncircumcised in their hearts. To do right, to love mercy, to walk in humility with God is impossible for the natural man; in order to do this there must be the new birth, and the new birth takes place when the sinner believes and expresses his faith in true repentance. Only a blind leader of the blind can say this verse is the gospel, and that faith in the deity of Christ and in His atoning, ever blessed work on the cross is not needed. Israel never has been anything like this which Jehovah demands. The day is coming when the Lord in His grace will give them a new heart and take away the stony heart, and fill them with His spirit. (See. Ezek. 36.)

Verses 9-16. The Lord speaks again and puts before them once more their moral degeneration. Wicked balances, deceitful weights, the deeds of unrighteousness. They were destitute of mercy, for they were full of violence, lies and deceit. Therefore judgment must now fall upon them.

CHAPTER 7

1. The prophet's complaint (7:1-6)
2. Confession, prayer and thanksgiving (7:7-20)

Verses 1-6. It is the prophet's voice complaining over the conditions of the people. But he is also the typical representative of the remnant during the time of travail in Zion. It is to be noted that our Lord quotes from this portion of Micah. (See Matt. 10:21, which dispensationally applies to the future remnant.) In the midst of the conditions the prophet describes we read that his refuge was prayer, looking to the Lord with the assurance that He will hear. "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (verse 7). This will be the attitude of the godly Israelites during the time of trouble.

Verses 7-20. It is Israel speaking in the remnant, represented by the prophet. The enemy is addressed; at the time of Micah it was the Assyrian, the type of the end Assyrian; but it includes all the world powers in their anti-Semitic attitude. The real Israel has always had this comfort, founded on the fact that God's gifts and calling are without repentance, that they are the elect nation, that their fall must be followed by a spiritual and national resurrection (Rom. 11). Hence they say, "Rejoice not against me, mine enemy; when I fall I shall rise again; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light unto me." This will be the case when their greatest darkness comes in the end of the age (Isa. 60).

It is a willing submission to the chastisement of the Lord expressed in verse 9; they acknowledge their sins and once more declare, "He will bring me forth to light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

This is followed by a prophetic declaration. The day is coming when her walls will be built again, and in that day shall the decree be far removed. The latter statement may mean the same which the prophet Jeremiah reveals in chapter 31:31 to the end of the chapter. The old decree, or law, will end, and there will be the new covenant into which Judah and Israel enter "in that day." Then the nations will gather to restored Israel in the kingdom. (Compare verse 12 with Isa. 60:3-10.)

In the meantime the land will be desolate, as it is now, the fruit of their evil doings, till the day comes when the wilderness will be a fruitful field (Isa. 32:16) when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1).

Once more the prophet's voice is heard in supplication. The prayer in verse 14 is answered by the Lord in verses 15-17. The Lord will show again in that day the marvelous things as He did in their past redemption out of Egypt. The nations, their enemies, will be witness to it; they will be humiliated in the dust.

The three concluding verses belong to the greatest in the Old Testament Scriptures. Here we listen to a great praise and outburst of adoration. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighted in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our

iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."

Such will be the future praise of the remnant of His heritage, when the Deliverer comes to Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, when the covenant with them will be consummated and their sins will be taken away (Rom. 11:26, 27). Once a year orthodox Jews go to a running stream and scatter into it bits of paper and small articles, repeating while they do it these three verses (the so-called Tashlik ceremony). It is but an outward act, yet testifying that there is still faith in Israel. It will be a glorious day when God forgives them their sins and remembers them no more.

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