

OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

Prof. William G. Moorehead

Copyright © 1893

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

MICAH

Micah was a native of Moresheth-gath, 1:14, hence he is called the Morasthite, 1, His name signifies “*who is like the Lord.*” Of course he is not to be confounded with Micaiah the son of Imlah who prophesied in the reign of Ahab (I Kings 22), for he was subsequent to him by more than a hundred years.

The time of his prophecy is stated in the first verse to be “**in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.**” The period of time during which these kings reigned was about sixty years. It is computed that Jotham reigned B. C. 758-742; Ahaz, B. C. 742-727; Hezekiah, B. C. 727-698. Micah’s official service may have embraced fifty years, which is certainly not an extravagant estimate.

The design of the prophecy is stated in 1:1.

“The word of the Lord which came to Micah concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.”

The sin and shame of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms are exposed by the prophet, but the burden of his message is intended for Judah. The prophecy, however, is not confined to Israel. All nations are addressed likewise; the earth and its inhabitants. Like Hosea, like Amos, Micah enters into the moral condition of the people and connects their afflictions with their unfaithfulness. Judgment, the theme of so many prophets, is prominent in Micah, sin prevailing and inveterate, makes it a necessity. But grace also flows. The advent of the Messiah and the blessing of the people under His peaceful reign the prophet announces in glowing terms.

The book consists of seven chapters. But after the first verse which is the title and preface, it falls into three parts, each of which is introduced by the almost military challenge, or legal summons: **“Hear ye.”** These three parts are the following:

- I. Chaps 1, 2.
- II. Chaps, 3-5.
- III. Chaps, 6, 7.

1. *The first division (1, 2) begins with a summons to all nations to hear God's testimony.*

The Almighty is coming forth out of His place on high to take His stand on the high places of the earth to witness against Samaria and to declare its doom. Nor shall Judah escape. The evil which shall overwhelm Samaria shall reach the gate of Jerusalem, for the sin of the former has come to Zion by way of Lachish, the near medium of the guilty communication.

The prophet wails over the kingdoms as if the threatenings were already accomplished. He will strip himself and go naked, will roll himself in the dust, will utter shrieks and lamentations "like the long piteous cry of the jackal, like the fearful screech of the ostrich."

His own immediate neighborhood in the maritime plains of Judah shall not escape; village after village shall be given to destruction. The moral evils that defiled the land and invoked the calamities are most graphically described. Idolatry, oppression of the weak by the strong, covetousness, and drunkenness are some of the sins for which the people are arraigned before the great Judge. It was a time of weak government, and so of misrule and oppression.

Through the reign of the wicked Ahaz, Micah lived, and we may well believe from what is told us of that apostate prince, that every species of vice flourished with rank exuberance. In the prophet's own striking imagery, it was a time when men did "**evil with both hands earnestly**," (7:3). But like so many other prophets before and after him, Micah became the champion of the oppressed and the weak, and their stern and unfaltering advocate in the presence of an insolent and powerful oppressor.

2. *The second division (3-5) opens with a fierce denunciation of the nobles for the crimes of which they were guilty, 3:1-4.*

With bitter satire the prophet describes the princes eating the poor and stripping the flesh from their bones as if in a cannibal feast; and foretells the cry of anguish with which they shall appeal to God in the day of their sore trouble, but He will not hear them.

Next, he denounces the unholy alliance between the traitor prophets and mercenary priests and corrupt judges of Israel who prophesy for gain, and administer justice for reward, and teach for hire. By these combined parties Zion is built up with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity, and Micah, filled with power by the Spirit of the Lord declares unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

In 3:12, he foretells the ruin of Jerusalem and the desolation of Zion. This prediction saved the life of Jeremiah, who would have been put to death for foretelling the destruction of the temple had it not appeared that Micah had foretold the same thing above a hundred years before, (Jeremiah 26:18, 19).

With chap. 4, a notable change occurs in the current of the prophecy. The iniquities of the people and the punishment which these provoke give place to a magnificent vision of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom and the blessedness and glory that shall be connected with it.

Verses 1-3 are with slight variation the same as Isaiah 2:2-4. In the judgment of many able and trustworthy interpreters the priority belongs to Micah; he is the original, and Isaiah probably copied from him. God's kingdom is to be exalted into an eminence in the world where it will have neither a rival nor a peer. Its sway shall be universal; its duration unending, its rule benignant and peaceful. War shall cease forever, wasting and desolation be known no more.

Chapter 5 contains a deeply interesting prediction of Messiah's birth (vs. 2). It was on this verse the scribes and priests laid their hands when Herod submitted to them the question as to Messiah's birth place. We learn from the whole passage that He is eternal (vs. 2).

- His appearing at Bethlehem was not His first; it was only one of many **"goings forth."**
- He will gather Israel at length into permanent occupancy of the land, and introduce them into new life and fellowship (vs. 3).
- His rule shall be over the whole world (vs. 4).
- He shall defend and deliver the people and exalt them over their adversaries (vss. 5-9).
- He shall destroy all instruments of war, and remove every vestige of idolatry from the land, and punish the heathen for their sin (vss. 10-15).

3. The third division (6, 7) exhibits the reasonableness, justice and purity of the divine requirements in contrast with the ingratitude, injustice and superstition of the people, which caused their ruin.

Chapter 6 begins with a most impressive scene, viz., the "Controversy" which God had with the people.

The mountains and hills are cited to hear the charges of the parties to the controversy—God and Israel. And in the presence of these stately, silent witnesses the people are asked to testify against their Deliverer and Creator, to show wherein He hath done them wrong or wearied them. At the same time He reminds them of the mercy and the goodness He hath showed them (6:1-5).

What a revelation is this of the divine love and patience and also of the obduracy and ingratitude of the human heart.

Then the prophet puts into the mouth of an inquirer the questions asked in vss. 6, 7. These are not to be taken as the words of Balaam, but of one who is anxious about his state before God, but uninstructed in the way of righteousness. Human sacrifice is certainly meant in the phrase **"firstborn," "fruit of my body."** The horrible rite was practiced to some extent in the reign of Ahaz, II Kings 16:3; 17:17. No doubt the allusion is to the sacrifice of children to the brutal Moloch, the fire-god of the Ammonites. How much a man will do and suffer if thereby he can feel he has satisfied God as touching himself. Contrast with this costly outlay, the supreme devotion even to the slaughter of one's own child to obtain salvation, with the simplicity and freeness of the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Why will men attempt the impossible, and refuse the gift? The answer to the inquiries is in vs. 8; and the assurance that the wise man will learn the way in vs. 9.

In vss. 10-16 the prophet lays before them in detail, the universal wickedness that reigned among them, and declares that judgment must surely come upon them.

In chapter 7, the prophet laments over the moral condition of his people (vss. 1-6), then intercedes in their behalf with God speaking in their name, and identifying Himself with them (vss. 7-10).

The prophecy closes with the assurance that God will make good to His people every promise and prediction, that He will pardon their iniquities and bury their sins in the depths of the sea.

In spite of their rebellion He will never forget them in His matchless love, and in His faithfulness He will not forsake them forever.

We may summarize the predictions of Micah thus:

- (1) The fall of Samaria and the dispersion of Israel, 1:6-8, 9-16; 5:7, 8.
- (2) The cessation of prophecy, 3:6, 7.
- (3) Destruction of Jerusalem, 3:12.
- (4) Deliverance of Israel, 4:10; 5:8.
- (5) Messiah's birth place, 5:2.
- (6) God's kingdom established over the whole world, 4:1-7.

~ end of chapter 35 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
