

General Comments on Micah 4-5

These two chapters should be read together as a unity. Primarily, they contrast the future redeemed and cleansed Israel/Zion (4:1-8) with the present wicked and stricken Israel (4:9-11). The contrast is accentuated by comparing the present worthless leaders (4:9) who's sins lead Israel into captivity (4:10) with the future messianic Davidic king (5:1-3) who delivers from captivity (5:4-5).

Additionally, the text of these two chapters indicates the Lord has an ulterior motive in all of this (4:12). Not only will He redeem and cleanse Israel (4:1-3, 5:6-8), but He will strike down the wickedness of all nations (5:9-14).

The text serves to explain the immediate reason why Israel and Judah are smitten. But, it then places those events in the larger context of the Lord's long term plan for Israel and the Gentile nations.

Comments on Micah 4

The preceding chapters have painted a negative picture of Israel and Judah. In contrast to this is Micah's vision of a future cleansed Jerusalem which is the Lord's Zion (v. 1-8). But this cleansed Jerusalem can only come about through great suffering (v. 9-5:1).

1 BUT in the last days it shall come to pass, [that] the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. 2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4 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 of hosts hath spoken [it].

5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever. 6 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; 7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the

LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. 8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

v1-8 An idealized messianic future Zion is placed in sharp contrast to the present carnal Jerusalem which is about to be cast down per 3:12. The future Zion will be exalted and preeminent among all nations (v. 1). People from all nations will go up to the Temple to worship and learn of the Lord (v. 2). The Lord will judge in righteousness, so peace will prevail (v. 3). All people will rest upon their inheritances in peace and enjoy the bounty of their lands (v. 4). So, even though the nations presently walk after their own gods, we should worship the Lord (v. 5). In the day when peace is established, the Lord will gather together the scattered remnant of Israel (v. 6-7). Then the messianic kingdom of David will be restored with Israel reunited (v. 8).

The text can be arranged as an inverted parallelism as follows (JPS):

A - 1 In the days to come,
The Mount of the Lord's House shall stand
Firm above the mountains;
And it shall tower above the hills.
The peoples shall gaze on it with joy,

B - 2 And the many nations shall go and shall say:
"Come, Let us go up to the Mount of the Lord,
To the House of the God of Jacob;
That He may instruct us in His ways,
And that we may walk in His paths."
For instruction shall come forth from Zion,
The word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

C - 3 Thus He will judge among the many peoples,
And arbitrate for the multitude of nations,
However distant;

D - And they shall beat their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks.

D - Nation shall not take up
Sword against nation;
They shall never again know war;

C - 4 But every man shall sit
Under his grapevine or fig tree

With no one to disturb him.
For it was the Lord of Hosts who spoke.

B - 5 Though all the peoples walk
Each in the names of its gods,
We will walk
In the name of the Lord our God
Forever and ever.

A - 6 In that day declares the Lord
I will assemble the lame [sheep]
And will gather the outcast
And those I have treated harshly;
7 And I will turn the lame into a remnant
And the expelled into a populous nation.
And the Lord will reign over them on Mount Zion
Now and for evermore.
8 And you, O Migdal-eder, [i.e., tower of the flock]
Outpost of Fair Zion,
It shall come to you:
The former monarchy shall return
The kingship of Fair Jerusalem.

v1-3 A similar statement appears in Isa. 2:1-4.

v4 This verse is a paraphrase of 1 Ki. 4:25. It is harking back to the days when the Davidic throne was powerful and Judah was blessed by the Lord. Compare Zech 3:10 for a similar statement, and Isa. 51:3 for a general allusion to the divine Eden-like state the world will be with the return of the messianic kingdom.

v5 With the advent of the messianic kingdom all nations will worship the Lord. Until then, the children of Israel should worship the Lord undaunted.

v6-8 When all nations are summoned to Zion the remnants of Israel, scattered among the nations, will be brought back to Zion.

v8 The towers and palaces left desolate (cf. Isa. 32:14) will be restored.

9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? [is there] no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. 10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go [even] to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there

the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

11 Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. 12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. 1 NOW gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

v9-5:1 An obscure passage. The text draws its theme from the covenant curses of Lev. 26. There, the curses are laid out on Israel so as to get her to repent and return to Him, and in so doing the Lord humbles and saves her. This is the same message of the present text.

Zion will be left leaderless as the corrupt rulers complained of in the previous chapters are disposed of (v. 9). Zion will then suffer greatly as she is sent into exile in Babylon (v. 10). Indeed, Zion has many enemies who would very much like to plunder her (v. 11). But, these nations do not understand the ways of the Lord, they do not realize He has gathered them to Zion to thresh them (v. 12). In the day of redemption, presumably the time described in v. 1-8, Zion will rise up in the strength of the Lord and destroy her enemies (v. 13). However, for the present, Zion must suffer as her rulers are smitten per v. 9 and she goes into exile (v. 5:1).

v9-10 On the imagery of the woman in labor, cp. Hosea 13:12-13, which is also connected to the removal of her leaders in Hosea 13:9-11. The imagery is used elsewhere in a variety of contexts, cf. Isa. 13:8, Isa. 21:3, Isa. 26:17-18, Isa. 42:14, Jer. 4:31, Jer. 6:24, Jer. 13:21, Jer. 22:23, Jer. 30:6, Jer. 48:41, Jer. 49:22-24, Jer. 50:43, and see also John 16:21, 1 Thess. 5:3, D&C 136:35.

The imagery is particularly fitting in this case because the captivity is to be relatively brief with joy after the delivery, as predicted in Isa. 48:20.

v9 This verse can be read two ways. The first is that discussed above where Jerusalem is left leaderless after they are smitten and scattered.

The second possible reading is ironic. Micah is saying

they have leaders, but the leaders are worthless. So where are these leaders now, these corrupted visionaries (per 3:1), when the Babylonian armies are at the gates of Jerusalem?

v11 Babylon and the other hostile Gentile nations leer at Judah and Jerusalem when it is sacked, cp. Obad. 1:12.

v12 The Gentile nations are ignorant of the Lord and fail to understand their role in His plans, but they will nonetheless fall into His plans, cp. Jer. 51:33.

v13 For similar statements compare 5:6-8 and Isa. 27:12, Isa. 28:23-29, Isa. 40:23-24, Isa. 41:15-16.

“Arise and thresh”, cp. D&C 35:13.

v5:1 It is not uncommon for various translators to include this as v14 of chapter 4 rather than v. 1 of chapter 5. The message is to Micah’s contemporaries. While some day Israel will rise up and strike the Gentiles, that day is not today. Today, Judah will be besieged, struck down, and go into captivity.

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