

## Comments on Micah 7

This chapter continues the theme from the previous one. In ch. 6 the Lord makes His case against Israel. Here, Israel, personified as a woman, laments over the present unrighteous condition of Israel. She makes a series of statements confessing her guilt, but she also says she will trust in the Lord because she knows He will ultimately deliver her.

1 WOE is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: [there is] no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit. 2 The good [man] is perished out of the earth: and [there is] none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. 3 That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge [asketh] for a reward; and the great [man], he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. 4 The best of them [is] as a brier: the most upright [is sharper] than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen [and] thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. 5 Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. 6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies [are] the men of his own house.

v1-6 The corruption of Israel. Israel compares herself to a fig tree that has been left barren after harvest (v. 1), meaning there is no good fruit left at all. All of the righteous are gone because all of the people are now corrupt, lying in wait to exploit one another (v. 2). All are out for dishonest gain (v. 3). The very best people among them is no more fruitful than a briar patch or thornbush, and so the day of punishment is upon them (v. 4). Society has broken down entirely as you cannot trust anyone at all, even the family unit is completely breaking apart (v. 5). However, Israel knows that by virtue of the Sinai Covenant she can rely on the Lord to save her and not utterly give up on her (v. 6).

v1 Israel is personified as a woman as the Hebrew for "Woe is me" is feminine. Her lament over the men (v. 2-5) and women (v. 6) of Israel portrays her as a mother or grandmother figure lamenting over her awful children. Nevertheless, she will remain faithful to the Lord. The sentiment expressed here is similar to that of Jer. 31:15 where Rachel weeps over her children.

v4 Briars and thorns presented as wickedness is a common symbol, cp. Gen. 3:18, Num. 33:55, Isa. 5:6, Isa. 10:17, Ezek. 2:6. Not only do they bear no edible fruit, but they tear at you and hurt you when you pass by them.

v5 "keep the doors of thy mouth", in other words "keep your mouth shut" or "don't tell anyone anything", cp. Amos. 5:13.

7 Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. 8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD [shall be] a light unto me. 9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, [and] I shall behold his righteousness. 10 Then [she that is] mine enemy shall see [it], and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. 11 [In] the day that thy walls are to be built, [in] that day shall the decree be far removed. 12 [In] that day [also] he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and [from] the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and [from] mountain to mountain. 13 Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

v8-13 Israel warns her enemies not to gloat over her present humiliated state, because the Lord will ultimately vindicate her (v. 8, cp. 4:10-13). Presently, Israel admits she must endure the humiliation because of her sin, but the Lord will bring her out of it and vindicate her (v. 9). When her enemies, who formerly taunted her about her faith in the Lord, see Israel being vindicated they will take their turn being humiliated (v. 10). That will be a day her enemies will unsuccessfully try to mend their walls to keep out those who would trample them (v. 11), even as Israel was trampled. Many nations will trample Israel's enemies underfoot (v. 12) and their lands will be left desolate, because of their misdeeds (v. 13).

Israel's enemy is characterized as a "she" in the Hebrew with various feminine pronouns. The "she" may be the figure Babylon, used extensively as a rival to Zion in Isaiah and personified with a female character, cp. Isa. 47. The Jewish Publication Society translation footnotes suggest it is Damascus, a contemporary rival nation (cf. Isa. 7:1-9) other

than Egypt and Assyria which are referenced explicitly in v. 13. The intended target is not clear.

14 Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily [in] the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed [in] Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. 15 According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvelous [things]. 16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay [their] hand upon [their] mouth, their ears shall be deaf. 17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.

v14-17 Israel is longing for the fulfilment of the prediction in ch. 5. She wishes the Lord would lead the flock of Israel from the present solitary woodland to graze in the proverbial fertile fields (v. 14). She wishes the Lord would show forth wondrous deeds as in the days of Moses' Exodus (v. 15). When the nations see the fulfilment of these predictions they will be dumfounded (v. 16), and will come to Zion in humility, fearing the God of Israel (v. 17).

v14 "Feed thy people with thy rod", a poor translation. The JPS renders it "Oh, shepherd Your people with Your staff" which making reference to subject of 5:4.

"the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood", an obscure translation. Israel is being likened to a flock presently being pastured in less than ideal land, that of an isolated forest. The request being made is that the flock of the Lord, Israel, be redeemed and moved from its present unfertile circumstances to more fertile circumstances, which are exemplified by Carmel, Bashan, and Gilead.

"Carmel...Bashan and Gilead", these are the ancestral lands promised to Abraham, and are considered quite fertile, cf. Num. 32, Jer. 50:19.

v15 "I will shew unto him", the JPS suggests an emendation of "Show us" which would be more contextual.

18 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 for ever, because he delighteth [in] mercy. 19 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. 20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, [and] the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

v18-20 The Lord is merciful, will remit Israel's sins, and not remain angry forever (v. 18). He will take back Israel in love, and cast their iniquities away (v. 19). He will be faithful to his covenants with Jacob and Abraham (v. 20), and thereby save Israel.

This strophe closes the book of Micah majestically on an upbeat note. Chapters 1-3 of the book are very negative and harsh, saying Israel has broken her covenants. But, Micah wraps up the book in ch. 4-7 with a more positive message of the Lord's future remembrance of the covenant, and this results in Him protecting and saving Israel. So, while the covenant is a source of judgement and punishment at present because of rebellion, it is also a source of mercy and salvation in the future.

These verses are paraphrased by Zacharias in Luke 1:71-73.

v18 Note the Lord is pardoning sin, not overlooking it. The Lord lets go of His anger. Sin angers Him, but mercy mitigates his anger and it passes. It is not a matter of Him accepting sin, it is a matter of Him absolving it and casting it away from Himself into the deep per v. 19.

v20 While the Lord is angry with the currently corrupt condition of Israel and Judah, His mercy and compassion do not come to a complete end. The covenant with Abraham and Jacob continues, despite the quality of their present children, and at some future time the Lord will revisit and fulfill the promises made to the ancient fathers.

The message is twofold. First, the wickedness of the present children cannot break the Lord's promises to the ancient fathers. Second, it is up to the children to fulfil the promises the Lord made to their ancient fathers. The Lord is ever willing to fulfil those promises, it is the rebellion and unworthiness of the children which prevents it from happening. Once the children are worthy, the promises made to the fathers will be fulfilled. The Lord is simply waiting for a righteous generation, and is ultimately forced to bring one about by His own efforts so His promises to Abraham do not go unfulfilled.

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