

The prophecy of Micah

3. Woe to them that devise iniquity

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IN [THE PREVIOUS article](#) it was seen that one of the prevailing themes of the prophecy of Micah is the coming of the greater Son of David who will be to Israel both Shepherd and King. Micah looked forward to the time yet future when the flock of God will once again dwell in safety in the land, as in the days of old, when David “fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands” (Ps. 78:72).

The shepherd king was sorely needed in the days of Micah, because Israel and Judah were like sheep having no shepherd, just as they had been a hundred years previously in the days of wicked King Ahab. The kings of Israel and Judah who should have led the flock of God had, with few exceptions, failed miserably. As a result the commandments of God had been forgotten, and instead the statutes of Omri were kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab. As a consequence, Micah’s message to his people was one of judgement to come, firstly on the ten tribes and then on the two.

It is an evil time

When Elijah spoke to King Ahab about the impending judgements of God upon his house, he said, “Behold, *I will bring evil upon thee*, and will take away thy posterity” (1 Kgs. 21:21). In the days of Micah the wickedness of Ahab had been eclipsed, and therefore the nation to whom Micah spoke was to face even greater evils than those that were administered by Jehu: “Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, *against this family do I devise an evil*, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil” (Mic. 2:3). By means of the Assyrians, the rod of God’s anger, the yoke of bondage and captivity was about to be imposed upon their necks, in fulfilment of the words that Moses uttered even before they entered the Land of Promise: “Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD

Assyrian battering ram being used against the walls of Lachish



Assyrian soldiers

Details from a relief found in Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh of the Assyrian siege of Lachish, testifying to the severity of the Assyrian invasion of Israel at that time.

(Pictures: Tony Benson; courtesy of the British Museum)

shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee” (Deut. 28:47,48).

Indeed, as Micah said, it was to be “an evil time” when the Assyrian would come into the land. Amos, a contemporary of Micah, spoke in a similar vein: “For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time” (5:12,13). As the Assyrians swept through the land, consuming everything before their path, there would be great lamentation and mourning in Israel: “In that day shall they take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: He changeth the portion of my people: how doth He remove it from me! to the rebellious He divideth

our fields" (Mic. 2:4, RV). Just as Israel was guilty of oppressing "a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" (v. 2), so also the heritage of Israel would in turn be oppressed by the Assyrians. Just as the leaders of Israel coveted fields, and took them by violence, so also the fields of Israel would be given to the rebellious.

Prophecy ye not

How different it would have been if they had feared the Lord, and accepted Him as the portion of their inheritance! Like David of old they would then have been able to say, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Ps. 16:5,6). But now the situation was to be exactly the opposite, as Micah continues to say: "Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD" (2:5). Their inheritance was to be taken away because they had rejected God.

Not only had they turned their backs upon God, they had also rejected the prophets that God sent to them to speak in His Name: "Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy" (v. 6). Amos also said, "And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not" (2:11,12). Time after time, God had "testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear" (2 Kgs. 17:13,14). They had no interest in the words of the prophets, preferring instead the statutes of Omri, and all the works of the house of Ahab.

God therefore decreed that His appeal to His people through the ministry of the prophets would cease, and judgement would come. There was little point in continually sending His prophets if their message went unheeded. Micah therefore declared that the day would come when "They shall not prophesy to these: reproaches shall not depart" (2:6, RV). Israel would not repent of her sins, or depart from her idolatry, because they were "a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy

not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isa. 30:9,10). Similarly, Amos said that the days would come when there would be "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it" (8:11,12).

Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

It was not that God was any less longsuffering than He had been in times past. Micah continues, "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these His doings?" (2:7). Were these calamities of God's making? The question is answered in the latter part of the verse: "do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" asks God. This has always been the case, and always will be, for God does not change. Israel brought her troubles upon herself by turning away from God. Had she walked uprightly, and heeded the prophets' words, she would have found that God's words indeed do good to them that walk uprightly.

But "even yesterday" Israel was guilty of violence: "Even of late [AV mg. yesterday] My people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war" (v. 8). Not content with stealing a man's outer robe, they had taken the undergarments as well as they went about their business of oppressing a man and his house. Even the women and children suffered at the hands of the wicked: "The women of My people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away My glory for ever" (v. 9). The very members of society that the Law of Moses commanded Israel to respect were being oppressed and cast out of their homes.

This is not your rest

God's judgements were therefore to come upon the wicked: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction" (v. 10). Although they dwelt in the land, this was not the "rest" that Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy 12:10,11: "But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the LORD

your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there". This "rest" still has not been obtained, even today, as the writer to the Hebrews confirms: "For if Joshua [RV] had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day . . . Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (4:8-11).

The rest not having been attained, Israel could not therefore use the words of Moses as an assurance that they would not fall into the hands of their enemies. In fact rather the reverse, for Moses also had said that if they failed to keep God's statutes and judgements they would be forcibly ejected from the land: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you" (Lev. 18:26-28). The Canaanites that occupied the land before them defiled the land with their abominations, and therefore God commanded Israel to destroy them all. But now, in Micah's days, they themselves had defiled the land, and therefore they were to be spued out by means of the Assyrians: "because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction" (Mic. 2:10).

With great irony, Micah concludes this section of his prophecy by saying that "If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people" (v. 11). This was exactly what Israel desired: "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). God permitted this to happen because Israel was beyond reproach. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28).

Prophecies of future glory

This is a very depressing part of Micah's prophecy. But the prophecy of Micah is by no means all gloom and doom. He has much to say also about the glories of the age to come, for which we hope. In fact, one of the characteristic features of his prophecy is the very abrupt way in which he changes from speaking about impending judgement to foreseeing Israel's future glory. Almost in the same breath he turns from pronouncing judgement upon the disobedient to speak about the glorious future that God has in store for His people. We thus find that the remaining two verses of Micah 2 speak of Israel's future restoration in the Kingdom of God. This will be the focus of the next article.

[\(To be continued\)](#)