

Micah

Setting: In the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1), similar to, but starting later than, Isaiah.

Messianic passages detected by ancient rabbis:

- 2:13 Gathering the remnant (2:12) was an indication of the time of the Messiah.
4:1 – 8 The “latter days” (4:1) and “many nations” (4:2) and “peace” (4:3) suggested the Messiah.
5:2 This is the passage known to the advisors of Herod the Great concerning the location of the birth of the Messiah.
7:6 – 8 Although the passage seems obscure, Jesus quoted it in Matthew 10:35 – 36 to describe Himself.

The Plot

- 1:2 – 5 Against idolatry in Israel and Judah
1:6 – 9 Israel (characterized by Samaria, its capital) will be utterly destroyed
1:10 – 16 Mourning for this destruction is described by plays on words with the names of various places
2:1 – 5 Against dishonesty
2:6 – 13 Against those who ignore godly prophets
3:1 – 4 Against the rulers of Israel and Judah
3:5 – 12 Against those who follow false prophets
4:1 – 8 But God will establish a peaceful worldwide kingdom
4:9 – 5:1 Judah will go into captivity to Babylon
5:2 – 5a But God will gather the remnant into a peaceful kingdom
5:5b – 6 Judah will not fall to the Assyrians
5:7 – 9 The captives of Israel and Judah will bring good to the regions in which they are dispersed
5:10 – 15 This calamity is the means by which idolatry will finally be removed from Israel
6:1 – 5 God recounts His history of caring for His people
6:6 – 8 This is the proper response to the love of God
6:9 – 16 God pronounces sentence on His people
7:1 – 20 Micah, representing the few remaining faithful people, acknowledges the sad state of the kingdom, but expresses confidence (faith) that God will raise up the remnant of Israel in order to accomplish the promise made to Abraham.

Obscure References:

- 1:8 The ostrich has a mournful cry.
1:10 Gath is a city of the Philistines. Do not mourn there as they will rejoice.
1:10 – 15 Micah picks ten city names that illustrate the fate of Israel
 - Beth Aphrah: Roll in the dust in the House of Dust (dust symbolizes grief)
 - Shaphir: Contrasts “naked shame” with Beautiful
 - Zaanah: Those of Going Out do not go out
 - Beth Ezel: The House of Standing will have no place to stand
 - Maroth: They pined for good in Bitterness

- Lachish: The fortress famous for chariots (which are only useful in the plains) will attempt to use those chariots for swift escape.
 - Moresheth: You will give presents to the hated Philistines of Possession
 - Achzib: Refuge will not be a refuge
 - Mareshah: An inheritance will come to Inheritance
 - Adullam: The glory of Israel shall find Refuge
- 1:16 Shaving bald places was another traditional sign of mourning, despite its prohibition by Deuteronomy 14:1 .
- 2:5 The traditional boundaries of the tribes were originally determined by lot (Joshua 14:2 – 19:49)
- 3:3 The leaders were treating the ordinary people like cattle.
- 4:4 Grape arbors and fig trees were common places to find shade and a cool breeze in the heat of the day
- 5:6 Nimrod founded Nineveh (Genesis 10:8 – 14)
- 6:5 The story of Balak and Balaam is in Numbers 22:1 – 24:25. Acacia Groves (Shittim) was the last encampment before crossing the Jordan into the promised land. Gilgal was the first encampment on the other side of the Jordan, at which circumcision was re-instituted. There are wry applications. Balaam blessed Israel rather than cursing Israel as Balak had hired him to do, but Micah implies that they act more like they believed Balak than Balaam. Acacia Grove (Shittim) is noted in Numbers 25:1 as the place at which Israel worshipped Moabite gods. Gilgal became known as a center of Baal worship.
- 6:16 The statues of Omri refers to primarily to Baal worship (1 Kings 16:25 – 26). The House of Ahab (son of Omri) is roughly the same (1 Kings 16:29 – 22:40). Hissing was the customary method of response to something believed to be cursed by the gods (or God).
- 7:1 From the context, “those who rather summer fruits” were doing so at harvest time, when no summer fruit remains. So, the illustration is of the faithful who cannot find the good that they seek.
- 7:14 Carmel, Bashan, and Gilead are mentioned as locations that will be returned to the remnant, but which, at the time of writing, were in the possession of others.
- 7:16 Putting the hand over the mouth was a sign of recanting one’s previous position in the face of overwhelmingly superior wisdom. “Well shut my mouth.” “Their ears shall be deaf,” from the context, is a response to the greatness of God, not a refusal to listen. Their ears will be deaf to the wisdom of men.
- 7:17 The serpent image probably is meant to recall the curse on Satan (Genesis 3:14), but implies that the nations, who will be under Satan’ control, will fear God and perhaps repent, at this future time.