

THE BOOK OF MICAH
Lesson 14, Chapter 7 Continued

Yehoveh has shown Himself through His Word and through His Creation to be a God of order. Therefore, cycles and patterns quickly appear in everything we can see from the visible Universe to the way our Earth operates predictably in every manner, to the possibility for there to be such a thing as mathematics that reflects that predictable orderliness that underlies all that God has made. Thus, when we read the Prophets, which always revolves around the cycle of Israel falling short of the goal and resorting to sinful behavior, and then God sending warnings to repent or suffer the covenant-based consequences, and after that Israel still denying their culpability or offenses and so suffering God's anger, there is always, at the end, the offer of grace and restoration for them. This ought to be a great comfort to us, as it is also a great warning.

God's threats are not idle. They are not hypothetical. The consequences for refusal to obey and to turn away from our rebellion against Him are severe and long lasting...even eternal. Finally reaching an opportunity for full forgiveness and restoration is difficult and costly and usually isn't even available to the first generation that began to feel His wrath, when it concerns a judgment on the nation as a whole. All of this is what we have been seeing in the Book of Micah, and as we arrive at the final chapter when the mercy of God at last begins to emerge.

An important background for us to continue in our study is that what we are reading is more of an eschatological climax (that is, what happens in the End Times) than what happened in the past (even though, certainly, historical events are also in play). I think people of the 21st century need to pay close heed to what God is telling us in His Prophets, because the preponderance of biblical evidence is that much of what we see happening all around us, today, are the birth pangs of the entry into the final stage of human history as we have known it.

Micah chapter 7 begins with Micah suddenly realizing his personal and his nation's condition before Yehoveh. It is not what he and they had thought it was. There is no evidence that prior to God giving this prophecy to Micah, that

he was an especially enlightened person that had set him apart from all the other Israelites of the Holy Land. Clearly, Micah had been prepared by God's Holy Spirit to receive and take to heart all that God was going to reveal. Rather than being hard minded he was open minded. But so much he had taken for granted as settled doctrine and truth turned out to be wrong, once God began pouring into Him the message that was to be delivered to the leadership and the common people of Israel. Thus, the first words of chapter 7 were: "Woe to me!", and not "Woe to Israel!". Those with ears to hear, please listen.

As we concluded in our previous lesson with chapter 7 verses 5 and 6, a picture is painted of the ultimate stage of societal breakdown in Israel reaching its pinnacle. In its final worldwide scope, chaos, confusion, corruption, and distrust in all of the critical social institutions as well as in family bonds, have descended upon all the earth... not just for Israel. Yet, in the midst of this, the separation of the sheep and goats (so to speak) has occurred. Those who never had any interest in knowing God, plus those who falsely claim to be His worshippers but believing instead on the power of manmade doctrines and morals, are set on one side of a gaping, impossible to traverse chasm... while the sincerely faithful who base their lives and obedient behavior on God's covenants, according to God's terms and commands stand on the other side. The former side is enormously full with the people who stand upon it... while the latter side represents but a faithful remnant (to use the standard biblical reference term). The one side has nothing ahead of them but eternal judgment: the other side nothing ahead of them but eternal forgiveness and regeneration.

This chapter is raw, blunt, and definitive. While the Hebrew poetic is present, it typically continues with Micah's unusual mix of narrative, hyperbole, and prose to give it its tone of certainty and therefore, urgency. His grammar style can also be tough to deal with, but it is more doable when we put it in the context of not only the entirety of his book, but also of its place in the 12 Minor Prophets and the cycles and patterns they propose that have become predictable.

Open your Bibles to Micah chapter 7.

RE-READ MICAH CHAPTER 7:5 to end

Verses 5 and 6 frame the breakdown of society based upon the breakdown of the family fabric. Societal breakdowns are always blamed on the leadership. But, in practice, it is a bottom-up and not a top-down matter. The breakdown of society begins with the breakdown of family. Strong family units and bonds are not broken because a leader proclaims it. But, once the family unit fractures to the high degree foretold, then it is easier for a leader to use those conditions to re-form that society and culture into something he wants for his own purposes.

Since a family unit is based on the relationship of but a relatively few individuals, then the influence of each individual on the family becomes exaggerated. Thus, when the most basic attribute of the role of an individual family member begins with gender, should it ever be attacked or even discarded, then we have hit rock bottom. There is no denying that in the current era, the most basic biological given as a person's gender is under attack and is deemed (in ever growing numbers) as a matter of fluency, personal choice and identification. The consequences? The family that misgendered person belongs to is greatly weakened. Thus, the society those many families together form is greatly weakened. God's order of things has been corrupted, so chaos and confusion reign. This is where we are in the 21st century, and this is a strong indicator of where we are in the timeline of Redemption History. This is societal rebellion against Yehoveh, after warning and more warning from Him. What is left to expect but His judgment and wrath?

In Micah's day (and in his own personal life), the people of Israel had not realized where their persistent rebellion had finally taken them. When Micah learned from God what was coming next, and why, he was horrified. Folks: God has told us what is coming next for the world once chaos and confusion begin to reign: it is judgment and wrath. As God worshippers, then we, too, need to realize that the next step in history is divinely ordered calamity as punishment; there is no other stage between now and then. Why we don't seem to be as affected as was Micah once we had this knowledge, I don't

understand unless we simply don't believe it. Remember what we read one chapter back?

CJB Micah 6:8 *Human being, you have already been told what is good, what Yehoveh demands of you- no more than to act justly, love grace and walk in purity with your God.*

Already by Micah's day in the 8th century B.C., God could say that His worshippers (and to an extent all human beings) know what is good and what Yehoveh demands of us. How much more we know today, as yet more history has unfolded and continues to unfold, and simultaneously His Word has become more available to everyone to examine for themselves. Many of the fulfillments of what was for a long time just biblical predictions have happened. The coming of the Messiah and His atoning death. The dispersal of Israel to the nations, and then after 1900 years, their return to their homeland in 1948. And now, the gradual and most fundamental breakdown of society one can have is well underway: gender reorientation and its glorification. Let's move on to verse 7.

CJB Micah 7:7 *But as for me, I will look to Yehoveh; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*

Finally! A ray of hope! Starting with verse 7 we read of an emerging confidence in Yehoveh's mercy, which leads Israel (and the world, for that matter) out of the chaos and confusion and into a return to God's order of things. This verse speaks from the position of the speaker as suffering the wrath God had promised to inflict. He is in the midst of shouldering the just punishment of God, which is being manifested primarily as being oppressed under the subjugation of a wicked but powerful foreign enemy. For Israel, that first enemy would be Assyria, and then around 130 years later, it would be Babylon.

The thoughts expressed in Micah 7:7 – 12 remind one very much of the Book of Lamentations, which was written immediately after the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in the early 6th century B.C. When one reads Lamentation, the pure emotion of what has just happened pours out. And, yet, within those grieving

thoughts also came a far more matured understanding of what happened and why; and also, that there was a way to deliverance and restoration. This hope came as thanks mainly to what the 12 Minor Prophets had revealed to them by means of God's oracles.

Israel realized that despite their constant unfaithfulness to the terms of God's covenants with them, above all God would not abandon His side of the covenants. Israel remained as the apple of God's eye, and His special treasure. Their identity as God's people was re-affirmed, and that whatever justifiable fate the nation of Israel might suffer, the covenants and the covenant people would survive and eventually bear the fruit and reap the reward that God had always wanted of them. In a way, verse 7 balances verse 1.

CJB Micah 7:1 *Woe to me! for I have become like the leavings of summer fruit, like the gleanings when the vintage is finished- there isn't a cluster worth eating, no early-ripened fig that appeals to me.*

Micah's conclusion in verse 7 is that all that is left to be done is, in the end, to wait upon the Lord to deliver them because of the rock-solid belief that God will, as promised, hear their pleas. But, goodness, how long they waited. As I think about the length of time this wait has gone on for the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom, for instance, it has been 27 centuries. But, for those relative few who have waited in faith, God has heard them and thousands have come back to the land of Israel very recently, with more on the way. This is really kind of a good news/bad news thing for we modern worshippers. Despite bad circumstances of various kinds that might envelope us, we are promised that God will hear us. Yet, because for us, "long" means weeks or months, it seems that when we pray if remedies don't happen nearly immediately, then we can doubt if God hears or if He's going to do anything. The issue is that our perspective is too narrow and too short term; not that God has become more distant or persistently tardy.

Certainly, in this chapter, Micah is speaking for himself... but meaning it as hopefully a representative thought of his fellow Israelites when the promised calamity of judgment happens. Yet, without doubt Micah is under no delusion that he might still be living when the restoration of Israel finally comes about...

although he probably (and I feel confident that he did) suffer the calamity of being invaded and exiled by Assyria. I think it is also important to point out that when Micah speaks of “the God of my salvation”, it should be much more honestly worded “God of my deliverance”. Micah had no thought of a Messiah when those words of rescue were spoken. He meant “deliverance” in the general sense of the word as being finally delivered... rescued... from the coming oppression just as Israel was delivered from Egypt. So, while in some ways his remark has turned out to have had both a physical and a spiritual meaning, he was aware only of the physical part of it. The deliverance he dreamed of was not to be saved from his and his fellows’ sins, but rather to be saved from exile and oppression of an enemy nation.

CJB Micah 7:8 *Enemies of mine, don't gloat over me! Although I have fallen, I will rise; though I live in the dark, Yehoveh is my light.*

There is disagreement among Bible scholars as to whether this is Micah speaking about himself, or Micah speaking as figurative of Israel as congregation, or Micah speaking as figurative of the City of Jerusalem. In my opinion, he is speaking generally and while he is most likely speaking of himself at the moment in history that He occupies, in the mystery of God’s prophetic oracles, it turns out to also be speaking of Israel and of Jerusalem. Either way, at this point, Micah’s view is through the windshield of time and not the rearview mirror of history. He’s thinking of the future. What’s his expected timeline? He doesn’t know because he’s not been informed. It could be immediate, or it could be many years. Scholars, never liking to have things as undetermined, have their various views of what Micah’s timeline is, and therefore which time Israel has fallen that he is envisioning. I find that sort of amusing as though, once again, the typical Christian approach to prophecy of there being a single fulfillment to each prophecy was the biblical pattern. In fact, the biblical pattern is of multiple fulfillments of a prophecy, each time growing in scope. Thus, in Micah’s immediate future, it would be the Assyrian invasion of that part of Israel called at that time Ephraim, or Ephraim/Israel. But, not that much farther down the road it would be the Babylonian invasion of what remained of Israel: Judah. After that, the Greek and Roman occupation of the Holy Land, and then to my way of thinking, the back and forth Christian then Muslim takeover and occupation of the Holy Land that was

mostly (but not entirely) only resolved in 1948. But there is another and final fulfillment yet to come that will result NOT in another exile and then return, but rather in Israel's vindication.

Honestly, I see this verse as a prayer that we all ought to remember and use when the world seems to be crashing in upon us. Sometimes, we are in a position where there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. And, from an earthly perspective, that might be the case. But, from the higher plane of the spiritual, Yehoveh's light is always there for those who love Him. In my own personal experience, that light is never brighter as when it is darkest. Sometimes that darkness can be the result of our own sins and failures. Other times it has nothing to do with that but rather is due to injustice or just plain terrible misfortune. None of us would prefer to live in darkness so as to receive that extra-special glorious light as our encouragement, no matter how wonderful it can be. Yet, when darkness is our fate for a time, that light is there, waiting, and we can count on it.

One final thought and we'll move on to verse 9. There is no "if" I fall; or "should" I fall, there is only "when" I fall. The statement is neither hypothetical nor conditional. We all **will** fall to one degree or another, for one reason or another. Everyone hearing my voice will fall and experience darkness, if you are not already experiencing that darkness at this moment. It is the inescapable part of the human experience, but also the national experience. So, we're either going to fall into darkness and have no light at all if we set ourselves against God; or we're going to fall into darkness and have God's light to assure us and to navigate us through that darkness.

CJB Micah 7:9 *I will endure Yehoveh's rage, because I sinned against him; until he pleads my cause and judges in my favor. Then he will bring me out to the light, and I will see his justice.*

Here is the case of being in darkness due to our sins. First, is always to recognize our sin and confess it. Saying to God "whatever it is that I did, I'm sorry" is not a true confession and in fact has little value. Unless you can see your own sin, any confession is moot, and repentance is impossible. How can I

truly repent (change) when I don't even know what needs to be changed? Once again, we are faced with the argument of whether Micah is speaking only on his behalf, or figuratively as Israel or as Jerusalem. I say it doesn't matter much because depending on the point in history a fulfillment is happening, he's speaking of one or the other even though as he speaks these prophetic words, he doesn't realize that this is how it is going to play out. We, today, have the vantage point of hindsight so that we can see exactly how it played out... no speculation is needed.

Honest confession leads to submission. There's no more fighting it: God is right, I was wrong. What does it mean that "He pleads my cause and judges in my favor"? As it concerns Israel, it means that even though it was God that incited other nations to attack and harm Israel, at some point God, hearing Israel's pleas, will determine that enough is enough, those nations have been too harsh for too long on His people, and Israel has been punished accordingly. At that point, His intent to punish is satisfied and His intent to have mercy and restore Israel kicks-in. But, at the same time, His anger turns towards those nations that He used as agents to carry out His wrath because their actions did NOT carry out His will, but they're own. God ruins them so that Israel can escape their grip.

I think for those of us living now, one of the best illustrations of what I'm speaking about is Iran and their proxies Hamas, Hezbollah, and others. No doubt, due to Israel's intransigence, God is using Iran and their agents to discipline Israel... but only to a point. They have gone much too far, and their aim is to annihilate Israel and to exile them once again. Gaza has borne the brunt of this folly lately; their territory utterly destroyed. Thousands and thousands of Gazans killed and injured. Hamas itself a hollow shadow of what it was 3 years ago. Hezbollah has lost its iron grip over Lebanon (though it is still a problem). Iran is crashing and burning with their water supply nearly gone, their economy in tatters, and people lining the streets of Tehran in protest openly wanting overthrow of their Muslim Theocracy that's making their lives miserable in the name of Allah. They are dealing with Yehoveh's rage, they just don't know it.

Israel, from Micah's perspective, was also dealing with God's rage. They didn't realize until Micah told them that their current troubles were God's rage, not back luck. In Israel's case, it is over their unfaithfulness to Him. And Micah is wise to see that because God's rage has begun, he and his fellow Israelites are just going to have to endure it until it has run its course... he has no ability or position to get God to relent until God is ready to relent. At some point, Yehoveh will determine that the proper amount of punitive justice has been doled out on Israel, and those nations He used to cause Israel to suffer (but they did it too much) will now be judged against. Once that begins, then Israel will be brought back into God's light (meaning, they will be brought out of their darkness) and see God's severe justice being turned towards their oppressors, while the forgiving and merciful side of God's justice begins to restore Israel. That paradigm has never changed, and the truth is that Christendom refuses to acknowledge it even though it is found in the New Testament.

CJB Romans 11:22 *So take a good look at God's kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, God's kindness toward you- provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you too will be cut off!*

Micah, in referring back to what he just said in verse 9, continues this thought in verse 10.

CJB Micah 7:10 *My enemies will see it too, and shame will cover those who said to me, "Where is Yehoveh your God?" I will gloat over them, as they are trampled underfoot like mud in the streets.*

This verse is basically Israel taunting their enemies that had made their lives so hard for so long. The enemies will suffer "shame" because they had long ago taunted Israel after they had invaded and subjugated them. "Where is your God?" is a rather stock expression in the Bible. It comes from the popular notion that all conflicts and wars between nations is essentially war between those nations' gods. Each nation thinks their god is bigger and better than their foe's national god. So, when the loser finally submits, it is as though their god is submitting to the strength and power of the winning nation and god.

The result is “shame” on the loser. Let’s be clear though: the term “shame” is used not because that’s really what is at stake. It is only that the condition of “shame” is such a feared and despised societal status, that little else could be imagined that was worse. All the world in this ancient time consisted of shame and honor societies, with all people desiring to be in the status of honor. Shame was intolerable and there was no limit a person might go to remedy they’re shame and return to a societal status of honor.

Since the situation is now reversed, Israel will gloat about their god being the more powerful. Being trampled underfoot is the typical abuse the victor applies to defeated and captured soldiers. It is more an expression than actual behavior, but abuse to the losing army to some degree was the norm. What this reversal of conditions amounts to is what the Bible usually calls “retribution”. Just as God punishes Israel through other nations, so other nations receive retribution by the tide turning and what happens to them is like what happened to Israel. Retribution is viewed, biblically, as a kind of proportional justice because any more than proportional would be considered as unjust.

It is a big mistake for any people or nation to behave as though God... the God of the Bible... was not present in our lives, completely knowledgeable of our thoughts and behaviors and choices, had not announced what good is (and therefore, what evil is), and how people and nations are to comply with the moral standards He gave to everyone long ago. And further, that there are unavoidable consequences that will come (in time) to those who rebel, individually or corporately, against this reality of His presence. God is not the head of a democracy. Majority does not rule in God’s economy. God is not voted into and out of his office. God’s laws and commands do not get amended by humans. It is a dangerous thing to decide that if the larger group says that what they believe must be right simply due to the might of their size, and we determine to join them based on that thought, then God will soon show us that His power is nothing to be trifled with and that the majority is no indicator of good or right. He is no respecter of persons. Rather, He is looking for that remnant who will do what is right in His eyes, bear-up to the persecutions and troubles and heartaches we might have to face because of it and wait on Him for His deliverance to come to us.

Verses 11 and 12 are another case of a thought that should never have been separated into 2 separate verses. So, we'll look at them together as they were intended to be.

CJB Micah 7:11-12 ***¹¹ That will be the day for rebuilding your walls, a day for expanding your territory, ¹² a day when [your] people will come [back] to you from Ashur and from the cities of Egypt, from Egypt and from as far as the Euphrates River, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.***

I'll tell you upfront that there are so many different interpretations of this passage for a very good reason. The grammar and even the basic word order is so difficult and non-typical, that we have to begin with making a choice between deciding whether this has been faithfully recorded and transmitted to us as we have it, or the text suffered terrible and error filled redactions and/or copyist errors that we may never be able to fully recover. Since Micah has such a unique and unusual style throughout his book, it is well within his pattern that indeed it is what was spoken even if we struggle mightily to discern its meaning. But, neither can it be positively ruled out that this is not a redaction by a scribe or just plain errors in the copying process. I'm going to approach this with the idea that what we have is correct, as Micah intended, it's just messy to unpack its intent.

Even starting from that assumption still has its problems. Let me give you a short sample of the many different interpretations of even the first several words.

CJB Micah 7:11 ***That will be the day for rebuilding your walls, a day for expanding your territory,***

JPS Micah 7:11 ***'The day for building thy walls, even that day, shall be far removed.'***

KJV Micah 7:11 ***In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed.***

^{NAS} **Micah 7:11** *It will be a day for building your walls. On that day will your boundary be extended.*

^{YLT} **Micah 7:11** *The day to build thy walls! That day -- removed is the limit.*

What a variety! I won't bore you with the grammar details, but they are quite valid in their problems with feminine verbs seeming to be attached to male subjects and vice versa unless what seems to be that attachment is not correct. And if not, then it is nearly impossible to know which subjects from previous verses these verbs might be attached to. And it even gets more technical.

This much seems discernable from the context that has come from all the earlier verses not just from chapter 7, but from all of Micah taken as a whole. The term "the day" or "that day" or "a day" is nearly exclusively used throughout the Prophets as being eschatological... that is, referring to End Times events... something in the future. I have pointed out in lessons in other books that there is more than one "that day" or "latter days" that the Prophets speak of. That is, we must remember that "the future" is relative to where we sit in history. For Micah, for instance, everything that happened after the time he wrote (mid to late 8th century B.C.) was the future. This is true for all the Prophets we have in our Bibles. Thus, for Micah, the "latter days" or "that day" were, to his mind, the next major event that was still future to him, whether it was a near-term or long-term timeframe.

It is fair to say that each time a prophecy was fulfilled (and, of course, all prophecies are future in their nature when they were written), and "the day" or "the latter days" were written about the prophesied event, the Prophet had no idea when it would happen, and probably assumed the fulfillment was a one-time event. Thus, there are a number of "latter days" or "the day" events we find in the Scriptures. However, in the 21st century, realizing that some of those fulfillments have already happened in history, but some have not, then the future we see is far different than what the ancient Prophets saw. After all, we are living in time 2800 years after Micah. Thus, our future is quite different

than his. Because of the prophetic fulfillments that have already occurred are the necessary run-up to the final End Times or “latter days”, then by all we can tell, all that is left is for the last fulfillment of whatever prophecies that remain to be fulfilled.

Assuming we are generally correct in that assessment, then “the day” Micah is speaking about in Micah 7:11 & 12 will be reaching its final fulfillment... its climax... soon. And, with that as a basis, let’s try to determine what events are going to happen.

Three events seem to clearly emerge. A day for rebuilding something. A day for expanding something or decreeing something. And a day for someone or something to come. Let’s go one by one. The first subject is in Hebrew ***libenot gederayik***. ***Gederayik*** can mean walls or fences. Most translations assume walls is correct and I would agree. The walls are generally, biblically, indicative of the walls of a fortress city, and far more often than not when talking about the End Times it refers to the walls of the City of Jerusalem. The rebuilding of the walls then, is a symbol of Israel being restored to God’s favor and His deliverance BECAUSE it *is* referring to Jerusalem. Often in this case it is more appropriate to speak of Jerusalem as Zion, because Zion tends towards meaning a restored, or redeemed, or ideal Jerusalem, which is the center of the geographical location on earth of God’s covenant-based faith. That center gets further reduced from Jerusalem to the Temple.

While it is put in such an abrupt term as “rebuilding the walls”, it indicates something much more expansive. It means that all the sins and shame that has been heaped upon Israel over the centuries is finally removed once and for all. It means that the days of a cycle of punishment and exile and oppression are permanently over for Israel. Israel’s walls have, historically, been reduced to rubble and rebuilt a few times. But this next time they are rebuilt will be different because the pattern of destruction and then rebuilding will have come to an end. And this symbolic rebuilding that is also quite literal meaning the walls will be rebuilt, but also it means that Israel’s faithfulness and intention to obey God has also turned a corner to being permanent.

The next subject involves the meaning of the Hebrew word **choq**. Most widely, translators have chosen the English word boundaries to interpret it. Within the that word's various uses, it can mean rule, limit, or something decreed. Certainly, the English word boundary can inhabit the sense of a limit, but it's a bit of a stretch. Nonetheless, considering the sometimes-odd ways that Micah words things, I agree with interpreting it that way because not only does it fit the overall context, but also because among the several events to take place in the End Times is the expansion of Israel's territory beyond whatever its current limits might be, and I think even beyond what it has ever been in history at the height of its boundaries in David and Solomon's era.

Although Christian scholars attempt in make the final subject about the return of Yeshua, in no way is a person or a messianic hero intended. Rather we can see in the Hebrew that the words (in English) indicate a return from Assyria and from Egypt, and from distant locations all over the earth (as it speaks of coming from sea to sea and mountains to mountains) it of course means lots of people and not a specific person. In overall prophetic context, this is the return to Israel of the dispersed tribes of Israel from wherever they are among the nations. And, since that is happening as we speak, in the year 2026, this, to me, is a great indicator that we have stepped over the threshold into "that day" or the "Latter Days" or the End times. Thus, the meaning that these first 2 subjects mention in this passage indicates they are also on the cusp of coming about. We'll continue chapter 7 next time.