Turning Defeat into Victory

Micah 5:1-6

In 701 BC, “The Word of the LORD came to Micah of Moresheth in the days… Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning… Jerusalem.” (1:1)

1. Israel’s Doom – 5:1

“Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; they have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.” (5:1) [NASB]

Judah has been overrun and its capital, Jerusalem is surrounded, under siege by Assyrian troops. The situation is hopeless, a situation which was prophesied by Isaiah some 30 years earlier (Isaiah 7:3 – 8:10). The king Hezekiah has been caged like a bird.

The Warrior King Sennacherib describes the situation from his perspective,

“As for Hezekiah the Judean who did not submit to my yoke, 46 of his strong walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighborhood, which were without number, by escalade and by bringing up siege engines, by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels, and breaches, I besieged and took… Himself like a caged bird I shut up in Jerusalem his royal city.” (ARAB, II, 240; cf. ANET. pp. 287f).

Micah is not attempting to tell Jerusalem (daughter) to rally the troops, in hope that they may defeat the invasion. Micah is describing their frantic circumstances.

What do troops do? They attack and they strike. The Hebrew word “gadad” allows for this meaning. So a better translation of this verse is,

“Now you are gashing yourselves, Lady under attack. Siege is laid against us; with their stick they are striking on the cheek Israel’s judge.” [?]

Meaning: The inhabitance of Jerusalem are so despondent they are like a insane person who bangs his head against the wall, hits or bites himself for the purpose of diverting pain from one spot to another, only making the situation even worse.

Those laying the siege are described as striking the judge (King) on the cheek, an act of humiliation. Micah is uses a play on words. He is uses similar sounding Hebrews words to express a reversal of roles. A judge “shaphat” is one that strikes others with a “shebet” rod, stick or from the root “a branch”.

Meaning: A judge strikes others with a judgment, but here it is the judge who is being struck, that is judged.

The LORD calls Assyria the rod or stick of My anger (Isaiah 10:5).

God’s wrath was at work, in reprisal for the sins of leaders and people, an implicit warning that the path of disobedience leads to disaster for Jerusalem and Judah. “I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed." (5:15)

How did they get into this situation? Are they not God’s people? Did not God promise them to bless them and protect them from their enemies?

Three Kings

Uzziah – Good King

Jotham – Good King

Ahaz – Bad King

Both King Uzziah and Jotham did what was right in the sight of the LORD, but they did not remove the high places and the people continued to act corruptly.

King Ahaz made molted images and burned his sons in fire. He sacrificed at the high places in every city of Judah and provoked the LORD to anger. He brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful (2 Chronicles 28:19)

There was Rebellion in the Land,

* Perversion of true religion.
* Sacrifices on high places.
* False prophets lead people astray.
* Prophets and priest used religion to make money.
* Sorceries, fortune-telling, craven images and sacred sites pervaded the land.
* The Temple was closed and sacrifices cease under King Ahaz

Israel was told,

Numbers 33:51-52

“When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places.”

Leviticus 26:23-33

“I, will strike you seven times for your sins. 'I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant;… if… you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you… I then will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and heap your remains on the remains of your idols, for My soul shall abhor you. 'I will lay waste your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate… 'I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it. 'You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.”

A Series of Invasions

734 B.C

Syro-Ephraimite War of 734 B.C. – 120,000 Judea killed in one day, 200,000 take captive, [later returned], and much spoil taken.

Philistines and Edomites invaded also taking captives and stripping their defenses.

732 B.C.

Tiglath-pileser III, (745-727 BC) Assyria’s Napoleon. He invaded northern Israel and captured parts of the land and set Hoshea on the throne. This was shortly after the fall of Damascus. [Assyria Kings (Warlords) – Assyria was built for war; a nation of warriors. Their rulers were warrior kings. Their occupation was soldier and plunder.]

722 B.C.

Shalmaneser (727-722 BC) When Tiglath-pileser III died Hoshea took this occasion to cease paying tribute to Assyria and turned to Egypt for help. Shalmaneser moved at once and began a siege of Samaria, which lasted three years. Samaria fell in 722 and the people of Israel were taken into captivity. Shalmanser died about the same time.

Sargon II (722-705 BC) took the city of Samaria, Israel’s capital, after a three year siege in 722 B.C. and deported the people of the Northern Kingdom.

2 Kings 17:18-20

“So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.”

King Ahaz of Judah paid a heavy tribute to Assyria to assist him - Ahaz had to present his master treasures out of the temple, his palace, and the houses of the princes.

701 B.C.

Sennacherib (705-681 BC) invaded Judah and “came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them” (2 Kings 18:13) Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib at Lachish apologies and payments of silver and gold tribute, begging him to retreat. Sennacherib then sent a large army to Jerusalem. “Lady under attack”

However, the LORD is about to turn defeat into victory.

Structure – Notice – Doom then Hope

Throughout the book of Micah as well as most if not all of the prophets we find a mixture of hope and doom - Long Doom section followed by short hope, or short doom followed by long hope, (See Chart) a mixture of judgment and salvation, or salvation through judgment.

“They have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make head of tail of them or see what they are getting at”[[1]](#footnote-1) So commented Martin Luther on the impression given by the prophetic books. The book of Micah is a blatant example of this seeming jumble, so that a search for a literary structure is a first sight an impossible task.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Short Time Deliverance

Sennacherib boasts of his own superiority and taunts Hezekiah and the LORD into giving up for no one can stop Him now. All the other gods of nations that he has defeated did not help them, neither will Your God (2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36-37). But at that time God had other plans and delivers for now Jerusalem from destruction by killing 185,000 Assyrians in one night. Sennacherib is force to retreat and then some time later is killed by two of his own sons in the sight of his gods in the temple in Nineveh.

The nation(s) gathered around Jerusalem (701) are already doomed. “They have walked into a trap. Arrayed against God’s people, and so against God, they have played into the hands of a master Strategist who is in control of the situation and will turn defeat into victory.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Micah 4:12

“But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, and they do not understand His purpose; For He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.”

Long Time Deliverance – Micah goes way past the present circumstances and prophecies concerning Israel’s ultimate deliverance, the things that “will come about in the last days” (4:1)

Israel’s Hope – 5:2-6

1. Hope from the Past – 5:2

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

Hope for the future begins in the distant past. 300 years earlier a future king emerged from a little town of Bethlehem, “house of bread”, Ephrathah, “fruitfulness”, a community of wheat farmers and shepherds. This would be an odd place for a great warrior king to emerge in order to defeat the great armies surrounding Jerusalem. No one expected David to defeat Goliath – shepherd boy vs. giant warrior.

He is called a ruler/sovereign that has no rival.

He is from eternity past, from the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13). [Divinity?]

Of all the descendents of David only Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem [all others were born in Jerusalem or in dispersion].

It reminded them of God’s promise to David to establish his royal line forever (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89) There have been many attempts to destroy David’s dynasty or have it fade into obscurity One will arise to establish it anew in all its pristine beauty.

1. Hope for the Future – 5:3-6
2. Hope of Restoration – 5:3

“Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel.”

All hope hangs on the birth of the royal prince. This expectation is doubtless to be related to Isaiah’s mysterious promise of Immanuel’s birth (7:14) pronounced 30 years earlier.

Problem: The presence of their enemies in the land and the absence of their brothers.

Herein lays the promise of restoration and return. It looks forward to the day when all the brother/tribes of Israel are in the United Kingdom.

1. Hope of the Shepherd – 5:4

“And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.”

His rule will be like a shepherd that cares for and protects his sheep. This is also an illusion to David, in the dress of the founder.

Jesus is called the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20).

Revelation 7:17

“the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them (trib. Saints) to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

The shepherd will be endowed with the LORD’s strength and authority.

“The LORD His God” describes the close relationship they will have.

The God given power of the coming shepherd king is the basis of the security of his sheep/people. The LORD promised that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly (2 Samuel 7:10)

His renown/fame will be known throughout the world, a universal kingdom.

Luke 1:30-33

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

1. Hope of Peace and Victory over the Enemy – 5:5-6

“This One will be our peace. When the Assyrian invades our land, when he tramples on our citadels, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men. They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its entrances; And He will deliver us from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory.”

This One born in Bethlehem, this child will go forth to be a Rule over a restored and untied Israel, to Shepherd His people in the strength and authority of the LORD, to be great in all the earth; this One will bring peace and deliverance over their enemy.

Peace – When? – “When the Assyrian invades the land…” – Not present tense, but this looks forward to an Assyrian or “the” Assyrian invades the land in the last days. This is no other than the King of the north described by Daniel, and the beast and antichrist describe by John in Revelation.

Daniel 11:45

“He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.”

Isa 14:24-25

“The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains.”

Notice: that when the enemy sets foot on Judean territory, he find himself driven back by so vigorous a counterattack that his own country will be invaded.

The Assyria is driven back by seven shepherds and eight leaders of men with the sword. A nation that was once leaderless finds men who take charge and turn a defeat into routing victory.

Conclusion:

Were God’s people saved/delivered?

In Ahaz’ day, Assyria withdrew from Judah and marched to Babylon after hearing of disturbances in that land. A remnant remained and the house of David was saved.

In Hezekiah’s day, 185,000 troops were killed by the Angel of the LORD and Sennacherib withdrew to Nineveh and was killed by his own sons.

In Jesus’ day, the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem and Judea and made slaves out of the remaining inhabitance, a remnant remain and are dispersed around the world.

In our day, many Jews have returned and live in Judea, but not securely. They are under constant threat of invasion.

In the end times, the King of the North, know as “the Assyrian” will invaded Israel, and a child born in Bethlehem will deliver Israel from “the Assyrian” (Micah 5:1-6)

At that time “all Israel will be saved”! (Romans 11:26)

“Judah and Jerusalem has been brought to the brink of totally despair. They are convinced of their weakness and lack of resources; there is no king who can save them (4:9). “To a people who have promise of a king to come who would be God’s own answer to the problem of Assyria, now that the people’s self-confident hopes have been proved ill-founded (5:5f). A Davidic prince, he would be the embodiment of theocratic power and peace, and his coming would spell the creation of new, united Israel (5:2-4).” (A, p. 256)

Quote Allen p. 349

Hezekiah – “Yahweh has strengthen” (726-686)

Purpose: Micah spoke with two voices, “His task was not just to afflict the comfortable but also to comfort the afflicted.” (Allen, p. 243).

An implicit warning against trusting in armaments and military leadership…

Remnant – used as a poetic parallelism - a negative term, alluding to the weakness with which God’s people had been overwhelmed and a positive term, alive with potential. “Their role, reduced through they are to a pitiful remnant (cf. Isa. 1:9), is to be the traditional, paradoxical dual function of Israel as agent of the baneful and beneficial power of God.” (Allen. P. 256)

God’s wrath – was at work, in reprisal for the sins of leaders and people, an implicit warning that the path of disobedience leads to disaster for Jerusalem and Judah.

“I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed." (5:15)

“They needed to be reminded… (Allen, p. 255)

Sheep and Shepherd – used to describe the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people

Micah 5:1-6 is the pivot of the book.

1. Cited by von Rad, *OT Theology*, vol. 2 p. 33, n. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Allen, p. 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Leslie C. Allen, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976, p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)