

the most effective way of impressing a lesson on the mind of a man. It is the same principle as corporal punishment inflicted on the body of a child. He may not be capable of seeing the lesson with his reason alone, hence it is necessary to reach his mind through his body. It is the same in the case of an adult, except that a form of physical punishment may be used of such a character that the victim can understand as well as feel the force of the chastisement. In the present case God started the punishment by using a worm that destroyed the gourd.

Verse 8. After destroying the gourd the Lord left conditions as they had been by the normal heat of the sun. Next some additional distress was to be inflicted upon him by another miracle upon the elements. *Vehement* is from CHARYSHIR and Strong defines it, "In the sense of silence; quiet, i. e. sultry (as noun feminine, the sirocco or hot east wind)." The idea is that it was not a rushing current of air, for that motion itself would have somewhat counteracted the desired effect. Instead, it was a quiet but intensely hot and sultry wave of air that was terribly depressing. Jonah's request to die was from a different cause described in verse 3, but his attitude toward death should have the same comments as are offered in that verse.

Verse 9. The Lord's question calls for the same comments as the ones on verse 4. Jonah will be shown the reasons for which he had no valid cause for wishing death just because the gourd had withered and died.

Verse 10. The comparative unimportance of the gourd when considered with the importance of a city of people is the thought in this verse. *Pity on the gourd* means that Jonah would have spared it because of its usefulness to him. And all this in spite of the truth that he had put no time or effort into it to bring it into existence, while God was the maker of the city and all things therein. If the personal interest of Jonah in the plant would justify his regret at seeing it destroyed, he should have praised God for sparing a city that was destined in the near future to co-operate with Him in one of the great events concerning Israel.

Verse 11. The gourd was small even from the standpoint of material volume, while the city contained 120,000 human beings. *Cannot discern*

between their right hand and their left hand is a figure of speech used to describe the ignorance of the people as to what is right and wrong. This does not contradict the comments on chapter 3: 8 as to the people's knowledge of right and wrong, for it is shown there that they knew it only after the Lord had informed them through the prophet.

MICAH 1

Verse 1. *The word of the Lord that came to Micah* shows that he was inspired to write his book. Moreover, in Jeremiah 26: 17, 18 we have his writing referred to favorably by some elders of the land and there is no indication that his predictions were called in question by anyone. His predictions pertained to the 10-tribe and the 2-tribe kingdom of the Jews, for Samaria was the capital of the first and Jerusalem that of the second. The date of his writing is identified with the reigns of some of the kings of the 2-tribe kingdom. A glance at the history of those times will show that Micah began writing about 40 years before the captivity of the 10-tribe kingdom and some 150 years before that of the 2-tribe kingdom. Since those revolutionary events were so near, we may expect the prophet to have a great deal to say on the subject. He will also say many things relative to the corruption that was the cause of God's wrath toward his people, namely, their worship of idols.

Verse 2. The Lord God was about to be a witness against the people. The significance of that is that since God knows everything, there could be no question as to the truth of the testimony about to be uttered. *From his holy temple* refers to the throne of the universe, which indicates the supreme headquarters from which the testimony was to be issued.

Verse 3. The holy temple in heaven is the Lord's personal dwelling place, but He is everywhere at all times in a spiritual sense. And He is spoken of as being in or coming to specific spots on the earth when some definite work is to be accomplished, such as inflicting a chastisement on His people for their sins.

Verse 4. The power of God is illustrated by the figurative melting of mountains and cleaving of the alleys. All of the material events mentioned in this verse are for the same purpose, to indicate that God can do as he wills with kingdoms of men.

Verse 5. This verse gives the key to the figures of the preceding one. The two kingdoms of the Jews are meant by Jacob (or Israel) and Judah. The same is meant by Samaria and Jerusalem because they were the capitals of those kingdoms. They are named in direct connection with sins and transgressions because the kings and other leaders of nations are located in their capitals. *High places* identifies the particular corruption of these kingdoms to have been idolatry.

Verse 6. For the present the predictions are against the 10-tribe kingdom whose capital was Samaria. *Heap* is from a Hebrew word that Strong defines as "a ruin (as if overturned)." When the Assyrian army subjugated the kingdom of Israel it left the country in ruins, at least as far as its government was concerned. The history of this event is recorded in 2 Kings 17.

Verse 7. God's complaint against his people was about their idolatry, and he was determined to abolish it through the agency of the Assyrians. *The hires thereof* refers to the possessions of the people of Israel which they claimed they had obtained by the help of their gods. *Hire of an harlot*. Idolatry was compared to adultery in ancient times, and the gains that were claimed to have been acquired through the favor of the gods is here likened to the money that a harlot would receive in payment for her service to immoral men. *Shall return to the hire of an harlot*. Israel claimed to have received these material possessions through the favor of the gods. The italicized clause means that the heathen nations from whom the people of Israel learned the corrupt practice of idolatry would come upon the country and take possession of these very goods that were claimed to have been received through the favor of the gods.

Verse 8. The first person of pronouns is used in the prophetic writings somewhat interchangeably as referring to either God or the prophet. That is because the writing is inspired of God although the prophet is doing the writing. But when language describes such actions as the ones in this verse we should understand the pronoun to refer to the prophet. We have seen instances where the prophets were induced to do some "acting" on account of the affairs of God's people. In the present verse the prophet goes through some of the ancient custom-

ary acts of mourning over the deplorable condition of the nation.

Verse 9. Israel had become so corrupt in devotion to idols that God saw no cure for it except by the services of a foreign nation which was to be the Assyrians. *Wound . . . come unto Judah*. The Assyrians did not rest content after having taken the kingdom of Israel into captivity, but came on and threw Jerusalem into a panic of fear. The history of this is recorded in 2 Kings 18 and 19.

Verse 10. *Gath* and *Aphrah* were places in the land of the Philistines bordering on the country of Israel. The verse means that Israel should not make too much ado over the unfortunate situation, or these heathen communities would hear about it and take pleasure from it. Instead, in their distress let them quietly sit down or roll in the dust as a silent token of their humiliation.

Verse 11. The revolutionary events that were to come upon the country involved various cities and communities in one way or another. Some cities had encouraged Israel in wrongdoing, and others had taken the opposite trend and refused even to sympathize with the people of the Lord in their many misfortunes. The places and persons alluded to in this verse were among the descriptions given and all were destined to fall.

Verse 12. Maroth was another town in Palestine that was destined to feel the sting of the Lord's wrath. *Waited carefully . . . evil came*. The gist of this verse is virtually the same as the preceding one, and predicts that this was another city that was to be disappointed of its expectations regarding the continuance of its prosperity.

Verse 13. *The swift beast* refers to the horse which is a swift animal and can draw a chariot with speed. The purpose of binding the chariot to this beast was to try to escape from the foe. This does not mean that any city's inhabitants could actually escape the foe, for God had decreed that all were to become captives. The statement is a prediction that when the invasion came the unhappy citizens would wish to flee away for safety. *She is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion*. The pronoun *she* stands for the city of Lachish, a place of importance south of Jerusalem. According to 2 Kings 18: 14, 17 and 2 Chronicles 11: 5, 9, Lachish was among the first cities to take up with

the corruptions of Jeroboam, leader of the revolt of the ten tribes from the government in Jerusalem. Such is the meaning of the italicized clause, and it also explains the statement, *the transgressions of Israel were found in thee*.

Verse 14. *Give presents to* ["for" in the margin] *Moreseth-gath*. *Give presents* is a term of military and political significance, meaning to make a formal surrender to another, or at least to acknowledge his superiority. This was another idolatrous place and the people of God were destined to *give presents* to the Assyrians for or because of their corrupt practices in this and other cities. *Achziab shall be a lie*. The last word is from AKZAB which Strong defines, "falsehood; by implication treachery." The kings of Israel had counted on this city and others like it for support in times of national need. The prediction means that when the test comes they will fail the kings and will prove to be traitors.

Verse 15. *An heir* means one who will become the possessor of the place and that was to be the Assyrians. They were destined soon to invade this territory and take possession of the cities and put the inhabitants under subjection.

Verse 16. *Make thee bald* is an allusion to a custom of shaving the head as a symbol of distress. This is a prediction that the places mentioned would mourn over their children (citizens) because they would be taken away into captivity.

MICAH 2

Verse 1. *Work evil upon their beds*. In the first Psalm David pronounces a blessing on the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates in that law day and night. The phrase cited from this verse gives an indication of the force of David's statement as to the advantage of meditation. In the hours of night when the activities of life are subsided for the time being, these workers of iniquity were planning some kind of mischief for the next day. Then when the night was over they went forth to carry out their wicked plot. *Because it is in the power of their hand*. Having thought upon their evil work and figured out the details, these wicked men had only to perform the physical execution of it since the "head work" had been done.

Verse 2. Some details of the wicked schemes of these men are stated. A man would be lying in his bed thinking about increasing his possessions. He would think of some field that impressed him as being very desirable, but it might not be for sale so he would plan some way to get it by violence if necessary. There is a notable instance of this kind of wickedness performed by Ahab, recorded in 1 Kings 21: 1-16.

Verse 3. *This family* means such as the preceding verse describes. The *evil* the Lord devised against such a family was not something wrong, but it was to be the chastisement imposed through a foreign nation for the purpose of correction. The *evil* at the end of the verse is the same that is explained above, and it was so sure to come that Israel need not become *haughty* over it, for their necks would not be released from it until the Lord's plan was accomplished.

Verse 4. *That day* means the time when the prediction against Israel would be fulfilled. When that time arrives someone will express the situation with a *doleful lamentation*. The form of that lamentation is like that predicted by David in Psalms 137.

Verse 5. The one who will express such a depressing sentiment will not be popular in the minds of the people. *Cord* is from a word that means a group of people bound together by some common opinion. The meaning is that the man making the above lamentation will not have any group of sympathizers for his gloom in the congregation of the Lord.

Verse 6. The people did not like to hear predictions of such unpleasant experiences indicated by this doleful lamentation and they cried for the prophet to stop it. Isaiah had the same objectors to contend with in his book, chapter 30: 10, and they were like certain characters predicted by Paul in 2 Timothy 4: 3, 4.

Verse 7. This verse is a rebuke to the people for questioning the word of the Lord. *Not straitened* means the Lord's word is not cramped or short of the truth, and hence the predictions expressed by the prophet are true, for they are according to divine inspiration. I will caution the reader again not to be confused by the question form of the language. It is the Lord's manner of making positive declarations through Micah.

Verse 8. *Of late* denotes that the

accusation is a consideration of something very recent, showing that God was not complaining of something the people had done long ago and that should have been dealt with then or not at all. *Robe with the garment*. The last word is the article worn next to the body and was a close fitting piece, while the *robe* was like a mantle or loose piece that was worn over the other as an extra protection. These cruel thieves took both of the articles from their victims even as they were passing by. *As men averse from war*. Had these men been in uniform and serving in the enemy's army it would not have been so bad to strip them of their clothing; but they were civilians quietly going about their own business.

Verse 9. The outrages against the helpless women was similar to that charged against the hypocrites by Jesus (Matthew 23: 14). It is one of the traits of men who are greedy of material gain to take advantage of those who cannot protect themselves.

Verse 10. *Arise and depart* is a prediction that they will depart from their home land and be lodged in the land of their exile. *This is not your rest*. They will not be permitted to rest or remain in possession of their ill-gotten property. *It is polluted*. The very place where these gains were made was polluted with the corruptions of idolatry and for that reason the nation was doomed to be overthrown.

Verse 11. True prophets were required to make predictions about the false ones or otherwise describe them. In this verse Micah describes the kind of prophet that the people of Israel were willing to accept. Jeremiah 5: 31 also records a description of this conspiracy between the people and the false prophets.

Verse 12. The subject changes and the prediction pertains to the restoration of Israel to the home land. *Gather the remnant* refers to the comparatively small number of the Jews that survived the ravages of the captivity (Ezra 2: 64). *Put them together as sheep* denotes they will be gathered from their scattered condition and grouped together as a flock in their own fold. *Make a noise* refers to the lively expressions that the people will make on being released.

Verse 13. *Breaker* is said with reference to the Lord because he will use his agency (the Persians) to break

through the gates of the city to release His people. *Their king* means Cyrus who will be the instrument in God's hands for the delivering of Israel.

MICAH 3

Verse 1. The bulk of this chapter is against the head men of the nation. *Heads of Jacob* would be the outstanding men whether they were prophets or men in high social rank. The class of men had for many years taken advantage of their position to impose on the poor and otherwise unfortunate people. The last clause means that the princes were expected to know how to act with good judgment.

Verse 2. Instead of being examples of righteousness, these leaders reversed the proper attitude toward good and evil as to which they loved and hated. The pronouns *their* and *them* stand for the common people who were the victims of the cruelty of the leaders. *Pluck off their skin*, etc., is said figuratively and refers to the severe treatment they imposed on the people, similar to that mentioned in chapter 2: 8.

Verse 3. This is more along the same line as the preceding verse.

Verse 4. The pronouns change now and stand for the heads and princes of Israel who are mentioned in verse 1. *Then* applies to the time when God would bring judgment upon the wicked men. When that time arrives it will be in vain for them to cry to God for mercy. He will turn his face away because *they have behaved ill in their doings*.

Verse 5. *Bite with their teeth, and cry, peace*. The selfishness of the leaders is still the topic in the mind of the inspired prophet. As long as they had food to bite they were peaceable and satisfied and not disposed to be unpleasant even in their teaching. They would even gratify their ear-itching and servile brethren with visions of *peace*, though such predictions were false. But when those down-trodden people refused to contribute to their selfishness; when they *putteth not into their mouths*, then they became spiteful and prepared [predicted] *war against them*.

Verse 6. The thought in this verse is against the prophets personally. They made a selfish use of their ability to issue predictions, so the Lord was going to deprive them of that information. *Night . . . not vision* means that instead of giving them further

visions as prophets, God would leave them in the dark as far as the future was concerned which would constitute the "night" of this phrase. *Shall not divine* denotes they will not be permitted to make predictions. The last clause of the verse means the same as the first part just explained.

Verse 7. *Seers* and *diviners* are names for the prophets who were supposed to be inspired of God for making their predictions. But when they abused their position by using it for their selfish enjoyment. He determined to deprive them of all information and that was to make them ashamed and confused. They would *cover their lips* which means their lips would be closed because they had nothing to say. The reason for that will be that when they sought for divine instruction *there was no answer from God*.

Verse 8. The first personal pronoun is again to stand for Micah who was a faithful prophet, and the *power of the spirit of the Lord* was guiding him. *Jacob* and *Israel* are used in the same sense, having special reference to the 10-tribe kingdom, but in a general sense the writing of the prophet applies to all the Jewish nation. *Declare* is from *NAGAN*, and the word in Strong's definition that especially applies in this case is "expose." It was the work of the faithful prophet to expose and denounce the corruptions of Israel.

Verse 9. The leading men in the nation are still the ones especially in the mind of the prophet. *Abhor judgment* refers to the right judgment which they should have manifested instead of abhorring it. A result of such an attitude was to *pervert* or corrupt all *equity* (fairness in dealing).

Verse 10. Since *Zion* and *Jerusalem* were names of the capital of the 2-tribe kingdom, this indicates that the prophet was considering the whole nation somewhat in his book. See the comments on this subject in verse 8 and also at chapter 1: 1.

Verse 11. This verse describes the same condition as Jeremiah 5: 31, but it goes further and states the motive for the corrupt conduct of the leaders. It verifies the statement of Paul in 1 Timothy 6: 10 that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. After all this wicked procedure these hypocrites had the boldness to *lean upon the Lord* or pretend to rely upon Him. They even pretended to believe that the Lord would preserve them from

all harm in spite of their inconsistent lives.

Verse 12. *Zion* was an important spot in *Jerusalem* which was the capital of the 2-tribe kingdom. *Heaps* means ruins either material or political, and this prediction refers to the ruin of Jerusalem (2 Kings 15: 9, 10).

MICAH 4

Verse 1. The first five verses of this chapter as a group predict the kingdom of Christ, but I shall comment on the several verses in their order. *In the last days* corresponds with "afterward" in Joel 2: 28, and "last days" in Acts 2: 17. It means the last days of the Jewish dispensation, for that system was still in force when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles to set up the kingdom of Christ. *Mountain* in symbolic language means a government, so the government of the Lord was to be established above all others, which was predicted also in Daniel 2: 44.

Verse 2. *Many nations* means people from many nations, not that any government as a body would attach itself to the kingdom of Christ. This prediction of the many nations was begun to be fulfilled in Acts 2: 5. *Shall say, come let us go up* refers to the generous response that was made to the call of the apostles recorded in Acts 2: 41, 47; 4: 4 and other passages. *The law* means the law to govern the kingdom of Christ, not the Jewish government, for that had been given many centuries before by Moses (John 1: 17). It was the law or government predicted by the patriarch Jacob in Genesis 49: 10, which makes the wording of this verse very appropriate.

Verse 3. In the midst of a group of verses most of which consist of figures and symbols, it would be unreasonable to give the present one a literal interpretation. It does not predict that carnal warfare will cease after the kingdom of Christ is established. It is true that the tendencies of the Gospel are in the opposite direction from violence of any kind in the conduct of the true followers of Christ. But it is also true that as long as the world stands the scriptures teach us that the great majority of mankind will reject the Gospel, hence this verse could not be a prediction of the end of carnal warfare. The explanation lies in the difference between the Jewish and Christian dispensations. The former was a combination of religious and

political government, hence it was right to use the support of carnal warfare. That is why Jesus said that if his kingdom were of this world his servants would fight in his defence (John 18: 36). But the Christian dispensation is strictly religious and its citizens will not resort to the material sword for its propaganda and support. Hence the members of the Lord's kingdom will use their metal for instruments of peaceful industry, and depend upon the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" for the defence of the kingdom of Christ. Let the reader understand that this paragraph has nothing to do with the subject of Christians engaging in carnal warfare as a citizen of the temporal government. When he does that he is acting as a citizen of the temporal government and in its defence, and not for the defence of the kingdom of Christ, for they are two separate and distinct institutions and a Christian is a member of each just as Paul was a Christian and a Roman at the same time (Acts 22: 25).

Verse 4. Like the preceding verse, this one uses terms figuratively to express the thought in the mind of the prophet. If a country was sure there would be no hostile army invade it, the inhabitants would feel no need of secluding themselves within protective buildings but would feel safe in the great outdoors. The vine and fig tree were prominent sources of nourishment and good cheer, and a land that was permanently free from danger could offer these comforts to its inhabitants without fear. I have gone into these details to explain the significance of the illustrations used by the prophet. However, the reader should remember that they are illustrations only and that they represent the spiritual safety and feeling of security that a citizen of the Kingdom of Christ was to enjoy. This prospect was guaranteed by the Lord who gave the vision to the prophet Micah to be delivered to the people of the nation.

Verse 5. *All people* means the people of the world in general. It was not expected that the kingdom of Christ would be able to enlist the majority of the race of mankind, but instead it was even predicted in literal language that the many would be in the service of sin. That would include the idolatrous practices of walking in the name of his god. We is prospective and means the inhabitants of

the kingdom of Christ who would honor the true God only.

Verse 6. In a number of places we have seen the prophet pass from the release of Israel from captivity to the establishing of the kingdom of Christ. In the present chapter the order is reversed, for the rest of it beginning with this verse is a group prediction of the return from the captivity. *That day* is a familiar term in the Bible and the context usually has to be considered in determining the day meant; it here stands for the day of Israel's release. *That halteth* means the national halting or lameness brought about by the captivity. *Driven out* refers to the exile of Israel from her native land which was yet in the future when the prophet wrote this. *I have afflicted* is said because the Lord used the heathen nations as instruments in His hands to inflict the chastisement on the disobedient people.

Verse 7. We usually think of a *remnant* as something rather inferior, a "scrap" of material left after the best has been taken. However, it has the opposite meaning in the present case, and indicates a superiority of strength in that it was able to survive after the bulk of the nation had succumbed to the ravages of the captivity. Thus this verse uses the word in the same connection with *strong nation*. God promises to use the remnant as a nucleus of a nation with Zion (Jerusalem) as its headquarters.

Verse 8. *Tower* is also rendered "castle" and is here used to designate Jerusalem as a watchtower for the kingdom the Lord promised to make out of the "remnant." *First dominion* denotes that God had a dominion over the same people and at this same place long before. *Daughter of Zion* and *daughter of Jerusalem* are terms of endearment used frequently to represent God's people whose headquarters were in Jerusalem.

Verse 9. The verse is predicting a condition of sorrow to be felt by the nation in captivity, but with the understanding that the sorrow will be turned into joy by the deliverance from bondage. *Is there no king* is a prediction in question form that Israel will have the services of a king when the important day arrives.

Verse 10. The pains preceding childbirth are used to compare the distress of the captivity, but with the added thought that, as the pains are an indication of the approaching joy

of parenthood, so the captivity must precede the return and establishment of the "strong nation" predicted above.

Verse 11. In a group of verses predicting the restoration of Israel from bondage, it was fitting to insert a few lines regarding the opinions of the nation's enemies and such is the present verse. Many nations were ill disposed toward the people of God and took pleasure in their misfortunes, but they were going to learn that the Lord would come to the rescue of his own nation after the necessary chastisement was given.

Verse 12. *They know not the thoughts of the Lord.* The heathen nations misunderstood the Lord's dealings with his people and thought it was because He had turned against them. Because of this misunderstanding they regarded the victories which they had experienced over Israel as a sign of God's personal favor for them, whereas the Lord was using them as instruments for the necessary chastisement of a disobedient and ungrateful people. *Gather them as sheaves into the floor.* The floor means the place where grain was piled for threshing by beating the whole straw until the grain was separated from the chaff. Since only the good sheaves would be taken to such a place, the fact is used to represent the profitable use which God proposed to make of the nation that had gained so much at the expense of His people.

Verse 13. *Daughter of Zion* is an endearing term frequently used to designate the people of God whose headquarters were in Zion, a special spot in Jerusalem. God accomplished much of his plan against the unfaithful Jews through the agency of the heathen nations. Now the order is reversed and He will use the Jews as instruments in bringing the heathen nations into the service of their restoration to the home land; such is the meaning of the figures used in this verse. Since the figure of "sheaves" was used for the heathen in the preceding verse, it was consistent for the prophet to use *thresh* in this. In figurative language *horn* means power, and God here promises to give his people the power to contend with the heathen through their influence and superior wisdom, not necessarily through military action. Sometimes the ox was used in treading out the grain that had been piled upon the floor (Deuteronomy 25: 4; 1 Corinthians 9: 9; 1 Timothy 5: 18), so the promise of brassen hoofs

is appropriate in this connection. *Consecrate their gain unto the Lord* was to be fulfilled literally and morally. The heathen nation was constrained to contribute material help for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 1: 2-4; 6: 8-10), and also the same nation was brought to respect the God of Israel.

MICAH 5

Verse 1. This verse is a continuation of the thought started in the last verse of the preceding chapter, namely, the triumph of Israel over all her misfortunes. *Troops* literally means soldiers and indicates military conflicts, but it is used figuratively only, for Israel did not have to fight for the release from captivity. The pronouns should be carefully distinguished in order to avoid confusion. *Thyself* and *us* means Israel, while *he* and *they* are the enemies of God's people. *Laid siege* and *smite* refer to the siege and capture of the nation of Israel, which was to be reversed when the "return" was accomplished by the Lord's decree.

Verse 2. This verse is another of the numerous instances of the passing from some favorable event for ancient Israel to one of spiritual Israel. It is understandable why the inspired prophets would do so; while the spiritual advantages pertaining to the New Testament times are for both Jews and Gentiles, yet the system was given to the world through the Jews (Romans 3: 2). We know this verse is a prediction of the times of Christ, for the New Testament makes such an application of it (Matthew 2: 6). *Whose going forth . . . from everlasting.* Jesus was not personally connected with the affairs of the Old Testament, but He was recognized by his Father throughout all of the dealings intended for the benefit of mankind (Matthew 25: 34).

Verse 3. After a brief interruption to make a prediction concerning Christ, the prophet returns to the original subject of ancient Israel. *Give them up* means that God would suffer the foreign nation to have possession of His people. *Until . . . travail* . . . brought forth means when the captivity and its ravages will be ended and the nation of Israel will be given a "new birth of freedom" in its own native land. *Remnant shall return* refers to the surviving number stated in Ezra 2: 64.

Verse 4. The antecedent of *he* is the *remnant* of the preceding verse, mean-

ing the part of Israel that was to survive the captivity. One meaning of the original for *feed* is "to rule," which the remnant of Israel was to do after returning from the captivity. In the *strength of the Lord* denotes that the leaders in Israel were to rule the flock under and with the help of the Lord. They were to do this in the name of the Lord and because of the majesty of the God of Israel. *And they shall abide.* The Jewish nation was never again to be removed bodily from its home land as it had been in the captivity.

Verse 5. The specific exile generally meant in this book is that of the 10-tribe kingdom under the Assyrian Empire recorded in 2 Kings 17. Of course when the final "return" was accomplished (Ezra and Nehemiah), that included the 10 tribes also since the territory formerly controlled by the Assyrians was later taken over by the Babylonians. This verse is a figurative prediction that Israel would not be retained in exile by the Assyrians. *Seven shepherds* means that complete triumph would be enjoyed by Israel over all foes.

Verse 6. The predictions of this verse are virtually the same as those in the preceding one. *Nimrod* is mentioned in connection with *Assyria* because the founder of the Assyrian Empire *went forth* out of the land under the domain of Nimrod (Genesis 10: 9-11), and the two names are frequently linked together in prophecy and history.

Verse 7. Small things are sometimes very effective in their influence. The dew is light and small compared with the vegetable kingdom, yet it can enliven an entire field of dry and parched grass. Likewise, the influence of the remnant of Israel was to be great when it was settled down upon the (politically) dry land of Palestine.

Verse 8. This verse continues the thought of the preceding one but with a different figure. Now the remnant is likened to a lion among other beasts, with the added specific thought that Israel was to be like a lion in a flock of sheep. Not that the people of Israel were actually to exercise any violence against the surroundings, but the illustration is to show the power of God's nation.

Verse 9. The greatest enemies the people of Israel ever had were those who led them into idolatry. All of that was to be reversed by the rev-

olutionary effects of the captivity. This is the sense in which the enemies were to *be cut off*.

Verse 10. The general subject of the verses from 8 to the close of the chapter is the return from captivity, including the things that were to be accomplished by that sad experience. Chief among these was the cure of idolatry and the worldly interests the people of Israel had manifested. This verse cites one of those as being the horse and chariot. Such things should not have led them into wrong-doing, but it seems they did. The Lord knew the tendencies of them and had forbidden their use as early as in Deuteronomy 17: 16 which Solomon disobeyed after he became king (1 Kings 10: 28).

Verse 11. The mere fact of being a city was not objectionable to God, but some of them had been devoted to the service of idolatry and He proposed to deprive the land of such.

Verse 12. The belief in *witchcraft* and *soothsaying* was based largely on that of the supposed power of the invisible false gods of the heathen. As an item in removing the indications of such false service, the presence and use of such evil characters as witches and soothsayers had to be removed.

Verse 13. Idolaters were not content to offer service to the invisible gods, but made images of them out of metal and other materials. All of this was to be discontinued as a result of the captivity, and the reader should keep his memory informed about this important subject. See the historical note that records the fulfillment of the prediction at Isaiah 1: 25, volume 3 of this Commentary. A very foolish fact in connection with the worship of graven images is that they were the *work of their hands*. The idea of serving a thing as a god that was the work of that same servant is the height of folly and inconsistency.

Verse 14. Not all groves were objectionable to God, for he is the creator of all vegetable life. But the heathen nations turned many groves into places of idolatrous worship, and in some cases they even singled out individual trees and consecrated them to the worship of false gods. It was these abominable groves that were meant by the prediction of this verse and others on the same line of denunciation. The very presence of all such growing objects might remind the people of Israel of their former practices and rekindle in them a de-

sire to return to the abomination. As a precautionary movement the Lord decreed that such groves should be destroyed. The cities that had been used for the same purpose were to share in the same fate as these groves.

Verse 15. The people of God learned of the practice of idolatry through the heathen nations, hence He was incensed against them and determined to take vengeance on them.

MICAH 6

Verse 1. The writers of the Bible do not always adhere strictly to chronology in their treatment of subjects. The preceding chapter closes with a prediction of the return from the captivity; the present one comes back and resumes the complaints against Israel for her unfaithfulness to God. Israel is called upon to contend or defend herself if such a thing can be done truthfully. *Before the mountains.* If you have a just defence for your conduct let the whole world hear it.

Verse 2. But while the universe is to hear the defence of Israel (if she can produce any), the Lord will also make His complaints just as public. He has a *controversy* or accusation to make against the ungrateful nation.

Verse 3. The Lord challenges his people to point out any fact that they can justly call mistreatment from Him.

Verse 4. We know (and Israel knew) that no truthful complaint could be made against God in his treatment of his people. On the other hand, God had done much for Israel that should have induced her to cling faithfully to a life of true devotion. After being in bondage under the Egyptians for four centuries, the Lord brought them out a free people and started them on their way toward the land that had been promised to their fathers. And they were not left to wander in uncertainty as they journeyed toward their goal, but had the helpful presence of the three members of one family; Moses to give them law, Aaron to assist him in the addresses to kings, and Miriam to strengthen their morale with her songs and music.

Verse 5. God reminds his people of some things that were done in their defence against the enemies. After they had about completed their journey through the wilderness they were opposed by the Moabite king Balak. His iniquity was made worse in that he *consulted* with another wicked per-

son who was a degenerate prophet. The Bible always regards sins that are done as a conspiracy in a worse light than done independently of others, and this sort of conspiracy was committed between Balak and Balaam.

Verse 6. This and the following verse sound like a penitent and complete confession on the part of Israel for the sins of the nation. It doubtless might have been the sincere sentiments of some individuals in the nation, but it certainly was not an expression of the nation as a whole. I understand the passage to be the prophet's way of showing what should have been the attitude manifested, and my comments will be made on that basis. The nation as a whole had become so corrupt that it was inconsistent to come with the outward rituals of animal sacrifices. Such formalities had been ordained by the law of Moses and were right in themselves, but when they were performed in connection with so much abomination as these leaders practiced, the whole service was displeasing to God and he rejected it all. See the long note offered with the comments on Isaiah 1: 10 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 7. The suggested appropriate confession is continued through this verse, but with stronger terms as to the offerings made to God. The great number of animals would not avail anyway if the corruptions in their general lives were continued. Olive oil in small amounts was prescribed by the law and the Lord blessed the service when it was accompanied by a consistent life; but if not, even thousands of rivers of it would count for nothing. God never authorized human sacrifice although some heathen people practiced it. The performance furnished an appropriate illustration to be used as a most significant kind of emphasis. For a sinful Jew to sacrifice his child in atonement for his spiritual iniquity, would in reality be offering a part of his flesh to atone for the corruption of his soul.

Verse 8. As if the preceding two verses were the actual inquiry of a penitent man of Israel, the prophet makes an almost verbatim quotation from the writing of Moses in Deuteronomy 10: 12. The requirements were general in their statement, but had they been honestly respected it would have prevented the leaders from committing their cruelties against the poor, and then their sacrifices of animals would have been acceptable to God as

a discharge of a duty enjoined by the divine law.

Verse 9. The declaration in the preceding verse is by the voice of the Lord, and a wise man will recognize the name of Jehovah in it. *Hear ye the rod* means to take heed to the chastening rod of the Almighty, and realize that it was He who appointed it.

Verse 10. The question form of accusation is again used in this verse. *Treasures of wickedness* refers to the gain the leaders held which they obtained unjustly from the poor. *Scant measure* signifies one of the means by which the poor were defrauded out of their possessions. It was by tampering with the legal scales and weights to be used in business transactions. (See Amos 8: 5.)

Verse 11. *Shall I count them pure* is rendered "shall I be pure" in the margin, and the American Standard Version also gives us that rendering. Moffatt translates it "Can I condone wrong balances?" The thought is that if God were to tolerate or accept the dishonest dealings of the people, then He would not be pure from such evils either.

Verse 12. This verse is a direct charge against the rich men in the nation. That was not because they were rich but because they had obtained their wealth by violence against the poor and helpless. The people were not entirely free from guilt, for they did not make the protest they should but seemed to defend the unrighteous deeds of the very ones who were robbing them, even doing it with speeches of falsehood. The explanation of the strange attitude is indicated by Jeremiah 5: 31 and chapter 3: 5 of this book. In order to avoid any unpleasant predictions and other teaching from the prophets, the people were willing to be defrauded and would even lie about it. This was their "bribe" to induce the wicked leaders to keep their unpleasant and unwanted predictions to themselves.

Verse 13. The common people were destined also to feel the wrath of God because of their falsehood in behalf of the wicked leaders. They were to be made "sick" in that many disappointments would come to them in their experiences of life.

Verse 14. This verse is an indefinite list of the reverses that were to be inflicted upon the people even while they were occupying their own land.

These details could have occurred in so many forms that I do not have any specific history upon it.

Verse 15. Regardless of any disappointments that might come upon them in a general way as indicated in the preceding verse, we are sure that the present one was fulfilled literally when the nation was taken into exile and the foreign people reaped the benefit of the labors of their captives.

Verse 16. *Statutes of Omri*. He was not the only wicked king in Israel and I know of no special reason for citing him in this connection. It might be suggested, however, that he was the one who founded the city of Samaria as the final and permanent capital of the 10-tribe kingdom (1 Kings 16: 16), and a reference to that city in connection with the national policy was afterward a suggestion of evil. As a punishment for the keeping of the wicked statutes of Omri which he had adopted from Ahab, another wicked king, the Lord threatened to overthrow his people with desolation. That fact would be pleasing in the eyes of the heathen and cause them to hiss and reproach God's people.

MICAH 7

Verse 1. The prophet uses the first person in describing the undone condition of the nation, not that he is personally involved in the misdeeds so generally being committed. He describes the situation by likening the nation to a vineyard from which the main crop has been gathered. In such a stage one would not even find a single whole bunch of grapes that had matured, much less a piece of fruit among the *firstripe*.

Verse 2. Dropping the figures, the prophet uses literal language and explains that there is scarcely a good man. Most of them have taken to murder and treachery and to the defrauding of the righteous out of their rightful possessions.

Verse 3. The main subject of this verse is conspiracy to do wrong, which we have learned is especially displeasing to God. There were three classes who formed the conspiracy; the *prince*, the *judge*, and the *great* or "older." The thing which the three conspirators wished to obtain was a *reward* which is used in the sense of bribe. *Wrap* is from ARATH, and Strong's definition is, "A primitive root; to interlace, i.e. (figuratively) to pervert."

The first part of the definition is especially applicable in this place, because to conspire together is the same as being interlaced in a transaction.

Verse 4. A brier and a thorn are very undesirable objects, and the prophet uses them to illustrate the best that Israel as a whole could produce. *Day of thy watchmen* means the day that had been seen coming by the watchmen on the walls of the cities. It was the duty of a watchman to be on the alert and to warn his fellow citizens when he saw an enemy approaching. Of course only an inspired watchman could see the enemy in the present case, which was the army of the Assyrian Empire, and a true prophet constituted such a watchman. (See Ezekiel 3: 17.) *Visitation* means the arrival and application of the perplexing chastisement of siege and capture.

Verse 5. This verse certainly paints a dark picture of society, for the advice given seems to be a contradiction of all the well established rules of friendship. It is a clear example of the incompleteness of many passages in the Bible if we stop with any particular verse, for such divisions are the arbitrary work of man and are done for convenience, and often cause a thought to be divided in the wrong place. We should always be watchful for this condition and not form a conclusion until we know we have considered all that is being offered on the subject.

Verse 6. The apparent difficulty in the preceding verse is accounted for in this. When people are normal in their attitude toward others such advice as the foregoing is uncalled for. But all the usual influences between the various relations of members of families had become so corrupted that nobody could be trusted. Jesus predicted a similar condition would come after He had done his work on the earth (Matthew 10: 34-36). In his case the situation was to be caused by the teaching which was to be delivered to mankind, because many would reject it and hence would become enemies of those who accepted it. Doubtless some such motives figured in the case as Micah saw it.

Verse 7. A companion verse for this one is Psalms 27: 10 which I shall quote in its entirety: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Micah advised his people to be distrustful of even

their nearest relatives, hence it was appropriate for him to say, *Therefore I will look unto the Lord*. This would be a good plan for general use at all times. Our flesh and blood relatives cannot be relied upon as infallible supports, especially when the matters of the soul are at stake.

Verse 8. God has frequently used the heathen nations to chastise His wayward people, but never would tolerate their selfish motive in the performance of it. Such is the thought in this verse, and the enemy is given to understand that the depression of Israel was not to be permanent. The people of God cannot fall so low but that He can raise them up again and show the divine love for the nation.

Verse 9. This verse represents the attitude that the people of Israel should show with reference to the Lord's punishment of them. They should be willing to *bear the indignation* because it is just and proper since they *have sinned against Him*. When the proper time comes God will *plead their cause* and *execute judgment* against the enemies who have been instruments in the Lord's hands in administering chastisement upon the disobedient nation. When that time arrives the people of Israel will realize that all of the Lord's dealings have been in righteousness.

Verse 10. Not only would Israel see the justice in the punishment she had suffered, but the nation that had been used as the instrument of God for such a purpose will be brought to *see it, and shame shall cover her which said, Where is the Lord thy God?* The fulfillment of this prediction may be seen in Daniel 5.

Verse 11. This is a prediction of the restoration of Israel to her own land and to the rebuilding of her city. The fulfillment of this is recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

Verse 12. The general return of God's people from all places of exile is predicted in this verse. Assyria is named because the first deportation out of Palestine was to be at the hand of that people, but before the final return to the home land they will have been taken over by another great empire, the Babylonians. *The river* refers to the Euphrates River which was the easternmost boundary of the territory promised to Abraham (Genesis 15: 18).

Verse 13. But before the happy event

can happen, the land must go through the experience of desolation. This is to be charged up against *them that dwell therein* (the people of Israel) because of *the fruit of their doings*. The exile or captivity of both kingdoms of the Jews was to be a chastisement upon them for their unfaithfulness to God regarding the law that had been enjoined upon them at Mt. Sinai.

Verse 14. *Feed* (or rule or guide) *thy people* is Micah's way of predicting that God would again care for His people after they have gone through their desolation period.

Verse 15. The reference to the day of Egypt is for comparison. Israel was brought out of bondage in that country, and she will also be released from Babylonian captivity.

Verse 16. In view of the comparatively small number in Israel at the time of the release, it will be a surprise to see their accomplishments. *Lay their hand upon their mouth* indicates that the circumstance will be so marvelous in the eyes of the heathen that they will not be able to say anything.

Verse 17. *Lick the dust* is a figurative prediction of the humiliation of the heathen nations when they see the triumph of Israel. *Be afraid of the Lord our God* means they will be stunned with awe and forced to respect the might of the God of Israel.

Verse 18. The most wonderful feature of God's treatment of his unfaithful people is his willingness to forgive them. Their many abominations would seem to justify their utter extinction, yet His great love preserved them and restored them again to their home land after the necessary punishment had been administered.

Verse 19. *Subdue our iniquities* has special reference to the complete cure of idolatry that the captivity effected upon Israel. See the historical note on this subject with the comments on Isaiah 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 20. *Perform the truth* means that God will prove the truth of all His promises to Jacob or Israel, which had first been made to Abraham the founder of the race.

NAHUM I

Verse 1. Nahum was one of the minor prophets who wrote about 6 or 7 centuries before Christ. *Burden* is

from an original that means "an utterance," and is used here to mean that the prophet has something to say about Nineveh. That was the capital of the Assyrian Empire that was still in power as Nahum wrote. But the Lord gave him a vision of the fate of that nation and he wrote about it in his book. Assyria was the empire that had carried the people of the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel off into exile. It was God's decree that such an event should take place, yet He was incensed at the personal satisfaction that heathen nation got out of Israel's downfall, and of the unnecessary cruelty that was imposed in connection with the case. As a consequence, it was decreed that Assyria in turn should be made to suffer some reverses. The nation finally fell before the Babylonian power.

Verse 2. Jealousy is what causes a person to cling to that which he possesses and to resent any attempt of another to take it from him. Assyria had taken possession of a portion of God's people. He was determined to take vengeance because of it. *Reserveth* is defined "to cherish" in the lexicon, and the clause means that God holds a store of wrath for his enemies.

Verse 3. *Slow to anger*. This phrase is in keeping with the last sentence of the preceding verse. If God reserves wrath for certain characters, then He can take as much time as his wisdom suggests in executing it upon His wayward people. But he will not entirely overlook even their wrongdoing, which is the meaning of the words *not at all acquit the wicked*. That is why He suffered the Assyrians to take the people of Israel into exile. *Hath his way* means that God does as he wills with all the elements of the universe. If He wishes to use these agencies to carry out some of the decrees of chastisement upon a nation it will be done.

Verse 4. This is further specification of the power of God over the parts of the universe, and it denotes that if He wills to control them as agencies against men and nations it will be accomplished. *Bashan* was in a heathen territory and *Carmel* with *Lebanon* was in the possession of Israel. However, wherever the place might be that incurs the divine wrath, it will have to suffer whatever form of chastisement that He deems proper.

Verse 5. All of these statements are made as a description of the power of