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Resource Guide

A Reading Resource on Micah for Ministers and Teachers

JOHN T. WILLIS

Many scholarly books and articles on Micah have been published since 1980. This summary of selected works attempts to highlight significant studies in English. Helpful resources may be arranged in four categories.

COMMENTARIES

Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah* (The Anchor Bible 24E; New York: Doubleday, 2000) is the most thorough commentary thus far (637 pages with 66 pages of bibliography). The approach is vast and multifarious. Andersen and Freedman divide this work into three sections: chapters 1–3, 4–5, 6–7. In each case, they treat each section and verse in great detail. This volume includes chronological charts, maps, an introduction to the whole book, tables of various types throughout and occasional excursuses.

Daniel J. Simundson is the contributor to “The Book of Micah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in the *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 531–89. This format is useful for ministers and teachers. After an introduction, each section appears in two parts: commentary and reflections. Many practical religious ideas flow from this material.

Ralph L. Smith is the commentator on “Micah” in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 32 (Micah–Malachi; Waco: Word, 1984), 1–60. After an introduction, each section contains bibliography, translation, notes, form/structure/setting and an explanation or comment. This work discusses the meaning and application of the text.

STUDIES ON DIFFICULT TEXTS

It is well known that the book of Micah offers exceptionally difficult passages: 1.10–15; 2.6–11; 4.14–5.5 [English 5.1–6]; 6.6–8, 9–15; and 7.7[8]–20.

The little volume by Anthony J. Petrotta, *Lexis Ludens: Wordplay and the Book of Micah* (American University Studies; Series VII, Theology and Religion 105; New York: Lang, 1991) presents an extensive treatment of Micah 1.10–15, with the emphasis on word plays in this interesting passage.

W. J. Wessels, “Conflicting Powers: Reflections from the Book of Micah,” *Old Testament Essays*, 10 (1997): 528–44 addresses the use of power by people in leadership positions against helpless people reflected in Micah 2–3, with relevant religious concepts for contemporary society.

Randall J. Pannell, “The Politics of the Messiah: A New Reading of Micah 4:14–5:5,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 15 (1988): 131–43 reasons that this passage demonstrates a conflict between two philosophies of leadership: using violence against opponents in contrast to championing peace in dealing with opponents.

Ronald T. Hyman, “Questions and Responses in Micah 6:6–8,” *The Jewish Biblical Quarterly*, 33 (2005): 157–65 offers suggestions as to speakers in the dialogue in this text and the interpretation of verse 8.

Marvin L. Chaney, “Micah—Models Matter: Political Economy and Micah 6:9–15,” in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 145–60 deals with the textual and

philological problems of this pericope, and discusses the political economies of North Israel and Judah in the eighth century B.C.E.

W. J. Wessels, "Micah 7:8–20: An apt conclusion to the Book of Micah," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 24 (2003): 249–59 argues that this pericope is a well-rounded conclusion of the whole book of Micah, coming full circle from Micah 1 with an emphasis on Yahweh's dealing with the peoples on earth.

RELIGIOUS THEMES

Four major religious themes stand out in the book of Micah.

1. Pervverted religious practices (Mic 1.5–7; 5.11–13 [English 12–14]; 6.6–7) and deplorable inhumane injustices (Mic 2.1–11; 3.1–4, 9–12; 6.9–16; 7.1–6) define the sinful fabric of the people of God. Several important studies on these matters include: Bruce C. Birth, *Let Justice Roll Down. The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991). Moshe Weinfeld, "Justice and Righteousness—*mishpatim wet sadekah*—The Expression and Its Meaning," in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, eds. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (JSOTSup 137; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 228–46. W. J. Wessels, "Wisdom in the Gate: Micah Takes the Rostrum," *Old Testament Essays*, 10 (1997): 125–35.
2. Yahweh will punish his sinful people for their sins (Mic 1.2–16; 2.3–5; 3.6–7, 12; 6.1–2, 16), but he will deliver his penitent remnant from destruction and promise his faithful people a glorious future (Mic 2.12–13; 4.6–8, 9–10; 7.18–20). Rick R. Marrs, "'Back to the Future': Zion in the Book of Micah," *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts*, eds. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn J. Roberts (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 77–96, and Marvin A. Sweeney, "Portrayal of YHWH's Deliverance in Micah 2:12–13 Reconsidered," in *God's Word for Our World I: Theological and Cultural Studies in Honor of Simon John De Vries*, eds. J. Harold Ellens, et al. (JSOTSup 388; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 315–26 offer helpful significant contributions on the issue of doom and hope in tension. Also, in the Streams of Mercy study series published by Leafwood Publishers (Abilene, Texas) is *Isaiah 1–12 & Micah, A Prophetic Call to Justice* by Stuart Love.
3. The theme of Yahweh's relationship to his people as the metaphor of shepherd/sheep permeates the book of Micah (2.12–13; 4.6–8; 4.14–5.5 [English 5.1–6]; 7.14–15). The broad study by Jack W. Vancil, "Sheep, Shepherd," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1187–90, greatly enriches the importance and applications of this metaphor throughout biblical scripture.
4. Yahweh uses the nations to carry out his purposes in various ways: to punish his sinful people (Mic 1.2–7; 4.9–10), or to punish other nations who threaten his people (Mic 4.11–13; 5.14 [English 5.15]; 7.14–17), or to bring the nations to join his people in unity and worship (Mic 4.1–5). Essays by Marvin A. Sweeney, "Micah's Debate with Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 93 (2001): 111–24, and J. J. M. Roberts, "The of End of War in the Zion Tradition: The Imperialistic Background of an Old Testament Vision of World Wide Peace," *Horizon in Biblical Theology* 26/1 (2004): 2–23, contain suggestive ideas on this theological theme.

MICAH IN THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

Ministers and teachers must not overlook recent important considerations of the function and role of the book of Micah within its larger place in the Book of the Twelve from Hosea to Malachi. The reader should not miss the rich volume by various authors on important themes in the Book of the Twelve edited by Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Scharf, *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 325; New York: de Gruyter, 2003).

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