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And What Does the Lord Require?

A Reading from the Prophet Micah

LEE MAGNESS

This dramatic reading, drawn from the book of the Micah, features paraphrased words read by two voices—that of the prophet (Micah) and that of the Lord God (Lord). The words have been slightly modified to enhance the oral experience of readers and listeners.

The word of the Lord

Micah My name is Micah,
 I speak the word of the Lord.
 I speak the word of the Lord in the power of the Lord.
 I speak the word of the Lord in the spirit of the Lord,
 with the justice of the Lord, in the might of the Lord.
 I speak to the people of the Lord,
 I name the sins of the people of the Lord. (1.1, 3.8)

The Lord bears witness against you

Micah I say, Listen, O earth, listen, all you peoples of the earth,
 listen to the Lord.
 The Lord bears witness against you,
 the Lord testifies from his holy temple, saying,
Lord I, the Lord, am coming,
 I tread down the mountaintops.
 I melt the mountains like wax in a fire,
 I split the valleys like waters poured down a ravine.
 Why? Because of the sins of my people. (1.2–5)

Is not the Lord in our midst?

Micah And what are the sins of the people of the Lord?
 All night they mull over their mischief,
 at the dawn they do it.
 They long for land and foreclose on the fields of others,
 they oppress the poor
 and take away houses and inheritance. (2.1–2)
 They tell preachers not to preach truth,
 what they want to hear is wind and wine,
 deceit and drink is what they desire. (2.11)

Lord The rulers of my people reject justice,
 to them good is evil and evil is good.
 They skin their subjects, break their bones,
 chop up my chosen like meat for their meals. (3.1–3)

- Micah The rulers of God's people reject justice,
to them crooked is straight and straight is crooked.
They build their buildings on a foundation of blood,
and sell their sentences to the highest bidder.
Priests pray, prophets proclaim, but only for a price.
"Is not the Lord in our midst?" they say,
"Nothing harmful will happen to us." (3.9–11)
- Lord The rich do violence to my people with their riches,
their tongues tell lies.
The wealthy treasure up wickedness in their treasuries.
They sell a pint for a quart's worth,
their scales are skewed, their weights are rigged. (6.10–12)
- Micah These are the sins of the people of the Lord.

The Lord has an indictment against his people

- Micah How will God deal with his disobedient people?
- Lord I demand a defense,
I call on my people to plead their case.
I call the earth as witness, the mountains and the deeps.
- Micah The Lord has an indictment against his people,
He will wrangle with his rebellious people, saying,
- Lord What have I done to you, O my people?
How have I wronged you?
I have always rescued you and redeemed you,
so that you may know my saving acts. (6.1–5)
- Now you will eat but never feel full, hunger will haunt you.
You will save but not preserve,
and what you preserve I will pierce with the sword.
You will sow seeds but not reap a harvest,
crush the olives but never use the anointing oil,
tread out the grapes but never drink the wine. (6.14–15)
- I will make your home a heap, a heap of ruins,
your city will be like the countryside, plowed but fallow,
I will strew its stones across the valley and lay bare its foundations.
I will crumble your carved images and topple your idols,
saplings will sprout where priests once made their sacrifices. (1.6–8, 3.12)
- Disaster is coming,
like a conqueror's knobbed boot on your neck,
you will stumble, no longer propped up by your pride. (2.3)

Micah The sun will set on the seers,
 the day will turn dark for the diviners.
 Only shame will shine upon the prophets,
 their hands cover their lips, for to them God is silent. (3.6–7)
 The people will writhe like a woman in labor,
 they will flee the city, no longer safe, camping in the country,
 cowering lest they be captured. (4.10)

Lord I will wail at their walls, lament long and loud,
 I will mourn like a mother at the death of her daughter,
 like a slave stripped naked, seized and sent off.
 Howling like the jackals, owling like ostriches,
 I am inconsolable at their incurable wounds. (1.9)

Micah This is how God will deal with his disobedient people.

The Lord will set them together like sheep in a fold

Micah What will God do with his punished people?

Lord I will surely assemble my people,
 gather the remnant of the faithful,
 set them together like sheep in a fold,
 like a flock in its pasture,

Micah The Lord will lead them. (2.12–13)

It shall come to pass in the latter days that
 the mountain of the Lord's temple will tower above the mountains,
 lifted high up above the hills.
 People will flow to the foot of the mountain like a great river,
 nations will come to it and say,
 Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
 so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths.
 He will bring justice to the peoples and peace to the nations.
 They will beat their swords into plowshares,
 and their spears into pruning hooks.
 Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
 nor shall they learn war anymore. (4.1–3)

Lord I will gather the lame and the exiled and the afflicted,
 I will make them a remnant, make strong those who were weak.

Micah And the Lord will reign over them.
 The Lord will rescue his people
 and redeem them from his enemies. (4.6–7,10b)

From Bethlehem, too small to be counted among the clans,
 the Lord will raise up a ruler over his people.
 His coming has been prophesied of old.
 He will stand in the midst of his people
 and shepherd his flock in the strength and majesty of the Lord.
 His flock will dwell secure and he will be great among all people
 and he will be their peace. (5.2–5)
 This is what the Lord will do with his punished people.

And what does the Lord require?

Micah Now how should we respond?
 As for me, I will look to the Lord,
 I will wait for the God of my salvation.
 God will hear my cry.
 When I fall down, God will lift me up,
 when I sink in darkness, the Lord will be my light. (7.7–8)

With what shall I come before the Lord?
 How shall I bow myself before God on high?
 Will the Lord be pleased with a thousand sacrifices,
 with ten thousand offerings?
 Does God demand my child, my most precious possession?
 God has already told us what is good,
 he has revealed what he requires:

Lord Do justice, show mercy, walk humbly with me your God. (6.6–8)

Micah Who is a God like our God,
 pardoning sin, passing over the sins of his people?
 God does not retain his wrath, he delights in loving the disobedient.
 God lavishes his compassion on us,
 He treads down our transgressions underfoot, saying,

Lord I will cast all your sins into the depths of the sea. (7.18–19)

Micah So we will walk in the name of the Lord,
 in the name of the Lord our God,
 and so we will walk forever and ever. (4.5b)

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