



Micah - Chapter Seven

IV Micah 6:1-7:20 - The Lord's Indictment and Restoration of His People (continues/concludes)

IV.b Micah 6:9-7:7 - Crisis in Relationship (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Seven

The nation has become corrupt bringing about social disorder, injustice and want. Yet there remains hope because of God. On those who repent God will have mercy. Micah foresees a time when those who have been taken off into exile will be brought back by God and come under his sovereign care once more. The prophecy concludes with a summary of God's enduring character and understanding that he will be faithful to his covenant promises.

IV.b.ii Micah 7:1-7 - The Total Corruption of the People

In light of the curses in Micah 6:13-15, the prophet laments the loss of godliness (vv.1-4) and the grave disloyalty even among the closest of family members (vv.5-6). The unit concludes with a declaration of hope in God's salvation (v.7).

- ¹ Woe is me! For I have become like one who,
after the summer fruit has been gathered,
after the vintage has been gleaned,
finds no cluster to eat;
there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger.
- ² The faithful have disappeared from the land,
and there is no one left who is upright;
they all lie in wait for blood,
and they hunt each other with nets.

Micah 7:1-2

Woe is me! On behalf of the sinful nation, the prophet Micah now confesses the sin of God's people. First, he recognises that their sin has left them impoverished, i.e. **there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger**. Then he describes some of their specific sins and their general character, revealing their deeply ingrained sin against others, that is, **they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt each other with nets**.

Summer fruit has been gathered, grapes or the vintage have been gleaned, and the faithful have disappeared. In gleaning the fields of the summer harvest, one expects to find leftovers: *<<When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God>>* (Leviticus 19:9-10), *<<And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favour.' She said to her, 'Go, my daughter'>>* (Ruth 2:2), and: *<<If thieves came to you, if plunderers by night – how you have been destroyed! – would they not steal only what they wanted? If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings?>>* (Obadiah 5). Micah's search yields no remainder, i.e. no godly remnant, only sorrow and futility: *<<Gleanings will be left in it, as when an olive tree is beaten – two or three berries in the top of the highest bough, four or five on the branches of a fruit tree, says the Lord God of Israel>>* (Isaiah 17:6), and: *<<You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be a gnawing hunger within you; you shall put away, but not save, and what you save, I will hand over to the sword. You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine>>* (Micah 6:14-15).

³ Their hands are skilled to do evil;
the official and the judge ask for a bribe,
and the powerful dictate what they desire;
thus they pervert justice.

Micah 7:3

That **the official and the judge ask for a bribe** and the **dictates of the powerful** highlight the unrelenting demands of corrupt leadership: *<<For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble>>* (Proverbs 4:16).

⁴ The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright of them a thorn hedge.
The day of their sentinels, of their punishment, has come;
now their confusion is at hand.

Micah 7:4

The day of their sentinels. When the sinner is immersed in sin and is feeling successful, they feel like there is no price to pay for their sin. Nevertheless, there will come the day of their sentinels, of their punishment. The confident self-confidence of the sinner will be turned to perplexity. The role of the watchman or lookout on the city wall was to warn of approaching danger. In similar fashion, the role of the prophet was to announce the approaching judgement of God: <<*So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me*>> (Ezekiel 33:7), and: <<*The prophet is a sentinel for my God over Ephraim, yet a Fowler's snare is on all his ways, and hostility in the house of his God*>> (Hosea 9:8).

Their punishment, their confusion. The referents may be the notables of v.3. The confusion is illuminated by the examples that follow in vv.5-6.

- ⁵ Put no trust in a friend,
have no confidence in a loved one;
guard the doors of your mouth
from her who lies in your embrace;
- ⁶ for the son treats the father with contempt,
the daughter rises up against her mother,
the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
your enemies are members of your own household.

Micah 7:5-6

Because of their rampant sin and selfishness, personal relationships have crumbled among the people of God. One cannot even trust in a friend or put confidence in a close companion, and even blood relatives are at war with each other: <<*Beware of your neighbours, and put no trust in any of your kin; for all your kin are supplanters, and every neighbour goes around like a slanderer*>> (Jeremiah 9:4).

Have no confidence in a loved one, for the son treats the father with contempt. Both societal and familial relationships have disintegrated in a city under siege.

Jesus speaks of similar disruption to the social order because of divided opinion over who he is: <<*For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household*>> (Matthew 10:35-36).

7 But as for me, I will look to the Lord,
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
my God will hear me.

Micah 7:7

But as for me contrasts Micah with the unfaithful leaders of vv.3-4, while I will look identifies Micah with the sentinels of v.4. Micah was confident in his calling: <<*But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin*>> (Micah 3:8); perhaps this was in the same way as Paul saw himself: <<*My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me*>> (1 Corinthians 4:4 NIV). Look and sentinels are forms of the same Hebrew verb.

I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. This unit, which began with a cry of mourning (vv.1-2), ends with the quiet confidence that God will act. In this sin-immersed culture, there are few people to give confidence or compassion - so one can only look to the Lord. This is a bad thing, because people should be honourable and trustworthy enough so that others can find confidence and compassion from them. Nevertheless, God can use this as a good thing, because it forces people to put their trust in the only one who can never let them down - the God of my salvation: <<*He said: The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my saviour; you save me from violence*>> (2 Samuel 22:2-3).

IV.c Micah 7:8-10 - Penitence and Trust in God

Zion's humiliation is affirmed to be both God's just judgement and his gracious liberation as the roles with the enemy are reversed. The speakers are not identified but are probably personified cities.

8 Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the Lord will be a light to me.

Micah 7:8

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Micah speaks for those brought low by personal sin and the sin of the community. In their humble place, he warns their enemies not to rejoice over their condition because when I fall, I shall rise and when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. In effect Micah is saying, "You see me brought low now, but you should know that it is not for long. God will lift me up."

When I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. The city is likened to a prisoner of war, near death and in a dungeon of gloom, yet the Lord provides the sure hope of freedom: <<*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life'>> (John 8:12).*

⁹ I must bear the indignation of the Lord,
because I have sinned against him,
until he takes my side
and executes judgement for me.
He will bring me out to the light;
I shall see his vindication.

Micah 7:9

The indignation of the Lord, until he takes my side. Speaking for the sinful people, Micah manfully takes responsibility for their sin. The idea is, "I know that I have sinned, and so I will accept my correction." Micah knows that God's people will stay in their low place until he takes my side and executes judgement for me. They are totally abandoned unto God's care. The city, i.e. its people, is called to recognise that it suffers the Lord's judgement because of its sin. However, they now see the Lord as their advocate in a court case; refer to the comment made on Micah 6:1-2.

He will bring me out to the light; I shall see his vindication. At the same time, there is complete confidence in the salvation of God and their vindication before their enemies. This shows that God's people know their sinful state, but they also know the greatness of God's redemption: <<*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us*>> (Ephesians 1:7-8a). The rightness and justice of the Lord's action are seen in the freeing of the prisoner and the shaming of the enemy. Both sides will see it.

¹⁰ Then my enemy will see,
and shame will cover her who said to me,
'Where is the Lord your God?'
My eyes will see her downfall;
now she will be trodden down
like the mire of the streets.

Micah 7:10

Shame will cover her; my eyes will see her downfall. A reversal of roles takes place: those nations that earlier desired to ‘see’ Zion defiled: <<*But you should not have gloated over your brother on the day of his misfortune; you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah on the day of their ruin; you should not have boasted on the day of distress*>> (Obadiah 12), and: <<*Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, ‘Let her be profaned, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion’*>> (Micah 4:11), are now open to public scorn.

Where is the Lord your God? This taunting question disputes not God’s existence but his ability to save his people from distress: <<*Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, “Where is their God?”*’>> (Joel 2:17).

IV.d Micah 7:11-17 - A Prophecy of Restoration

This section begins with a promise of restoration for the people of Israel, for God will bring them back for their places of exile (vv.11-13). It then continues with a prayer that, in shepherding his flock, the Lord will silence the nations (vv.14-17).

- ¹¹ A day for the building of your walls!
In that day the boundary shall be far extended.
- ¹² In that day they will come to you
from Assyria to Egypt,
and from Egypt to the River,
from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.

Micah 7:11-12

Three activities of that future day bind these verses together:

1. Building walls. The enemy ‘now trampled’ (v.10) contrasts with the rising security (v.8) of Zion’s walls.
2. The boundary shall be far extended. Beyond security, there is a promise of territorial expansion: <<*I will set your borders from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out before you*>> (Exodus 23:31), <<*But you have increased the nation, O Lord, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land*>> (Isaiah 26:15), and: <<*Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will*

spread out to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will settle the desolate towns>> (Isaiah 54:2-3).

3. They will come refers to the gathered remnant: <<*On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth>> (Isaiah 11:11-12), and: <<Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries they shall remember me, and they shall rear their children and return. I will bring them home from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria; I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon, until there is no room for them>> (Zechariah 10:9-10); and the nations: <<In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem>> (Micah 4:1-2), and: <<Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year by year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths>> (Zechariah 14:16).*

Assyria, Egypt, River, sea, and mountain. The Diaspora will be brought back from all the far flung places they were sent to in exile. These geographical entities also express the extensive scope of salvation going out to all the Gentiles.

- ¹³ But the earth will be desolate
because of its inhabitants,
for the fruit of their doings.

Micah 7:13

But the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants. When God gathers Israel for restoration, they will come back to a desolate land, ruined because of the judgement of God on the sin of his people, i.e. for the fruit of their doings: <<*Tell the innocent how fortunate they are, for they shall eat the fruit of their labours. Woe to the guilty! How unfortunate they are, for what their hands have done shall be done to them>> (Isaiah 3:10-11). In this summary expression of the eschatological picture, safety is found only within Jerusalem's wide and secure borders. Outside there is only a wasteland.*

- ¹⁴ Shepherd your people with your staff,
the flock that belongs to you,

which lives alone in a forest
in the midst of a garden land;
let them feed in Bashan and Gilead
as in the days of old.

Micah 7:14

Shepherd your people, the flock that belongs to you is a request that Israel's sole possessor would feed and protect the nation: <<*the Lord's own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share*>> (Deuteronomy 32:9), <<*O save your people, and bless your heritage; be their shepherd, and carry them for ever*>> (Psalm 28:9), and: <<*He chose his servant David, and took him from the sheepfolds; from tending the nursing ewes he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel, his inheritance*>> (Psalm 78:70-71).

Bashan and Gilead. These fertile areas east of the Jordan were among the first lands that Israel gained; refer to Joshua 13:19-31. They were also the first lands to be lost: <<*In those days the Lord began to trim off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel: from the Jordan eastwards, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the Wadi Arnon, that is, Gilead and Bashan*>> (2 Kings 10:32-33), and: <<*I will restore Israel to its pasture, and it shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead its hunger shall be satisfied*>> (Jeremiah 50:19).

As in the days of old. There was a time when God's people enjoyed this kind of close relationship with him. Now, that previous relationship will be restored, and he will show them wonders and marvellous things (v.15). The wonders come out of the close relationship with the Shepherd: <<*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*>> (Psalm 23:1), and: <<*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me*>> (John 10:14).

¹⁵ As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt,
show us marvellous things.

Micah 7:15

This statement is the literary centre of vv.14-17. The Lord has acted in the past, and he will do so again.

When you came out. The people of God in all ages are included in the deliverance from Egypt: <<*Not with our ancestors did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today*>> (Deuteronomy 5:3).

Show us marvellous things. This term is associated with the Lord's acts before Pharaoh: <<*So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go*>> (Exodus 3:20). Jesus

performed many miracles to help people believe that he is God: <<*If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father*>> (John 10:37-38); not all of them were recorded though: <<*This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*>> (John 21:24-25).

- ¹⁶ The nations shall see and be ashamed
of all their might;
they shall lay their hands on their mouths;
their ears shall be deaf;
- ¹⁷ they shall lick dust like a snake,
like the crawling things of the earth;
they shall come trembling out of their fortresses;
they shall turn in dread to the Lord our God,
and they shall stand in fear of you.

Micah 7:16-17

The nations shall see and be ashamed. When Israel is restored to the land and enjoys a restored relationship with the Lord, then those who opposed God's people will see how wrong they were to fight against them. Sight and shame describe what the nations experience when they observe God's power (v.10).

The Lord our God. The shepherd of v.14 is now identified.

They shall stand in fear of you. The similar sound and spelling of graze, Hebrew *yir'u* (v.14), see, Hebrew *yir'u* (v.16), and fear, Hebrew *yire'u* (v.17), clarify the interaction of the Lord with Israel and the nations. God's people are fed, and the nations fear: <<*The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by*>> (Exodus 15:14-16). Seeing the greatness of God's restoration will make the nations respect the Lord in a way they did not before. They will see the power and love of God in action.

IV.e Micah 7:18-20 - God's Compassion and Steadfast Love

The final words of the prophecy focus on the Lord's faithfulness and compassion expressed in the restoration of the covenant relationship.

¹⁸ Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over the transgression
of the remnant of your possession?
He does not retain his anger for ever,
because he delights in showing clemency.

Micah 7:18

Who is a God like you? The question underscores the peerless nature of the God who defends and pardons his people: <<*Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders?*>> (Exodus 15:11), <<*O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your might; what god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours!*>> (Deuteronomy 3:24), <<*All my bones shall say, 'O Lord, who is like you? You deliver the weak from those too strong for them, the weak and needy from those who despoil them'*>> (Psalm 35:10), and: <<*Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord, a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all that are around him? O Lord God of hosts, who is as mighty as you, O Lord? Your faithfulness surrounds you*>> (Psalm 89:5-8). In light of the glorious restoration by the Lord of Israel Micah glorifies the God of such great forgiveness, i.e. pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession. Micah sees that God's forgiveness is so great, that it cannot even be compared to what often passes for forgiveness among men. This is a theme verse and appropriately ends the book. For it is a play on Micah's name. Micah means 'Who is like Yahweh?'

Because he delights in showing clemency. This provides the basis for why God forgives and relents of his anger. The divine and prophetic confrontation as a result of Israel's sin: <<*All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel*>> (Micah 1:5a) yields to the feeding and forgiving of his inheritance; refer also to Jeremiah 50:17-20.

¹⁹ He will again have compassion upon us;
he will tread our iniquities under foot.
You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea.

Micah 7:19

God's people once knew his compassion, but they resisted and rejected it. Now they can know it again, confident that he will again have compassion upon us. His compassion is shown in that the Lord will subdue the iniquities of his people. He loves them as sinners: <<*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us*>> (Romans 5:8), and: <<*We love because he first loved us*>> (1 John 4:19), but loves them too much to leave them there. His compassion saves them from their sin. His compassion is shown in that the Lord will cast all their sins in to the depths of the sea. God will not 'hold on' to that sin, but will forgive them instead: <<*Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit*>> (Psalm 32:1-2 NIV). This means there is no 'probation' with God's forgiveness. He does not forgive sins just to leave them around to hang over the heads of the forgiven. In his compassion, he does away with those sins, casting them to the depths of the sea, and then he puts a 'No Fishing' sign there! His compassion is shown in that the Lord will give truth to Jacob. God's people not only need his mercy, they need his truth and he is compassionate enough to give his truth as he gives mercy and pardon.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. As God cast Pharaoh's armies into the sea in Exodus 15:4, so he will deal decisively with the sins of his people: <<*No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more*>> (Jeremiah 31:34).

²⁰ You will show faithfulness to Jacob
and unswerving loyalty to Abraham,
as you have sworn to our ancestors
from the days of old.

Micah 7:20

Faithfulness, unswerving loyalty, and you have sworn. The book rightly concludes by summarising the foundational attributes and actions of the covenant-keeping Lord: <<*The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation'*>> (Exodus 34:6-7), <<*Because the Lord your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them*>> (Deuteronomy 4:31), and: <<*If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing*

them, the Lord your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors>> (Deuteronomy 7:12).

As you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old. God's character, his unswerving loyalty, moves him to keep his word, i.e. his faithfulness, and thus the old promises to the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob still stand.

In concluding his prophecy, Micah sees God's future work as a continuation of his past work to the patriarchs of Israel. Micah knew that the same love, compassion, and mercy he showed to their forefathers were available to them - but only if they received it in faith.