

## *Introducing the Old Testament*

### Worksheet for Week 7

#### Micah

Our study topic for this week is the book of Micah. Micah is one of the minor prophets (remember that “minor” refers only to the length of the book, not its importance!). I chose the book of Micah because it is short and because it encapsulates the a key thrust of the Old Testament prophets: because of Israel’s sins, Israel will be punished and carried into exile, after which God will bring them back into a time of perpetual peace.

I suggest you begin by first reading the chapter on the prophets in Philip Yancey’s book – it is excellent! Then, read the introduction to Micah in your study bible and, if you have one, the entry on the book in your Bible dictionary. Then read through the book as suggested on this worksheet. As with the other Old Testament books, a freer translation, like the New Living Translation, may help you, but please be sure to read at least some of the poetry of the NRSV.

#### *Making Sense of Micah (and the prophets!)*

Martin Luther once wrote, “the prophets have a queer way of talking, like people who instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble from one thing to the next so that you cannot make head or tail of them or see what they are getting at.” (as quoted in Dillard & Longman<sup>1</sup>) Reading the prophets can be quite a challenge. Generally, the prophetic books are collections of “oracles,” which are individual prophetic messages. These oracles might be oracles of salvation or oracles of punishment or expressions of God’s sorrow and disappointment with this people. Your study bible should help you see the beginning and end of oracles in these books. By their nature, it can be hard to see structure in the prophets. The following outline of Micah from Dillard & Longman might help you.

Superscription (1:1) [These are the typical openings in prophetic books.]

First round of judgment and salvation

- God’s judgment of apostasy and social sin (1:2-3:12)
- God’s word of hope for Israel (4-5)

Second Round of Judgment and Salvation

- God’s dispute with Israel (6:1-8)
- God’s reproach for Israel’s social sin (6:9-16)
- The prophet laments Israel’s condition (7:1-7)
- Psalms of hope and praise (7:8-20)

#### *The Message of Micah*

Though he was from a small village far from the city, Micah brings to Jerusalem a message of God’s judgment on Israel for her sins and a message of great hope. Though Micah is clear in God’s denunciation of Israel and the consequences that would follow from Israel’s sin, Micah also paints a remarkable picture of God’s kingdom. As Yancey would say, Micah makes the *much later* arrival of God’s kingdom a *now* reality for Israel, reminding them of what God really wants from them: not their sacrifices, but for them to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with YHWH.

Note also the promises God makes in Micah 5:2-5a. Here, God promises Israel will he will raise up a new ruler who will rule over God’s new age. This ruler will come from Bethlehem, King David’s birthplace. Thus, this new ruler is to be a new David. In both Matthew’s and John’s gospels, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem is seen as a fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy, for the Messiah, the deliverer of Israel, was to have come from the House of David.

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<sup>1</sup> Dillard, Raymond B., & Longman, Tremper. *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994)

## Bible Readings for Week 7

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage.

<b>Day 1 Micah 1:1 – 3:12 Oracles of punishment</b>	<b>Day 2 Micah 4:1 - 5:15 Oracles of salvation</b>
<b>Day 3 Micah 6:1 – 7:6 Oracles of punishment; Pay special attention to 6:6-8!</b>	<b>Day 4 Micah 7:7 – 20 Oracles of salvation</b>
<b>Day 5 Zephania 3:14-20 An oracle of salvation</b>	<b>Weekly Prayer Concerns</b>