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SOME NOTES ON MICAH, CHAPTER I

by D. K. INNES

MR. INNES, a graduate of the Universities of Oxford and London and an alumnus of Clifton Theological College, is now Vicar of Westacre in Norfolk. He was a contributor to the "New Bible Dictionary". We are glad to welcome his first contribution to the QUARTERLY; perhaps he will go on to annotate the rest of the book of Micah as he has done the first chapter here.

V. 1. The word of Yahweh *came* to Micah, i.e. *hayah*, literally came into existence (cf. Gen. 1: 3, etc.). The word, a typical introduction to prophecy (Hos. 1: 1; Joel 1: 1; Jer. 1: 2, etc.), stresses the initiative of God. The prophet claims no credit. His part is only to "see" the word which Yahweh proclaims.

V. 2. Not only the earth which has been defiled with Israel's sin, but even pagan nations are capable of witnessing to the justice of Yahweh's judgment. *bakem* has been taken to mean "against you", but the context, which speaks of *Israel's sin*, not that of the nations, suggests "among you" as the better translation.

Calvin took *heikal qodsho* to refer to the earthly temple, the focus on earth of God's self-manifestation (Ps. 79: 1; 138: 2). But the apocalyptic scale of vv. 3-4 suggests God's heavenly dwelling-place (Hab. 2: 20; Ps. 11: 4).

V. 7b. In both lines of the half-verse it is difficult to tell whether the harlot's hire is literal or metaphorical (riches gained through apostasy). Since the pagan rites involved literal fornication, the literal and metaphorical merge into each other. The probable meaning is that the Israelites indulged in pagan practices to maintain their independence of Judah, and their riches would strengthen other nations with similar religious habits.

V. 9. Judah's spiritual sickness is incurable because she has hardened herself beyond repentance. It is usually assumed that it is the *judgment* which has reached Jerusalem—perhaps in the person of Sennacherib. But it may be the wounds—the spiritual corruption of the people of God. If so then the singular "wound" found in the versions seems to gain added support.

Vv. 10-16 speak of the shameful punishment which will overtake the people of God. 10-15 is a notoriously obscure section.

Some commentators¹ have looked for a single cause of several corruptions in the hypothesis of a damaged right-hand margin. But this leads to some fairly drastic emendation of the text, usually only on the basis of the hypothesis. The passage consists mainly of puns on the names of towns in the area between Jerusalem and the coast—the area through which the conqueror would come.

V. 10. Schwantes questions the genuineness of "Gath", because, unlike the other towns mentioned, it is not in the Judaeian Shephelah. He then goes on to read *begannoth Giloh al-taggilu* ("In the gardens of Giloh do not rejoice"). While the reading *taggilu* may claim the support of the Peshitta, the inclusion of Giloh is quite hypothetical. The saying in our text is found in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1: 20). It is quite intelligible here as a proverbial saying. Let not opportunity be given to Israel's enemies to blaspheme (cf. 2 Sam. 12: 14).

It has been suggested that *bako* is an abbreviation of *be'akko*. The ellision of the letter 'ayin is sometimes found (e.g. *Balah* for *Ba'alalah*, Josh. 19: 3; cf. 15: 29, *nishqah* for *nishqe'ah*; Amos 8: 8 *qere*, cf. *kethib*, *bi* for *be'i*, and possibly *lamo* for *le'ammo* in Ps. 28: 8). But *Acco* is said to have been north of Carmel, and there is no need to assume that every phrase contains a pun. This phrase is a continuation of the preceding proverb.

On *hithpallashti* (*qere hithpallashi*) Schwantes quotes S. G. Glanzman as saying that the identical phrase is found in the '*Anat Epic* (67, vi. 15)—'*pr pltt* meaning "the dust of wallowing". He takes *hithpallashti* as a noun with *t* preformative, to which the article has been prefixed by a redactor, the final *i* being *hireq compaginis*.

In v. 11a the inhabitants of Shaphir are sped on their way into exile. V. 11b is translated by the LXX *tas poleis autes ouk exelthe*, and it may be that the original text ran (with Schwantes) *me'irah lo iase'ah ioshebheth Saanan*, "the inhabitant of Saanan did not come out from her city". It is interesting that this rendering does not support the theory of a mutilated right-hand margin, for nothing is inserted at the beginning of the line. V. 11c can be given an intelligible sense as meaning that the neighbouring communities will be able to give no support, being themselves desolate.

V. 13. We have no record that Israelite idolatry took root first at Lachish. To take *hatta'th* as meaning "sin-offering" would seem

¹ Cf. Siegfried J. Schwantes, "Critical Notes on Micah 1: 10-16", *Vetus Testamentum* xiv (1964), pp. 454ff.

to import an idea foreign to Scripture, that human suffering atones for sin. To read *Be'er Sheba'* for *reshith* (Schwantes) is attractive, but pure conjecture. In the absence of a convincing explanation it is best to retain the existing text and confess ignorance of the historical setting. The words as they stand are a solemn warning to those who lead others into sin.

V. 15*b* probably contains a reminiscence of David's flight to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22: 1). The glory of Israel (perhaps meaning the nobility, as in Is. 5: 13) will again be hidden in obscurity.

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