

## MICAH from Interpreter's Bible Commentary 578??

Micah is an eighth-century Judean prophet, numbers sixth among the twelve minor prophets.

The promise of a time of peace when nations will beat their swords into plowshares (Mic 4:3), the prophecy about a new ruler to come from the town of Bethlehem (5:2), and the response to the question of what the Lord requires of them, signal Micah's importance.

The name Micah is a shorter version of Micaiah, which means who is like Yahweh? This is a very fitting name for this prophet. The promises at the end of the book (7:18-20) ask the question, who is a God like you?

Perhaps he was a younger contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. Unlike Jerusalem Isaiah, however, Micah was from Moresheth, a small village lying southwest of Judah of capital city.

Despite its paucity of explicit biographical information, the collection bearing Micah's name discloses something of the prophet's theology and religious fervor.

Scholars have attempted to identify the period of Micah's prophetic ministry more specifically. The consensus is that his earliest prophecies preceded the destruction of the city of Samaria and the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 (1:6-7)<sup>1</sup>. Some have suggested that he began to prophesy in the 730, though not earlier

The best guess for placing Micah historically is that his first oracle dates to just before the fall of Samaria (722 BCE) and most of his warnings about Jerusalem belong to the time of the invasion of Assyrian king Sennacherib (701 BCE; see Introduction).

The latter half of the eighth century BCE was a time of great transition. In the first half of that century, both Judah and Israel prospered because the great powers of the ancient Near East, preoccupied with other matters, did not torment them. That situation changed very rapidly after 746, however, when Tiglath-pileser III came to power in Assyria. A succession of short and unsuccessful kingships, foolhardy efforts at rebellion, and the resurgence of Assyrian power in the region led to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel and its capital city, Samaria, in 722 BCE. Judah avoided a similar fate but paid a high price for its subservience to Assyria's urged tributes, loss of complete independence, and corruption of its traditions by the incorporation of religious practices of the dominant foreign power. Into this time of great change, when the fortunes of God's people had already declined and promised to get even worse, Micah stepped forward to provide a theological interpretation of crucial events facing the nation and its people.

The situation of ordinary citizens was of great concern to Micah. He felt compassion for the poor and dispossessed, and held the leaders responsible for their suffering. We can learn something about the people in social and economic situation from Micah's condemnation of their rulers, merchants, and prophets. Similar words from Micah's contemporary, Isaiah, add to our picture of a society where the rich and powerful used their influence to exploit the vulnerable and to create even greater inequalities of wealth and influence (e.g., Isa 5:8-10; 10:1-2). The economic situation of the poor was further aggravated by programs of armament and fortification in efforts to hold off the threat from foreign empires (see 2 Chronicles 32). The tribute demanded by Assyria from its vassal states also added to the problem. The wealth needed to buy off Assyria had to come from someone, and the poor surely paid more than their share. Further, Jerusalem grew in population at about this time, probably as a result of a large influx of refugees after the fall of Samaria.

Micah provides insights into the nature of God and to the way humans relate to God and to each other. Some passages from Micah may strike us as answers to our deepest questions of meaning. Other texts disturb us and raise hard questions about what we are doing with our lives.

Micah presents a complex variety of ways in which *Yahweh relates to humanity*.

Chapter 6 begins with a covenant lawsuit, in which mountains and hills will serve as the jury that decides either for the Lord or for God's people in the controversy between them (6:1-2). God begins by reciting a short summary of the great acts that God performed on behalf of the people (6:3-5). In a style resembling the question-and-answer formula of an entrance liturgy, the people ask what Yahweh requires of them, and they are given an answer (6:6-8). God speaks again and recites once more a list of Israel's offenses (6:9-12) that cannot be tolerated.

*The voice of the LORD cries to the city  
Hear, O tribe and assembly of the city!  
Can I forget the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked,  
and the scant measure that is accursed?  
Can I tolerate wicked scales  
and a bag of dishonest weights?  
Your wealthy are full of violence;  
your inhabitants speak lies,  
with tongues of deceit in their mouths.  
Therefore I have begun to strike you down,  
making you desolate because of your sins.*

The Lord invites Israel to plead its case before the jury of mountains and hills. Yahweh's people wonder whether God is just when they are punished while other, more wicked nations continue to prosper. Maybe God (or the prophet or others) has heard such complaints about injustice (see Hab 1:12-17) and it is time, in response, again to make the case for why God is bringing punishment.

*This is a lawsuit against those who have broken the covenant. The form is borrowed from ancient Near Eastern treaties in which the dominant king recites the benefits he has bestowed on his vassals, and then proclaims blessings for obedience and penalties that will follow disobedience. The subject states pledge their allegiance, knowing full well the consequences of rebelling against their master. Israel has broken the covenant; God has not. If disasters are now the result of that disobedience, God cannot be declared unjust. The mountains and the hills will be the jury. Let them decide. They have been around a long time. They have seen all the evils that humans have done from the beginning of time. They were present when the covenant was made, and they witnessed the pledges that have now been broken (see Deut 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1; Ps 50:4; Isa 1:2 for instances of heaven and earth being called as witnesses to covenant making). (See Reflections at 6:13-16.)  
Micah 6:3-5, What God Has Done for the People.*

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#### COMMENTARY

God now speaks directly to make a case. One can almost hear a note of hurt, wonderment, and pleading in God's opening question (v. 3). There is a wonderful play on words in Hebrew in the juxtaposition of the very similar words of weary?(hal 1A)? and to bring up?(hl[ (Al? vv. 3-4).<sup>33</sup> The

great God who delivered the people from Egypt has somehow become burdensome to them. God recites a short version of a salvation history, a kind of creed that recalls key periods in Israel's history when God activity was seen most clearly (Josh 24:5; 1 Sam 12:8; Ps 105:26). It is very unusual for Miriam to be listed along with Moses and Aaron in such a list of God's mighty acts. King Balak had hired Balaam to speak a curse against Israel, but it turned into a blessing (Numbers 22:4). From Shittim to Gilgal (v. 5) must refer to the crossing of the Jordan into the promised land. Shittim is east of the Jordan, and Gilgal is on the west. If the people will only remember these and other saving acts of God, they will never waver from following God's way, and, consequently, life will continue to go well for them. *to remember* (rkz zAkar) in texts like this means to identify fully with the ancient stories, to know that they are not remote tales from long ago but are living examples of the ongoing presence and power of God in every age. (See Reflections at 6:13-16.)

Micah 6:6-8, What God Expects in Return

#### COMMENTARY

*6:6-7. God has done all these things for the people. Now the people ask what God expects in return. In vv. 6-7, an individual raises the question for the whole community. What can we do to please God, especially at those times when we have gone astray and need to make things right with God again?*

Many commentators have noted that the dialogue in these verses is like an entrance liturgy, such as in Psalms 15 and 24. A religious official, probably a priest, responds to questions about who may approach the holy space, what one must do to please God and to be acceptable to the Most High. In vv. 6-7, the questions are all related to participation in Israel's sacrificial cult. What constitutes an acceptable offering: *year-old calves, rams, rivers of oil even the worshiper's firstborn?* The questions about quantity gradually rise to ridiculous levels (thousands of rams? or ten thousand rivers of oil? in v. 7a). Then, at the end, there is a qualitative jump with the suggestion that God may even require the giving of a human life (v. 7b). God had once asked that of Abraham, but then prevented Abraham from completing that terrible sacrifice (Genesis 22). Israel had looked in horror at the practice of human sacrifice (see Deut 12:31; 18:10; Jer 19:5; Ezek 16:20). The questions push the point to the extreme: Does anything suffice to move God to accept me, particularly when I have defied God, repented, and wish to return to a closer relationship?

6:8. The answer changes the question. This often happens in the biblical story (God's answer to Job in Job 38:1 is a classic example). *The people's questions were preoccupied with what they could do to please God through religious ritual and ceremony. Micah is in good company with other prophets when he clearly states that God is more interested in the way people live their everyday lives than in their religious practices. Amos even says that God hates such superficial efforts of piety if they are not accompanied by lives dedicated to justice and righteousness (Amos 5:21-24).*

*The threefold summary of what God expects (v. 8) is a general summary, leaving the details to further explication. Several very important biblical words appear here.*

***Justice*** (*fpvm mispat*) is something that people do. It is not enough to wish for justice or to complain because it is lacking. This is a dynamic concept that calls on God's people to work for fairness and equality for all, particularly the weak and the powerless who are exploited by others.

***Kindness*** translates a Hebrew word (*dsj hesed*) that is very common in the Bible, but its meaning can hardly be conveyed by any single English word. It has to do with love, loyalty, and faithfulness.

It can be used to describe the key element in relationships, whether in marriage or between human friends or between God and humanity.

It is not enough to maintain covenant faithfulness (whether on the human level or between humans and God) out of duty or fear of punishment. Israel is to love (bha )Ahab) God to be faithful to its covenant partners as God loves Israel. There is no resentment, as if manipulated or coerced by another (whether God or human). Israel's relationship of faithfulness to God is motivated by love.

Some scholars have pointed out that the word *humbly* from [nx zn) might better be understood as carefully or circumspectly. The key word in this verse is walk?(^lh hAlak ). We are to walk with God, careful to put God first and to live in conformity with God's will. Our life pilgrimage is likened to a walk with God as our constant companion.

These key verses from Micah are about life-style, one's total outlook on life, and one's ethical values. They reject the simplistic notion that there is one thing Israel can do (ritually or otherwise) to make things right between God and the people. (See Reflections at 6:13-16.)

#### COMMENTARY

God speaks again. The people have been told that Yahweh requires justice, loving-kindness, and a humble walk with God. If that is true, then the behavior of the people demonstrates that they have not lived up to that standard. God has no choice but to move against them. God cannot forget or tolerate the wickedness that is so prevalent, particularly in the cheating, stealing and lying that goes on in the name of commerce (vv. 10-12). God would be untrue to God's own self if such evil were allowed to continue with no response. If the jury is still listening, the evidence is clear. God is acting justly. The people are in the wrong and deserve punishment. If they cry out in their suffering that God is unjust, then they need to take another look at the total picture as presented in chapter 6. The contrast between what God has done for the people and what they have done in response should remove any doubt about God's justice.

#### REFLECTIONS

1. How can persons know that they are right with God? (See the section theological Issues in the Introduction.) The familiar text from Mic 6:6-8 gives us some ways to think about this perennial faith question. Clearly, God makes demands on those whom God calls into community. But which comes first: God's actions to form the community or meritorious behavior that earns acceptance from God? Many biblical texts, including this one, place the initiative with God.

It was God who brought the slaves out of Egypt, led them safely through the wilderness into the promised land, and made them a people. God called, loved, and made a commitment to them without requiring them to attain some preliminary standard of ethics, piety, or knowledge. But now they are God's people and are expected to live accordingly, particularly with regard to justice, love, and faithfulness to God and to each other. If they are unable or unwilling to do so, there will be unpleasant consequences. That does not mean that God has stopped loving them, but negative results are inevitable when people live out of conformity with the way God has constituted the world.

What God requires is both easier and harder than the questions of vv. 6-7 imply. It is easier because there is nothing that we need to do (or are able to do) to make ourselves sufficiently

It is harder, because what God expects of us is a dedication of our whole lives, not just outward and occasional acts of piety. There is really nothing new here. God has already told the people what is good (v. 8a). They have the teachings of Moses and the great stories of deliverance through God's graceful action. Their fascination with ceremony and sacrifice may actually hide a reluctance to come to terms with what they already know, with what is truly important.

If one is in right relationship with God (walking humbly with God), one need not worry over much about what to do to win approval or forgiveness for sinful indiscretions. If one is not right with God,

no liturgical ceremony, sacrifice, act of generosity, or rigid adherence to theological absolutes will be sufficient.

2. Is God just? When terrible things happen to people, even to those who seem least deserving, how do we reconcile attributes of God (e.g., power and justice) that appear to be in contradiction? If God is powerful and at work to influence earthly events (such as the exodus, the blessing by Balaam, the safe crossing of the Jordan), then why does God cause (or allow?) disasters that crush God's own people? Does God actually interfere in the life of the planet, or is God merely a frustrated bystander like the rest of us? Is there a middle position that affirms God's influence but admits that it is modified by human freedom?

Throughout the years, faithful people have struggled with the question of theodicy, the effort to find a rational defense of God's justice within the reality of horrible circumstances. *In a sense, God has been on trial many times throughout the centuries, as in the dispute between God and the people in Micah 6. Any jury (mountains or hills or the people of Israel or the Christian church) should look carefully at the evidence. In doing so, they may come to the same conclusion as the book of Micah: God is, indeed, just. The people sinned to the point where God had no choice but to punish the offenders. If God did not act to punish the guilty and vindicate the oppressed, it would have been a denial of justice.*

In pastoral work and in our preaching, we are wise to treat theories of theodicy with some caution. Enthusiastic efforts to clear God of charges of injustice and to argue against denials of God's power may lead to untrue accusations against human beings. In times of suffering, when all are looking for someone to blame, we may save God's reputation only by increasing the guilt of humanity, both individually and collectively. (See Reflections number 5 on 1:2-7; Reflections number 1 on 2:1-5; Reflections number 1 on 3:9-12; and Job 13:1-12.)

3. Is God hurt by the rejection of those whom God has called and loved? In 6:3-5, God's defense reminds us of the lament of parents who have done everything possible to prepare their children for happy and successful lives, only to be puzzled, offended, and grieved by their rebelliousness. What to do? Is punishment the proper course? Will it help? A parent who continues to love a misbehaving child does not want to hurt the child, but cannot let matters go on without intervention. Parents think that required discipline is more painful to them than to their child, but very few recipients of punishment ever believed that.

Just as the prophet does not like to be the messenger of menacing news to the people he loves, so also God does not enjoy inflicting punishment, even if the people deserve it. So God has a problem, too, when people are disobedient. God also feels pain. We can see examples of God's grief and sorrow in the Pentateuch (e.g., Gen 6:5-6), in other prophetic writings (e.g., Jer 3:19-20; 4:19-22; 5:7-9; Hosea 11), and certainly in the suffering God of the New Testament.

## MICAH 7:1-7, THE PROPHET 𐤌𐤎 LAMENT OVER THE DECADENCE OF SOCIETY

### COMMENTARY

The oracle of punishment in 6:13-16 is followed by a poignant lament. We are reminded of the lament over the fate of Samaria and the spread of disaster to Jerusalem in 1:8-9. Some scholars have supposed that the speaker of this lament is Jerusalem in response to the warning it has just received.<sup>36</sup> It seems more likely, however, that the prophet is lamenting, not only for himself but as the spokesperson for God. If Micah is, indeed, speaking (and there is no compelling reason to doubt that), we have here another rare look inside the prophet's mind and heart. In this passage, the prophet's agony is less related to the terrible events soon to

come than to the deplorable state of society, which has precipitated the disaster.

7:1-4. Society has deteriorated both in its public (7:1-4) and its private (7:5-6) spheres. Anyone who searches for an honest and faithful person will be as disappointed as one who is hungry and comes to the vineyard or orchard after all the fruit has been picked (v. 1). The best of the citizens are like briars and thorns (v. 4). We can only imagine what the worst are like. The list of their sins reying on one another, doing evil, taking bribes, misusing power, and perverting justice (vv. 2-3) is similar to what we have seen elsewhere in Micah's prophecies (e.g., Mic 2:2, 8-9; 3:9-11). Other biblical characters also searched vainly for a few even one honest and upright persons in desperate attempts to show that a condemned people are not completely decadent and, perhaps, to avert God's punishment (see Gen 18:23-33; Jer 5:1). But it is to no avail, and it is too late. The day of punishment, seen already by their watchmen (prophets like Micah?), is at hand (v. 4).

7:5-6. Not only public life has dissolved into greed and abuse of power, but even private arenas of friendship and family have been infected by the general dissolution of the society as well. No one can be trusted. Even a husband and wife, locked in the intimate embrace of their own bed, dare not share their deepest thoughts and feelings with each other (v. 5). The solidarity and security of the nurturing family is gone as intergenerational hostilities flare up (v. 6; see Jesus predictions of the family strife that will precede the end time in Matt 10:21, 35-36; Luke 12:51-3; Mark 13:12). No wonder the prophet is moved to lament.

7:7. As bad as things are, the lament ends with a word of hope. As with other laments throughout the psalter, the flow is from complaint to acceptance to praise. God has heard, God will do something, and, therefore, one can still hope. Hebrew has a number of words that can be translated as hope. The word wait? (lly yAhal) can just as well be rendered hope?(v. 7b). To wait is to hope if one knows for what or for whom one is waiting. Hope is not always expressed in terms of specific content. Rather, the basis of hope is a relationship of trust, confidence that the God to whom Israel has turned in the past will not forever abandon the people to their present distress. How the deliverance will come and when remain beyond human vision. But Israel lives in hope because it knows who God is (see Commentary on 7:18-20).

## REFLECTIONS

1. Once more we are reminded of the burden that the prophet must carry (see Reflections number 2 on 1:8-16). The prophet sometimes uses the lament form as a way to pronounce a disaster that has not yet occurred. But this is more than a clever use of a literary form. The true prophet loves his people and is pained by the message he must bear and is sometimes driven to a genuine lament that expresses his suffering. Jeremiah is best known for this, but we also see it here, yet briefly, in Micah.

2. The prophet is alienated from his own society. His critical analysis of all that is wrong puts him in a position against the people with whom he lives. When he begins to speak, that alienation grows as his listeners resist the message and the messenger. The gap between prophet and people is particularly obvious in this passage. There is not one decent person among them. If even the best of them is awful, how bad are the worst of them?

If we put ourselves in the place of Micah's audience, we can imagine our response to his critique of society. Who does he think he is, anyway? Why is he so alienated? Perhaps he had an unhappy childhood and is projecting his hostility on all of us. How do we understand prophets of doom in our own day? They often look like people who are already at odds with society. Do we take seriously their message or dismiss them as self-righteous, angry, perhaps paranoid cranks? Is their message true, a sharp picture of reality, or merely symptomatic of their own failure to be fully socialized? In our day, there is no shortage of prophets of doom.

How do we respond? Are we any better at distinguishing between true and false prophets than were Micah's hearers?

MICAH 7:8-20, THE CLOSING LITURGY

## OVERVIEW

The book of Micah ends with what scholars agree is a closing liturgy. It concludes the book on a hopeful note and makes Micah's prophecies usable in public worship. It assumes a time when the nation has already fallen and is sitting in darkness (v. 8), enemies are gloating (vv. 8, 10), and the wall of the city has been destroyed (v. 11). This points to a time after 586 BCE. Most scholars date it late in the exilic period or the early post-exilic times because of the people's willingness to accept the prophet's assignment of blame (v. 9) and because the text expresses a more confident mood about the future than would have been possible early in the exile.<sup>37</sup> Now the people begin to believe that the message of judgment so prominent in Micah is not the end of the story. They look ahead to a time when God will bring about a new deliverance that will rival the great saving event of the exodus. This passage is identified as a liturgy, in part, because more than one voice is heard. Personified Jerusalem speaks in vv. 8-10. In vv. 11-13 a priest, or some other religious functionary, responds. Verses 14-17 express the people's appeal to Yahweh; and verses 18-20 express their praise of God, who forgives their sins.

Micah 7:8-17, The Fortunes of Israel and Its Enemies Reversed

Link to:

## COMMENTARY

7:8-10. God's people have been disgraced and humiliated by what has happened to them. Their honor has been defiled. Further, God has been mocked by the enemy's sarcastic question, "Where is the LORD your God?" (v. 10), implying either weakness or indifference on God's part. Some have associated the taunting enemy with Babylon, but most have seen this as a reference to Edom, which caused Judah great anguish by its reaction to Jerusalem's downfall.<sup>38</sup> (See Ps 137:7; Isa 34:8-10; Lam 3:14; 4:21; Obad 12.) Israel's desire for vindication (vv. 8-10, 16-17) may be tarnished by more than a little of its own anger, but it also reflects concern for God's honor if perpetrators of evil against God's people were not held accountable. They had come to accept the truth of Micah's indictment. They have indeed deserved God's judgment (v. 9a). But now they expect God, if justice is to be fully executed, to become their advocate and to judge other nations by the same standards used to measure the conduct of Israel (v. 9b).

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7:11-13. In vv. 11-12, a priest or other religious spokesperson seems to step forward and pronounce specific words of good news. The wall will be rebuilt. The boundary will be extended, perhaps to the ideal borders of David's and Solomon's reigns (or further), from Egypt on one side, to the great empires of Mesopotamia on the other (see Ps 72:8; Zech 9:10). And people will be on the move from everywhere back to Jerusalem (v. 12). Most likely this is a reference to the return of the Babylonian exiles, but it could also be a reference to the time when all pagan nations will come to Jerusalem to learn about the one true God (as Mic 4:1-4). If so, the passage begins to take on eschatological overtones, looking into the far distant future when God will act to correct all that is wrong with the world.

7:14-15. These verses address God as the shepherd (see Mic 2:12; 5:4), urging God to let the people again feed in Bashan and Gilead. These areas were noted for their excellent pasture land (Num 32:1; Jer 50:19). They had been lost to Israel since the eighth century BCE. This is another expression of the

people 𐄂 hope for return to the land that had been promised to them from ancient times but had fallen under foreign domination.

Verse 15 contains a direct reference to the exodus from Egypt, that great act of deliverance which had achieved creedal significance as the premier act of God on behalf of the people. Now they ask God again to do marvelous things to accomplish their salvation from exile in foreign lands and to bring all the world into proper subjection to the one true God (vv. 16-17). Besides this explicit mention of the exodus in v. 15, there are other appeals to the exodus tradition in vv. 18-20.

7:16-17. When the nations realize who God is, they will be ashamed, completely humiliated, filled with fear. They will turn to God in fear and dread, not in hope and trust, as in 4:1-2. It is as if Micah 4 gives a longer view of the future, a willingness to look beyond the more immediate pains of exile and subjugation and desire for revenge to a time when all nations will be reconciled under the rule of the one true God.

Micah 7:18-20, Hope in God Remains

Link to:

#### COMMENTARY

The liturgy ends with a glorious hymn that brings everything in the book of Micah to a proper focus. The opening question of v. 18 reminds us of the meaning of Micah 𐄂 name: 𐄂 ho is like

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Yahweh??(author 𐄂 trans.). Such rhetorical questions about God are not uncommon in the OT (e.g., Exod 15:11; pls 77:13; 71:18-19). The exodus reference from the 𐄂 ong of the Sea?again links the expectations of the people singing this hymn with the wondrous acts of God in the escape from Egypt. There is hope for the future in remembering what God has done in the past.

Many key words and ideas about God are crowded into the final three verses of Micah. There are words about God 𐄂 character 𐄂 orgiving, not holding on to anger, delighting in mercy, compassionate, faithful, and loyal. Many scholars have seen a connection between vv. 18-20 and Exod 34:6-7.39 These two passages share several words for human rebellion and disobedience: sin, iniquity, transgression. And each has several ways to describe what God will do about sin: pardon, pass over, tread underfoot, throw into the depths of the sea 𐄂 nother possible allusion to the exodus and the crossing of the sea (Exod 15:1-5). The bottom line is that God is merciful and forgiving. The bad times are over. God 𐄂 anger had been stirred by the people 𐄂 faithlessness and the wrong done to the weak and powerless. But God 𐄂 true nature again comes to the fore. The ancient promises will never be broken (v. 20). If one faces the future with faith in a God like this, hope is possible no matter what experiences the world might bring.

#### REFLECTIONS

1. Throughout Micah, there is a constant tension between justice and mercy. God is a righteous God and will not tolerate evil. Punishment is inevitable if sinful behavior persists. The world makes moral sense. God cannot abandon God 𐄂 own standards of justice. And yet, God is constantly pulled in the direction of forgiveness and mercy. God is also in pain when people disobey, and God can see the terrible consequences awaiting them. God wants to forgive and move on to better things if people will give at least some hint of repentance, some opening into which God can move to relax the rigid standards of absolute justice.

This tension between justice and mercy shows up even in the structure of the book. Mercy and forgiveness break through in the midst of the horrible proclamations of doom in chapters 1?. Although chapters 4? primarily stress the positive word about a forgiving God, judgment is still present. Evil consequences are already at work and will need to run their course. And in chapters 6?, again we see a mix of judgment and hope, but, in the end, hope has the last word.



Since the received word from God is a mix of good news and bad news, those of us who are called to be contemporary bearers of God's Word need constantly to be alert to the times and situations of our audience so that we speak the truth and do not try to resolve the tension by proclaiming only one side of the message. We need to be mindful of Micah's critique of the religious leaders of his day who had part of the message right but who failed to warn their people of the dangers ahead (see Reflections on 2:6-11).

2. Having said all this, we are grateful that the conclusion of the book of Micah maintains (as do innumerable passages throughout the Bible) that the best description of God uses words like mercy, forgiveness, faithfulness, compassion, loyalty, and love. The world is full of people who do not know that about this God, but who may have heard about the punishing, avenging God. The end of Micah needs to be proclaimed loudly and clearly to put in proper perspective the hard words found earlier in the book.