

## VI. OBADIAH: “The God who judges pride”

### A. Orienting Data

1. *Author*: Obadiah (“servant of Yahweh”), a prophet from Judah
2. *Date of prophetic activity*: Just after a major attack on Judah.
  - a. Some posit the early 9<sup>th</sup> century.
  - b. It seems more likely the prophecy should be dated to the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, very soon after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (probably ca. 586 B.C.).
    - i. After the great destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon, Ezekiel offered an oracle of judgment against Edom for their hatred toward Jerusalem.
      - Ezek. 35:5–6, 14–15. Because you cherished perpetual enmity and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment, <sup>6</sup>therefore, as I live, declares the Lord Yahweh, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you.... <sup>14</sup>Thus says the Lord Yahweh: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. <sup>15</sup>As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am Yahweh.
    - ii. Similarly, with Israel in Babylon, mourning the loss of Jerusalem, the psalmist prayed that the Edomites be destroyed. This is the most likely context for Obadiah’s message.
      - Ps. 137:7. Remember, O Yahweh, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, ‘Lay it bare, down to its foundations!’”
    - iii. Finally, in the wake of Jerusalem’s destruction, the prophet (Jeremiah?) declared Edom’s downfall.
      - Lam. 4:21–22. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. <sup>22</sup> The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished; he will keep you in exile no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish; he will uncover your sins.
3. *Message*: Proud in her own security in the heights of Gilead, Edom has gloated over Israel’s destruction by foreign powers. However, her participation in that disaster will bring Yahweh’s wrath. Edom will be destroyed, Mount Zion and Israel will be delivered, and God’s kingdom will triumph.

### B. Excursus: Why are oracles against foreign nations in Israel’s Bible?

1. To show that Yahweh is God of the world, with universal authority (Mal. 1:5: “Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, ‘Great is Yahweh beyond the border of Israel!’”)
2. To heighten Israel’s hope in Yahweh’s faithfulness to his Abrahamic promise, “The who curses you I will curse” (Gen. 12:3).
3. To confront the taunts of the nations that propose Yahweh’s is unable or unwilling to protect his people (Deut. 32:26–27; Ezek. 36:20–21).
4. To affirm that if Yahweh is to deliver his people completely and permanently, he cannot leave their enemies free to strike again.
5. To emphasize that Yahweh is grieved when anyone rejoices over another’s grief.
6. To display Yahweh’s zeal against sin, passion for his fame, and commitment to judge all sin, whether those of his people or of the nations.

7. To shame Israel for looking to someone other than Yahweh for help and deliverance and to stress that Yahweh alone is savior (see Isa. 20:6: “And the inhabitants of this coastland [i.e., Judah/Israel] will say in that day [that Egypt and Cush are destroyed], ‘Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?’”)
8. To move Israel to return to Yahweh and thus escape devastating punishment (Zeph. 3:6–7: “I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant.<sup>7</sup> I said, ‘Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.’ But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.”)

### C. A Brief History of Israelite-Edomite Tensions

1. Before birth, Jacob and Esau were fighting in the womb (Gen. 25:22–26).
2. The brothers competed for the birthright and blessing of their father (22:29–34; ch. 27), a conflict that forced Jacob to flee. While later formally reconciled, their descendants were not.
3. Edom refused passage to Moses and the Israelites on their march from Egypt to Canaan (Num. 20:14–21).
4. Saul campaigned against Edom (1 Sam 14).
5. David subjected the nation and incorporated them into his empire (2 Sam. 8:13–14).
6. The Edomites unsuccessfully revolted against Solomon (1 Kgs. 11:14–22).
7. During the time of Elisha, under Jehoram of Israel, the Edomites successfully revolted (845 B.C.) (2 Kgs. 8:20–22).
8. Enmity continued until Jerusalem’s fall in 586 B.C., when Edom encouraged the destruction of the city (Ps 137).
9. Denunciations against Edom for their hatred toward their brother make up the most common foreign nation oracle in the Prophets (Jer. 49:7–22; Ezek. 25:12–14; Isa. 21:11–12; 34:5–15; 35:1–15; Amos 1:11–12; cf. Joel 3:19; Mal 1:2–5; Lam 4:21–22)
10. The fulfillment of Obadiah’s prophecy was not realized until 312 B.C. when Nabataean Arabs overran Petra, the Edomite stronghold, forcing the Edomites west into southern Judah (where they came to be called Idumaeans). The Maccabaeans forced the Idumaeans to adopt Jewish law including circumcision.
11. But the Roman overlords seemed to favor the Idumaeans, appointing one of their own—Antipater—as procurator of Judaea in 47 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Herod the Great in 37 B.C., the man who tried to placate the Jews by rebuilding the temple for them and the man who tried to have the up-in-coming “King of the Jews” killed in Bethlehem.
12. The Idumaeans joined the rebellion against Rome in A.D. 70, for which Titus destroyed them, wiping them off the face of the earth.

### D. Literary Overview

1. Superscription (1:1a)
2. Announcement of Judgment Upon Edom (1:1b–14)

- a. Edom's Humiliation (Thesis) (1:1b–2)
- b. Edom's Indictment
  - i. Condemnation of Pride (1:3–9)
  - ii. Condemnation of Hatred/Violence (1:10–14)
3. Day of Yahweh in Edom: Turning the Tables (1:15–21)
  - a. Announcement of Doom for Edom (1:15–16)
  - b. Announcement of Salvation for Israel (1:17–21)

#### E. Message

1. Proud in their own security (1:3–4), the Edomites delighted in Israel's destruction by a foreign power (1:12). They failed to help (1:11) and instead actually looted the remains and assisted in the capture of fugitives (1:13–14).
2. In response, God promises to bring them down (1:4), to cut them off forever (1:10), to do to them as they did to Israel (1:15), to consume them until there is no survivor (1:18), and to let their land be overcome with the restored of Israel (1:19–21), whom God will reestablish in Zion (1:17–18).

#### F. A Future for Edom?

1. An overview of the OT picture:
  - a. More respect is given to Edom than is accorded any other neighboring people—e.g., the biblical writers neither attack Edom's gods by name nor include Edom on lists of countries practicing “abominations.”
  - b. There are references to theophanies by Israel's God in areas traditionally associated with the Edomites (see Hab 3:3; Judg 5:4).
  - c. In contrast to Deuteronomy's handling of the Ammonites and Moabites, it holds out the possibility of the Edomites becoming a part of the “assembly of Yahweh” (Deut 23:8[9]; cf. Amos 9:11–12).
  - d. Biblical authors revered Edomite wisdom traditions (Jer. 49:7), and Job may have been conceived as having some Edomite connections (Lam. 4:21).
2. Edom will be fully destroyed.
  - Mal. 1:2–5. I have loved Jacob<sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert. <sup>4</sup>If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” Yahweh of hosts says, “They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom Yahweh is angry forever.’” <sup>5</sup>Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is Yahweh beyond the border of Israel!”
3. Edom's destruction does not stop God from preserving a remnant and granting them a new identity in the people of God.
  - a. Obadiah's portrait of Edom's future is dismal but not completely hopeless.
    - i. In one breath he declares total destruction for Edom (1:18), but in another breath, the prophet notes that a remnant will be preserved (1:17). This appears to mean that those who were once Edomite have now gained a new identity.
      - Obad. 1:17–18. But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess [yrš] their own possessions [môrāš]. <sup>18</sup>The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for Yahweh has spoken.
    - ii. As in Jer. 30:8–11 where the non-ethnic Israelite “foreigners” “serve Yahweh their God and David their king” but are distinguished from

“the nations” of whom God makes “a full end,” so here, because all of Edom is destroyed, the remnant are portrayed as having gained a new identity within the possession of Jacob.

- b. Like Obadiah, Amos sees a remnant of Edom being incorporated into the restored Davidic kingdom.
  - *Amos 9:11–12*. “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, <sup>12</sup>that they may possess [yrš] the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares Yahweh who does this.
- c. In the Jerusalem church, James cites the Amos text to support his claim that God is doing a work among the Gentiles through the ministry of Paul.
  - *Acts 15:14–19*. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup>And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, <sup>16</sup>“After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, <sup>17</sup>that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things <sup>18</sup>known from of old.” <sup>19</sup>Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God.

## VII. JONAH: “The God who is free in his steadfast love”

### A. Orienting Data

1. *Content*: Through a very reluctant prophet, God shows compassion for Assyria, one of Israel’s hated enemies.
2. *Author*: Jonah (“dove”), son of Amittai, a prophet to northern Israel
3. *Date of prophetic activity*: around 770 B.C., during the reign of Jeroboam II (see 2 Kgs. 14:25)
4. *Canonical Note*: Jonah is the only Minor Prophet to begin with the conjunction “and,” suggesting that it is to be read in direct association with Obadiah.
5. *Emphasis*:
  - a. Yahweh as creator, sustainer, and redeemer of all, who can have compassion on whomever he wills—even the Gentiles (represented by Nineveh).
  - b. Israel’s reluctance (represented by Jonah) to acknowledge Yahweh as a God free in his compassion for all peoples, including the nations.

### B. Literary Overview

1. *Theme*: Where Yahweh is exalted among those he upholds, he is compelled to show steadfast love, both in Israel and throughout the world.
2. *Outline*:
  - a. Jonah’s first experience of Yahweh’s steadfast love (1:1–2:10)
    - i. Yahweh’s initial call for a mission of steadfast love (1:1–2)
    - ii. Jonah’s personal need for steadfast love (1:3–16)
    - iii. Yahweh’s demonstration of steadfast love (1:17)
    - iv. Jonah’s positive response to Yahweh’s steadfast love (2:1–10)
  - b. Jonah’s second experience of Yahweh’s steadfast love (3:1–4:11)
    - i. Yahweh’s second call for a mission of steadfast love (3:1–2)
    - ii. Nineveh’s corporate need for steadfast love (3:3–9)
    - iii. Yahweh’s demonstration of steadfast love (3:10)
    - iv. Jonah’s negative response to Yahweh’s steadfast love (4:1–3)

v. Conclusion: Yahweh's lesson on his steadfast love (4:4–11)

### C. Literary Features in the Book

1. In contrast to the other prophetic books, Jonah is primarily biographical (see 3:5 for the summary of his message).
2. Inclusion: The story is framed by Jonah's flight from God (1:3) and the reason for his flight (4:2); also the sailor's response to God's salvation of them anticipates God's compassion to be shown to Nineveh.
3. Examples of rhetorical irony:
  - a. The pagan sailor's sacrifice to Yahweh, whereas Yahweh's prophet is defiant.
  - b. Jonah himself declares at the end of his psalm (of deliverance), "Salvation is from Yahweh," which is then played out by Nineveh's repentance and Yahweh's withholding judgment.
  - c. Jonah the prophet of God does not really like the character of God (4:2).
  - d. Jonah is rescued from death by God, but in the end wishes to die rather than to live—because the Ninevites get to live rather than die.
4. Characterization: Who is the main character in the story?
  - a. Yahweh calls Jonah to Nineveh.
  - b. Yahweh sends the storm when Jonah disobeys, and Yahweh intensifies it to keep the sailors from rescuing him.
  - c. Yahweh provides a great fish to rescue the prophet.
  - d. Yahweh is the object of Jonah's praise from the belly of the fish.
  - e. Yahweh graciously sends Jonah a second time to Nineveh and causes the prophet's message to be received.
  - f. Yahweh provides the plant, the worm, and the scorching east wind to instruct Jonah in Yahweh's ways.
  - g. *Jonah is but a foil to exalt God and his amazing steadfast love.*

#### **THINK!**

According to Jonah 2, did Jonah perceive his being eaten by the fish as God's judgment or God's salvation? Read the psalm carefully.

### D. The Main Point: Don't be like Jonah, but be like God in his boundless steadfast love!

1. Yahweh, not Jonah, is the main character.
2. Central issue: What is God like? Jonah cannot accept the orthodox definition of God's steadfast love (4:2)—except when he is the beneficiary!

### E. Is Jonah a Parable or History?

1. Overview of the question:
  - a. While none should question that Jonah is representative of Israel, many today even from evangelical circles are asserting that the story itself is parable, not history. The conservative L. C. Allen (1976: 175–81, 194–97) has been one of the most resolute advocates for the parabolic nature of the book of Jonah, and he argues that Jesus' mention in the Synoptics that Jonah was in the belly of a whale three days (cf. Matt 12:39–41; 16:4; Luke 11:29–30, 32) in no way points to the story's historicity (cf. Dillard and Longman, 1994: 392–93).

- b. Jesus regularly taught in parables, but I believe his use of the story in the context of the Gospel accounts strongly suggests, if not requires, a historical reading of Jonah—a view that is easily justifiable when an openness to the supernatural accompanies an evaluation of the book’s internal witness and the extra-biblical evidence (cf. e.g., Stuart, 1987: 435–38, 440–42; 1994: 816–17; Alexander, 1988; Baldwin, 1993: 544–48). Due to space limitations, I will not reiterate here all the arguments for and against the parabolic view of the book. Instead I will detail and evaluate Allen’s view of Jesus’ use of the Jonah story and will argue that Jesus’ words indeed call for the book to be approached as history.
2. Allen’s View: Jesus did not employ a “strict exegesis” of the Jonah story, and so his words cannot be cited as support for the historical interpretation of the book (1976: 180). His focus was “not to expound the book of Jonah but to reveal truth concerning himself in terms his Jewish audience acknowledged and could understand” (196–97). This is seen most directly in Matt 12:40, where the parallel Jesus’ creates between Jonah and himself requires that Jonah’s “three days and three nights in the belly of the sea creature” be viewed not positively as the book demands (i.e., as a place of salvation) but “negatively” (i.e., as a place of death). Allen states, “The implication of the time reference appears to be that Jonah would spend only ‘three days and three nights’ *in Hades*; after a short stay Jesus too would return to life” (196, italics added).
3. Evaluation: Allen (1976: 196) is correct that within the book, Jonah’s prayer of *thanksgiving* from within the belly of the sea creature requires that the fish be regarded as an instrument of divine salvation rather than judgment (Jon 2:1[2]; cf. Young, 1977: 265; Andersen, 2000:105–107; *contra* Luz, 2001: 217). I question, however, whether the actual implication of Matt 12:40 is so negative. Furthermore, Allen fails to address the more critical issue of Ninevah’s repentance in the context of Jesus’ words.
- a. Weakness 1: Failure to grasp the “sign of Jonah”
- i. *The Proper Focus: The Delivered Person and not the Time*. While Matt 12:40 parallels the prophet’s experience in the fish with Christ’s time in the tomb, the “sign” itself is not in the length of stay in their respective “graves” but in their rescue from the enemy power, whether fish or death (cf. Jeremias, 1965: 410 + n.28; cf. John 2:19). So, as Luke explicitly states in 11:30 and both he (11:29) and Matthew (12:39) imply in the genitive construction “the sign of Jonah” (= either appos. or subj. genitive), Jonah himself as one delivered from a great fish became a sign that called the Ninevites to repentance, and in the same way “the Son of Man will be [fut. *estai*—i.e., after his resurrection from death] for this generation.” Read properly, Matt 12:40 is the counter-parallel to Luke 11:30, Matthew describing the nature of the deliverance (i.e., both Jonah and Christ being set free from their dark “tombs”) and Luke its significance (i.e., both Jonah and Jesus’ deliverance supply signs for the people).
  - ii. *The Sign of Jonah and the Fish-Goddess*. Nineveh was the “city of the fish.” E. H. Merrill (1980: 26–27) has cogently argued that the chief

deity of Nineveh at the time of Jeroboam II and thus the prophet Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25) was the *fish-goddess* Nanshe. While such a connection is never made explicit in the story, it does help explain how the call to repentance from a God who had power to deliver his prophet from a great *fish* could have gained such immediate and universal acceptance (Jon 3:4–9; Merrill, 1980: 28–30; cf. Harrison, 1969: 908–09). It also helps provide a plausible source for the manner by which Jonah became “a sign to the Ninevites” and how the restored Jonah could serve as a picture of the resurrected Christ (Merrill, 1980: 29; on Jonah as a “type” for Christ, see France, 1971: 44; Luz, 2001: 218).

iii. *The Interpretive Key: Proper Perspective on the Deliverance.*

Regardless of Jonah’s perspective on his salvation (i.e., that the fish was God’s agent of salvation rather than punishment), Jesus is focused on how Jonah served as a sign *to the Ninevites*. And therefore we should expect him to speak of the prophet’s deliverance from the perspective of *the Ninevites* (i.e., that the fish was the enemy power rather than just the water). Jesus’ use of the OT is thus explained. This interpretation also elucidates any proposed rabbinic evidence viewing the fish as a threat to Jonah (e.g., Str.-B. 1:642–49). But contrary to Allen’s assertions, neither the LXX on Jonah 2 or Josephus’ comments in *Antiquities* (9.213) in any way support such a view. Furthermore, while 3 Macc 6:8 (1<sup>st</sup> cent. BC) may attest to this “negative” view of the fish, both it and Josephus’ statements clearly affirm the historicity rather than the parabolic nature of the Jonah account. I conclude, then, that although Jesus’ words offer a different perspective on Jonah’s deliverance than Jonah’s prayer does (i.e., for Jonah, his placement in the fish was a sign of salvation, not judgment), Jesus does so with historical grounding and for rhetorical affect. His 1<sup>st</sup> century audience is being compared with the Ninevites of old, and now “something greater than Jonah is here” (Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32).

b. Weakness 2: Failure to account for the flow of Jesus’ argument—*Rhetorical Effect & Historicity*. Allen never deals with the fact that in order for Jesus’ warning to bear any type of rhetorical jab to his hearers it is necessary that *both* the story of the Ninevites repentance and the account of the Queen of the South’s journey actually happened (cf. Harrison, 1969: 906; Stuart, 1987: 440). Few question the historical authenticity of the Queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon (1 Kgs 10:1–13; 2 Chr 9:1–12—for a response to the minimalists, see below). Why then should we question the authenticity of the Ninevites repentance at Jonah’s proclamation? The very fact that Luke places the comments regarding Solomon and the Queen of the South in between the statements regarding Jonah as a sign and the Ninevite’s future judgment suggests that the latter depiction is to be read just as the former—as a historically accurate and thus rhetorically searing comment about the present generation’s wickedness.

4. *Synthesis: Historicity & the Lasting Message.* While it may be true in one sense that theological message of Jonah does not change whether or not the story

actually happened (so Dillard and Longman, 1994: 393; Childs, 1994: 393), in another sense the rhetorical power of the story is lessened and some of theological message lost if it is read as fiction when it was intended to be read as history (Stuart, 1987: 440). As Allen himself writes (1976: 175), “The modern reader can read it [i.e., Jonah] aright only if he understands it as it was originally intended.” Numerous arguments from within the book itself can be proffered for a historical rather than a parabolic interpretation (cf. Stuart, 1987: 435–38, 440–42; 1994: 816–17; Alexander, 1988; Baldwin, 1993: 544–48), and Jesus’ use of the Jonah story makes little sense if it is not a historical account.

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### VIII. MICAH: “The God who testifies against sin”

#### A. Orienting Data

1. *Author*: Micah (“Who is like Yahweh”), a Judean prophet; contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea
2. *Date of prophetic activity*: An extended time between the accession of Jotham and the death of Hezekiah (ca. 737–690)
3. *Canonical Placement*: Sums up the realities of sin spoken of in the former books. Like the nations, Israel is wrapped in sins of idolatry and social injustice, and judgment is inevitable for all; but punishment will eventually redeem Israel and the nations by separating the righteous remnant from the wicked majority.

**B. Literary Overview**

1. Superscription (1:1)
2. Devastation and Renewal for Israel and Judah (1:2–5:15)
  - a. Destruction and Consolation (“Hear”) (1:2–2:13)
    - i. Promise of Judgment beginning with northern Israel (1:2–2:11)
    - ii. Promise of Deliverance for the Remnant (2:12–13)
  - b. Degradation and Exaltation (“And Hear”) (3:1–5:15)
    - i. Parade of Iniquity and the People’s False Confidence (3:1–12, esp. v. 11)
    - ii. Parade of Righteousness, Peace, and Hope for All Who Treasure God’s Reign (4:1–5:1)
    - iii. Arrival of the King and Restoration of the Remnant (5:2–15)
3. Condemnation and Consolation (“Hear”) (6:1–7:20)
  - a. Basis for Judgment (6:1–16)
  - b. Lament for the Nation (7:1–6)
  - c. Hope for the Nation (7:7–13)
  - d. Prayer for the Nation (7:14–20)

**C. Devastation and Renewal for Israel and Judah (1:2–5:15)**

1. Destruction and Consolation (1:2–2:13)
  - a. Yahweh declares massive destruction on the northern kingdom centered in Samaria, with the wake of the judgment stretching into Judah unto the gate of Jerusalem.
    - i. The nature of the judgment:
      - Mic. 1:6. Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country.
      - Mic. 1:12. ...Disaster has come down from Yahweh to the gate of Jerusalem.
      - Mic. 1:16. Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair for the children of your delight; make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile.
      - Mic. 2:3. Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster.
    - ii. The reason for this open judgment on the northern kingdom is clear:
      - (1) Their idolatry and failure to honor God as God (1:7).
      - (2) Their negative influence on Judah (1:9, 12–13).
      - (3) Their enemy-like scheming, greed, and oppression (2:1–2, 8–9).
      - (4) Their false security (2:6).
      - (5) Their failure to heed God’s word and walk uprightly (2:7).
  - b. Yahweh also promises a restoration of a remnant—a remnant that will follow Yahweh their king (2:12–13).
2. Degradation and Exaltation (3:1–5:15)
  - a. The House of Pride Centered in Jerusalem: Indictment and judgment
    - Mic. 3:9–12. Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, <sup>10</sup>who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. <sup>11</sup>Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on Yahweh and say, “Is not Yahweh in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.” <sup>12</sup>Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.



- b. The judgment reversal – How should we understand God’s relenting from his earlier promise?
- Jer. 26:16–19. Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of Yahweh our God.”<sup>17</sup> And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people, saying,<sup>18</sup> “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts, “ ‘Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’<sup>19</sup> Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear Yahweh and entreat the favor of Yahweh, and did not Yahweh relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves.”
  - Jer. 18:7–10. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it,<sup>8</sup> and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.<sup>9</sup> And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it,<sup>10</sup> and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.
- c. The Establishment of God’s Kingdom
- i. The scope and nature of the kingdom
    - Mic. 4:1–5. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it,<sup>2</sup> and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, 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 the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;<sup>4</sup> but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of Yahweh of hosts has spoken.<sup>5</sup> For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God forever and ever.
    - (1) What rhetorical power would the placement of this oracle have directly after the declaration of Judah’s destruction in 3:12?
    - (2) What pastoral role does 4:5 serve in the context?
    - (3) How should we explain the fact that this passage is almost identical to Isaiah 2:2–5?
  - ii. The king of the kingdom
    - Mic. 5:2–5. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.<sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of

his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup>And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. <sup>5</sup>And he shall be their peace.

**D. Condemnation and Consolation (6:1–7:20):**

1. Yahweh's "case" against Israel (6:2)
2. A Call for True Loyalty (6:6–8)
  - Mic. 6:6–8. With what shall I come before Yahweh, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup>Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup>He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
3. Israel's only Hope (7:18–20)
  - Mic. 7:18–20. Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. <sup>19</sup>He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. <sup>20</sup>You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

**E. Message:** The necessity of divine judgment for breaking covenant with Yahweh, yet the certainty of divine restoration for the whole world—a restoration focused on Jerusalem through the promised Davidic king.

1. Yahweh accepts no rivals (1:7; 5:12–14) and stands as a God of justice and mercy who pleads the cause of the poor and requires his people to do the same (2:1–2, 8–11; 3:1–3, 8–11; 6:10–12; 7:2–3).
2. Yahweh as the God of all the nations and Israel through its Messianic king (5:5) as the channel of blessing to the nations (4:1–4; 7:11–13; cf. 7:20 with Gen 12:3).
3. Gems in Micah:
  - a. His eschatological vision of Zion as the capital of the world (Mic. 4:1–5).
  - b. His prediction of the Messiah, who will come from lowly Bethlehem but whose reign of peace will extend to the ends of the earth (2:13; 5:2–5; cf. Matt. 2:6 with 28:18–20).
  - c. His definition of true piety and godliness (Mic. 6:6–8).
  - d. His appeal to Yahweh to shepherd his flock, and his portrayal of God as a gracious and covenant keeping God (7:14–20; cf. Exod 34:6–7).

**IX. Canonical Arrangement: Hosea–Micah, the Prophets of Sin**

**A. Similarities between Hosea and Micah suggest an intentional inclusio:**

1. Yahweh's lawsuit. Hosea and Micah include the only references to Yahweh's having a "case" (*rib*) against Israel.
  - Hos. 4:1. Hear the word of Yahweh, O children of Israel, for Yahweh has a *controversy* with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land.
  - Mic. 6:1–2. Hear what Yahweh says: Arise, plead your *case* before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, *the indictment* of Yahweh, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for Yahweh has an *indictment* against his people, and he will *contend* with Israel.
2. A prostitute's wages: The only references in the Minor Prophets to Israel's prostitution with respect to their earning a harlot's wages:

- Hos. 9:1. Rejoice not, O Israel! Exult not like the peoples; for you have played the whore, forsaking your God. You have loved a *prostitute's wages* on all threshing floors.
- Mic. 1:7. All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, for from *the fee of a prostitute* she gathered them, and to *the fee of a prostitute* they shall return.

**B. Flow of Thought in the Sin Prophets:**

1. *Hosea*: Israel, Yahweh has a case against you: You have played the harlot and been like an unfaithful wife, departing from faithfulness, steadfast love, and knowledge. Please return to Yahweh your husband!
2. *Joel*: For the Day of Yahweh is at hand, and repentance is your only hope! I will be a refuge to my people, but a roaring, devouring lion against all who fail to heed my voice!
3. *Amos*: How secure you feel, yet how insecure you actually are! I have disciplined you, yet you have not learned from the discipline. You anticipate my coming, but for you this Day will be darkness, not light. Prepare to meet your God, for the fulfillment of my kingdom promises is only for those who truly repent!
4. *Obadiah*: Know this: Pride and hatred have no place in my coming kingdom; this is why your brother Edom will be destroyed.
5. *Jonah*: Yet be warned, Israel, for your own pride and hatred of others resembles that of Edom and stands in direct contrast to the mercy Yahweh gives to whomever he wills. Don't be like Jonah; be like Yahweh and extend compassion rather than gloating in others' destruction, lest God's judgment fall on you!
6. *Micah*: Yahweh, from his courtroom, has found you and the nations guilty! Yet your final judgment Day has not come, and in his mercy, he will still forgive your sins, if you but return. Soon God, through his Word and Messiah, will be exalted over all things. Will you be a part of the judgment or the redemption?

## X. NAHUM: “The God of universal power who humiliates the arrogant”

### A. Orienting Data

1. *Content*: a prophecy of God’s judgment against Nineveh (Assyria) for her oppression, cruelty, and idolatry, concluding with the announced destruction of the city
2. *Author*: Nahum (“Comforted [by Yahweh]”), a prophet from Judah otherwise unknown
3. *Date of prophetic activity*: sometime after the fall of Thebes (No-Ammon, 3:8), the capital of Egypt, in 663 B.C. but before the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., during the period of Judah’s vassal-ship to Assyria
4. *Emphasis*:
  - a. Yahweh’s judgment on Nineveh for her oppression, cruelty, idolatry and wickedness
  - b. “An *oracle* concerning Nineveh” (Nah. 1:1). “Oracle” is the same Hebrew word for “burden” (*massa*’), which clearly points to the weighty nature of Nahum’s message.

### B. Literary Overview:

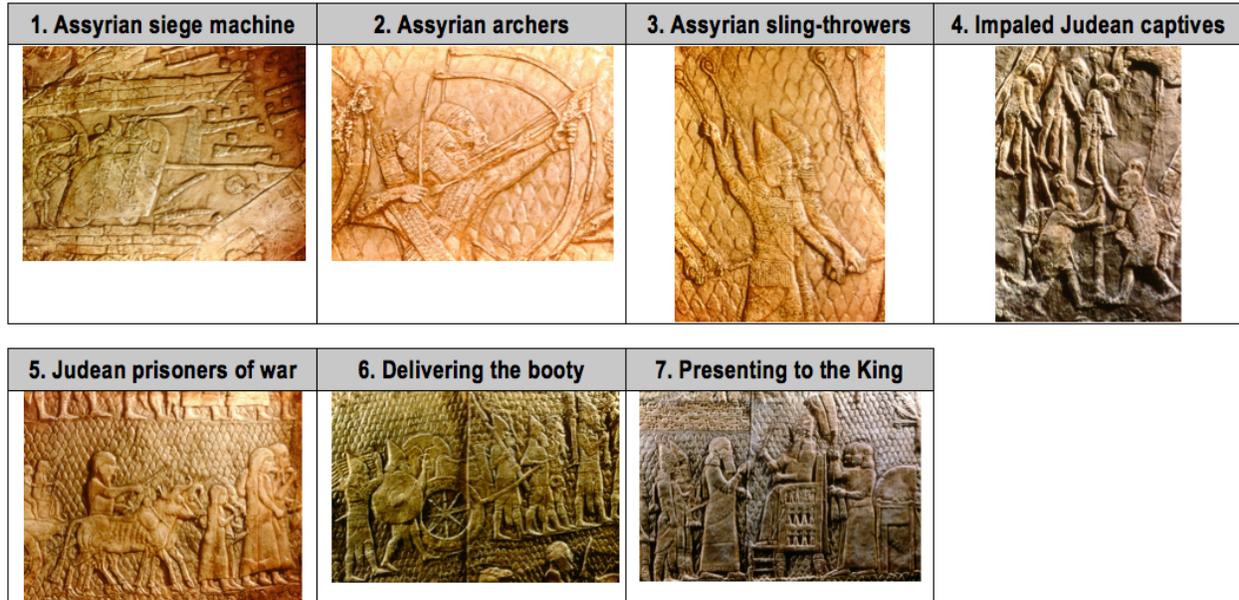
1. Superscription (1:1)
2. The Arrival of the Divine Lord: a Hymn (1:2–8)
3. The Announcement of Judgment on Nineveh (1:9–2:13)
  - a. Yahweh’s design for Nineveh (1:9–14)
  - b. The Significance of his actions for Judah (1:15–2:2)
  - c. The Description of Nineveh’s fate (2:3–12)
  - d. Yahweh’s Disposition toward Nineveh (2:13)
4. The Pronouncement of Woe upon Nineveh (3:1–19)
  - a. The Announcement of Judgment (3:1–7)
  - b. The Analogy (3:8–15)
    - i. The picture of Thebe’s fall (3:8–10)
    - ii. The picture of Nineveh’s fall (3:11–15)
  - c. The Ironic Funeral Dirge (3:16–19)

### C. Message

1. **Key Verses**: 1:2–3, 6–8 (cf. Ps. 46)
  - Nah. 1:2–3, 6–8. Yahweh is a jealous and avenging God; Yahweh is avenging and wrathful; Yahweh takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.<sup>3</sup>Yahweh is slow to anger and great in power, Yahweh will be no means clear the guilty....<sup>6</sup>Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.<sup>7</sup>Yahweh is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.
2. **The Question and Response**:
  - a. The Question (v. 6): Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heart of his anger. Cf. Isa 33:14–15; Joel 2:11; Mal 3:2; Rev 6:17.
  - b. The Answer:
    - i. For “those who take refuge in him” (v. 7), God will be “a stronghold in the day of trouble.”
    - ii. For those who persist in standing against him as “adversaries,” he “will make a complete end” (v. 7).

3. **Nineveh's sins:**
  - a. Idolatry (1:14)
  - b. Cruelty and injustice: slavery of nations (3:4), her merchants have stripped lands clean (3:16), endless cruelty (3:19). Against such evils, god's goodness and compassion stands in polar opposite

**Fig. 17.6. Reliefs of Sennacherib's Assyrian Victory at Lachish (701 B.C.)**



4. **Main Point:** While “Yahweh is slow to anger and great in power,” extending mercy to all who repent (as a previous generation of Ninevites experienced in the days of Jonah), he “will be no means clear the guilty” (Nah. 1:3). Those who act unjustly and abuse humans in bloodthirsty ways (ch. 3 contains the most vivid war song in the Bible) will receive full punishment for their sins. No one should presume on the longsuffering lovingkindness of God.

## XI. HABAKKUK: “The God who inspires faith in crisis”

### A. Orienting Data

1. *Author:* Habakkuk, a prophet of Judah, is unknown apart from this book
2. *Date of prophetic activity:* Sometime between 612 and 599 B.C. when Babylon had begun to dominate the international scene but before she had attacked Jerusalem; contemporary of Jeremiah
3. *Emphases:*
  - a. God's justice and power in the light of his apparent toleration of evil.
  - b. The proper stance of the righteous in all circumstances is surrendered confidence and persevering trust in the God who acts in his time.
4. Question: Habakkuk is made up of a dialogue between the prophet and God. Why was Habakkuk perplexed, and what was God's response?

### B. Literary Overview

1. Superscription (1:1)
2. Divine Tolerance of Evil (1:2–2:20)

- a. Round 1 (1:2–11)
  - i. Habakkuk’s Complaint: Why do you tolerate community injustice against the righteous? (1:2–4)
  - ii. God’s Response: Evil will soon be punished (1:5–11)
- b. Round 2
  - i. Habakkuk’s Complaint: How can you tolerate foreign injustice against the righteous? (1:12–2:1)
  - ii. God’s Response: Evil will be punished and faith rewarded (2:2–20)
- c. Habakkuk’s Hymn of Trust (3:1–19)

### C. Message

#### 1. Habakkuk’s Complaints

- Hab. 1:2–4. O Yahweh, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? <sup>3</sup>Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. <sup>4</sup>So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.
- Hab. 1:12–13. Are you not from everlasting, O Yahweh my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Yahweh, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. <sup>13</sup>You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

#### 2. The Contrast of the Wicked and the Righteous

- a. *The Wicked*: Those who put their confidence in human strength, who define on their own what is right and wrong, and who ultimately sin against themselves by failing to give proper reverence to God.
  - Hab. 1:4. The law is paralyzed and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice is perverted.
  - Hab. 1:7. They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.
  - Hab. 1:11. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!
  - Hab. 2:5, 9–10. Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.... Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm! You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life.
  - Hab. 2:14–15. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea. Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness. You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in Yahweh’s right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!
- b. *The Righteous*: Those who in all circumstances express surrendered confidence and persevering trust in the ever-just God who acts in his time.
  - Hab. 2:4. Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.
    - Rom. 1:16–17. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “*The righteous shall live by faith.*”
    - Gal. 3:9–12. So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. <sup>10</sup>For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is

written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”<sup>11</sup> Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “*The righteous shall live by faith.*”<sup>12</sup> But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”

- Heb. 10:35–39. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.<sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.<sup>37</sup> For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but *my righteous one shall live by faith*, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.
- John 3:36. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.
- Hab. 3:2, 16–19. O Yahweh, I have heard the report of you (cf. 3:3–15), and your work, O Yahweh, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.... I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in Yahweh; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. Yahweh, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places.

**Fig. 17.7. The Way of the Wicked vs. the Way of the Righteous**

	<i>Five “Woes” against the Wicked (2:6–19)</i>	<i>Implicit Characteristics of the Righteous</i>
1	Greed for the booty of conquest (vv. 6–8)	Respecting of others’ goods, content, generous
2	Pride in their building projects accomplished through exploitation of others (vv. 9–11)	Grateful to God, humble, respecting of others
3	Self-centered injustice (vv. 12–13)	Just with others, dependent on God and living for God
4	Violence in stripping others of their possessions and dignity (vv. 15–17)	Honoring of others, respecting of human dignity
5	Idol worship (vv. 18–19)	Worshipping Yahweh alone, distinguishing Creator and creature

3. “In Your Wrath, Remember Mercy: Habakkuk 1:2–4; 3:2–19 Recast in Verse”  
(Jason S. DeRouchie [12/8/2010])

Injustice prevailing; your law unheeded;  
The righteous surrounded. In the wicked is seated  
A heart filled with violence,  
Yet you remain silent.  
How long, O LORD,  
Will there remain a sword  
Cutting the good while serving the wrong,  
Hurting the helpless to promote the strong?  
The oppressed of faith all do crave  
For you to come, for you to save.

From of old a report did ascend,  
That's now come to my ear.  
A storm of power that did lend  
Aid to all who fear.  
Revive this work that all may see;  
In your wrath, remember mercy.

In glorious array, you came before—  
The heavens you mounted in splendor.  
With bright light and a lion's roar,  
Your verdict ready to render.  
Unveil your power in these days,  
Filling the earth with your praise.

The self-sufficient were in your path,  
But plague was at your heels.  
The nations quaked under your wrath,  
Your mighty hand revealed.  
From everlasting your purposes stand,  
Weigh now the hearts of all in hand.

All the mighty from earthly view  
Trembled at your arrival.  
Your bow was freed, the arrows flew,  
All for your people's survival.  
The sun and moon stood as if dead,  
As your unleashed fury did spread.

The mountains saw you and thrashed;  
The liquid torrents gushed.  
Upon your enemies you lashed,  
The heads of the strongest crushed.  
You rode upon your chariot throne,  
Working salvation for your own.

My body trembles at your might,  
Lord, save me from such an hour.  
My lips and limbs quiver at the sight  
Of your majestic power.  
Your day of trouble I await to arrive;  
Please keep you anointed and people alive.

Though the fruit no longer yield,  
 The crops no longer fill the field;  
 Though in the stall the sheep should die,  
 No longer milk to supply;  
 Though pains and trial should sustain,  
 Faithful to Yahweh I will remain.  
 He, my Treasure, Redeemer, and King,  
 He is for me, so I can sing.  
 I will trust, with no fear of fire,  
 My Savior, Sovereign, and Satisfier.

“To the choirmaster,” ends this song—  
 From faith for faith throughout the ages  
 To join the prophet in persevering long,  
 Believing good news, which alone can saves us.  
 Christ, the Victor—we in him secure;  
 The wicked will perish, the righteous endure.

--Jason S. DeRouchie (12/8/2010)

4. “Faith” or “faithfulness” in Hab. 2:4? “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith” (ESV).
  - a. A number of scholars have argued that the term translated “faith” in Hab. 2:4 should actually be translated “faithfulness” or “trustworthiness,” just as it is almost universally translated in every other occurrence in the OT.
    - 1 Sam. 26:23. Yahweh rewards every man for his righteousness and his *faithfulness*, for Yahweh gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against Yahweh’s anointed.
    - Isa. 11:5. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and *faithfulness* the belt of his loins.
    - Hos. 2:20. I will betroth you to me in *faithfulness*. And you shall know Yahweh.
    - Ps. 119:30. I have chosen the way of *faithfulness*; I set your rules before me.
    - Prov. 28:20. A man of *faithfulness* will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.
  - b. While certainly the righteous man is characterized by “faithfulness,” the contrast between the righteous and the self-exalting and self-confident wicked suggests that Hab. 2:4 is indeed focused on the life characterized by “faith” or “steadfastness” in relation to God and his ways. The righteous one will enjoy life as he manifests a godward heart that is steadfast in trust, surrendered to God’s timing, and confident in God’s present sustaining power and future redemption. The thrust throughout is not on man’s faithfulness to God but in his surrendered trust in God’s faithfulness to the righteous (cf. Gal. 3:11; Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38).