

## INTRODUCTION TO MICAH

This book is called, in the Hebrew copies, “Sepher Micah”, the Book of Micah; in the Vulgate Latin version “the Prophecy of Micah”; and in the Syriac version “the Prophecy of the Prophet Micah”. This prophet is not the same with Micaiah the son of Imiah, who lived in the times of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, (<sup><1228></sup>1 Kings 22:8); for, as Aben Ezra observes, there were many generations between them, at least many reigns of kings, as Jehoram, Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah, all which made up a hundred and thirty years; their names indeed seem to be the same, since he that is called Micaiah, (<sup><1228></sup>1 Kings 22:8); is called Micah, (<sup><484></sup>2 Chronicles 18:14); and this our prophet is named Micaiah in (<sup><268></sup>Jeremiah 26:18); which is with some of the same signification with Michael. So Abarbinel interprets, it, “who [is] as God”; (see <sup><378></sup>Micah 7:18); which Hillerus<sup>f1</sup> confutes, and renders it, “the contrition, attrition, attenuation, and depauperation, of the Lord”; deriving it from *Æwm*, which signifies to be depressed, humbled, weakened, and impoverished, as others do; which name, some think, was given him by his parents, because of their low estate, their meanness and poverty; but of them we have no account: however, this is much more probable than the reason Cornelius a Lapide gives of his name, that he was so called because he prophesied of Christ, who was poor, and that he should be born in a poor country village. As for his country, and the place of his birth, and the time in which he lived, they may be gathered from (<sup><301></sup>Micah 1:1); by which it will appear that he was not of the tribe of Ephraim, as Pseudo-Epiphanius<sup>f2</sup> says but of the tribe of Judah; whose kings’ reigns in which he prophesies are only made mention of; though his prophecies concerned both Israel and Judah, and he reproves both for their sins, and foretells their various captivities; and, for the comfort of God’s people, says many things concerning the Messiah, his incarnation the place of his birth, which no prophet so clearly points at as he, the execution of his offices, prophetic, priestly, and kingly; the blessings of grace that came by him, pardon of sin, atonement, etc. and the happiness and glory of his church in the latter day. The authority of this book is confirmed both by the elders of Judah in the times of Jeremiah, who quote a passage out of it; (<sup><382></sup>Micah 3:12); which they improve in favour of that prophet, (<sup><267></sup>Jeremiah 26:17-19); and by the chief priests and Scribes in the time of Herod, who refer that prince to a prophecy in this book for the place of the

Messiah's birth, (<sup>f2</sup>Micah 5:2); (see <sup>f1</sup>Matthew 2:4-6). He is thought to have prophesied thirty or forty years, Bishop Usher<sup>f3</sup> places him in the year of the world 3291 A.M., and 713 B.C.; but, according to Mr. Whiston<sup>f4</sup>, he prophesied 750 B.C., and so Mr. Bedford<sup>f5</sup>, and three after the building of the city of Rome; and he foretells the captivity of the ten tribes thirty years, and the coming of Sennacherib forty years, before they came to pass; but when and where he died, and was buried, no certain proof can be given. Pseudo-Epiphanius, confounding him with Micaiah in Ahab's time, says<sup>f6</sup> he was killed by his son Joram, who cast him down from a precipice, and was buried at Morathi, his native place, near the burying ground of Enakeim, and his grave was well known to that day. And, according to Jerom<sup>f7</sup>, the grave of this our prophet was at Morasthi, and in his time turned into a church or temple. Sozomen<sup>f8</sup> reports, that, in the times of Theodosius the elder, the body of Micah was found by Zebennus bishop of Eleutheropolis at Berathsalia, a mile and a quarter from the city, near which was the grave of Micah, called by the common people the faithful monument, and in their country language Nephsamemana.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO MICAH 1

This chapter treats of the judgments of God on Israel and Judah for their idolatry. It begins with the title of the whole book in which is given an account of the prophet, the time of his prophesying, and of the persons against whom he prophesied, (<sup><3000></sup>Micah 1:1); next a preface to this chapter, requiring attention to what was about to be delivered, urged from the consideration of the awful appearance of God, which is represented as very grand and terrible, (<sup><3000></sup>Micah 1:2-4); the cause of all which wrath that appeared in him was the transgression of Jacob; particularly their idolatry, as appears by the special mention of their idols and graven images in the account of their destruction, (<sup><3000></sup>Micah 1:5-7); which destruction is exaggerated by the prophet's lamentation for it, (<sup><3000></sup>Micah 1:8,9); and by the mourning of the inhabitants of the several places that should be involved in it, which are particularly mentioned, (<sup><3000></sup>Micah 1:10-16).

**Ver. 1.** *The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite*, etc.] So called, either from Mareshah, mentioned (<sup><3000></sup>Micah 1:15); and was a city in the tribe of Judah, (<sup><654></sup>Joshua 15:44); as the Targum, Jarchi, Kimchi, and Zacutus<sup>f9</sup>; or rather from Moresheth, from which Moreshethgath, (<sup><3000></sup>Micah 1:14); is distinguished; which Jerom<sup>f10</sup> says was in his time a small village in the land of Palestine, near Eleutheropolis. Some think these two cities to be one and the same; but they appear to be different from the account of Jerom<sup>f11</sup> elsewhere. The Arabic version reads it, Micah the son of Morathi; so Cyril, in his commentary on this place, mentions it as the sense of some, that Morathi was the father of the prophet; which can by no means be assented to:

*in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah*; by which it appears that he was contemporary with Isaiah, Hoses, and Amos, though they began to prophesy somewhat sooner than he, even in the days of Uzziah; very probably he conversed with these prophets, especially Isaiah, with whom he agrees in many things; his style is like his, and sometimes uses the same phrases: he, being of the tribe of Judah, only mentions the kings of that nation most known to him; though he prophesied against

Israel, and in the days of Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea:

*which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem*; in the vision of prophecy; Samaria was the metropolis of the ten tribes of Israel, and is put for them all; as Jerusalem was of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and is put for them Samaria is mentioned first, because it was the head of the greatest body of people; and as it was the first in transgression, it was the first in punishment.

**Ver. 2.** *Hear, all ye people*, etc.] Or, “the people, all of them”<sup>f12</sup>; not all the nations of the world, but the nations of Israel, so called from their several tribes; though some<sup>f13</sup> think the rest of the inhabitants of the earth are meant: thee are the same words which are used by Micaiah the prophet in the times of Ahab, long before this time, from whom they might be borrowed, (<sup>1228</sup>1 Kings 22:28). The phrase in the Hebrew language, as Aben Ezra observes, is very wonderful, and serves to strike the minds and excite the attention of men; it is like the words of a crier, in a court of judicature, calling for silence:

*hearken, O earth, and all that therein is*; or, “its fulness”<sup>f14</sup>; the land of Israel and Judah, the whole land of promise, and all the inhabitants of it; for to them are the following words directed:

*and let the Lord God be witness against you*; or, “in you”<sup>f15</sup>; the Word of the Lord, as the Targum; let him who is the omniscient God, and knows all hearts, thoughts, words, and actions, let him bear witness in your consciences, that what I am about to say is truth, and comes from him; is not my own word, but his; and if you disregard it, and repent not, let him be a witness against you, and for me, that I have prophesied in his name; that I have faithfully delivered his message, and warned you of your danger, and reproved you for your sins, and have kept back nothing I have been charged and entrusted with: and now, you are summoned into open court, and at the tribunal of the great God of heaven and earth; let him be a witness against you of the many sins you have been guilty of, and attend while the indictment is read, the charge exhibited, and the proof given by

*the Lord from his holy temple*, from heaven, the habitation of his holiness; whose voice speaking from thence should be hearkened to; who from thence beholds all the actions of men, and from whence his wrath is revealed against their sins, and he gives visible tokens of his displeasure;

and especially when he seems to come forth from thence in some remarkable instances of his power and providence, as follows:

**Ver. 3.** *For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place,* etc.] Out of heaven, the place of the house of his Shechinah or Majesty, as the Targum; where his throne is prepared; where he keeps his court, and displays his glory; from whence he removes, not by local motion, since he is everywhere; but by some manifest exertion of his power, either on the behalf of his people, or in taking vengeance on his and their enemies; or on them sinning against him, in which sense it is probably to be understood. It signifies not change of place, but of his dispensations; going out of his former customary method into another; removing, as Jarchi has it, from the throne of mercies to the throne of judgment; doing not acts of mercy, in which he delights, but exercising judgment, his strange work. So the Cabalistic writers<sup>f16</sup> observe on the passage, that

“it cannot be understood of place properly taken, according to (~~2012~~ Isaiah 40:12 ~~1087~~ 1 Kings 8:27); for God is the place of the world, not the world his place; hence our wise men so expound the text, he cometh forth out of the measure of mercy, and goes into the measure of justice;”

or property of it. Some understand this of his leaving the temple at Jerusalem, and giving it up into the hands of the Chaldeans; but the former sense is best:

*and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth;* which are his footstool; Samaria and Jerusalem, built on mountains, and all other high towers and fortified places, together with men of high looks and haughty countenances, who exalt themselves like mountains, and swell with pride: these the Lord can easily subdue and humble, bring low and tread down like the mire of the street; perhaps there may be an allusion to the high places where idols were worshipped; and which were the cause of the Lord’s wrath and vengeance, and of his coming forth, in this unusual way, in his providences.

**Ver. 4.** *And the mountains shall be molten under him,* etc.] As Sinai was when he descended on it, and as all nations will be at the general conflagration; but here the words are to be taken, not literally, but figuratively, for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and for the kings, and princes, and great men in them, that lifted up their heads as high, and

thought themselves as secure, as mountains; yet when the judgments of God should fall upon them, their hearts would melt through fear under him; as well as all their glory and greatness depart from them, and they be no more what they were before, but levelled with the meanest subject:

*and the valleys shall be cleft*: have chasms made in them by the melting of the mountains, or by the flow of water from the hills: these may design the lower sort of people, who shall have their share in this calamity; the inhabitants of the valleys and country villages; who, though mean and low, shall be lower still, and lose that little substance, that liberty and those privileges, they had; as valleys may be cleft, and open, and sink into the lower parts of the earth; so it is signified that these people should be in a more depressed state and condition:

*as wax before the fire*; melts, and cannot stand the force of it; so the mountains should melt at the presence of the Lord; and kingdoms and states, and the greatest and mightiest of men in them, would not be able to stand before the fierceness of his wrath; (see <sup><388D></sup>Psalm 68:2);

*[and] as the waters [that are] poured down a steep place*; that run with great swiftness, force, and rapidity, and there is no stopping them; so should the judgments of God come down upon the lower sort of people, the inhabitants of the valleys; neither high nor low would escape the indignation of the Lord, or be able to stand against it, or stand up under it.

**Ver. 5.** *For the transgression of Jacob [is] all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel*, etc.] All this evil, all these calamities and judgments, signified by the above metaphorical phrases, these did not come by chance, nor without, reason; but were or would be inflicted, according to the righteous judgment of God, upon the people of Israel and Judah, for their manifold sins and transgressions, especially their idolatry: and should it be asked,

*what [is] the transgression of Jacob?* what notorious crime has he been guilty of? or what is the iniquity the two tribes are charged with, that is the cause of so much severity? the answer is,

*[is it] not Samaria?* the wickedness of Samaria, the calf of Samaria? as in (<sup><280B></sup>Hosea 7:1 <sup><2806></sup>8:6); that is, the worship of the calf of Samaria; is not that idolatry the transgression of Jacob, or which the ten tribes have given into? it is; and a just reason for all this wrath to come upon them: or, “who [is] the transgression of Jacob?”<sup>f17</sup> who is the spring and source of it; the

cause, author, and encourager of it? are they not the kings that have reigned in Samaria from the times of Omri, with their nobles, princes, and great men, who, by their edicts, influence, and example, have encouraged the worship of the golden calves? they are the original root and motive of it, and to them it must be ascribed; they caused the people to sin: or, as the Targum,

“where have they of the house of Jacob sinned? is it not in Samaria?”

verily it is, and from thence, the metropolis of the nation, the sin has spread itself all over it:

*and what [are] the high places of Judah?* or, “who [are] they?”<sup>f18</sup> who have been the makers of them? who have set them up, and encouraged idolatrous worship at them?

*[are] they not Jerusalem?* are they not the king, the princes, and priests, that dwell at Jerusalem? certainly they are; such as Ahaz, and others, in whose times this prophet lived; (see <sup><1264></sup>2 Kings 16:4); or, as the Targum,

“where did they of the house of Judah commit sin? was it not in Jerusalem?”

truly it was, and even in the temple; here Ahaz built an altar like that at Damascus, and sacrificed on it, and spoiled the temple, and several of the vessels in it, (<sup><1260></sup>2 Kings 16:10-18).

**Ver. 6.** *Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, [and] as plantings of a vineyard,* etc.] As a field ploughed, and laid in heaps; (see <sup><382></sup>Micah 3:12); or as stones gathered out of a field, and out of a vineyard planted, and laid in a heap; so should this city become a heap of stones and rubbish, being utterly demolished; and this being done according to the will of God, and through his instigation of Shalmaneser king of Assyria to it, and by his providence succeeding his army that besieged it, is said to be done by him. With this agrees the Vulgate Latin version,

“I will make Samaria as a heap of stones in a field, when a vineyard is planted;”

(see <sup><282></sup>Isaiah 5:2); for the city, being destroyed, cannot be compared to the plants of a vineyard set in good order, beautiful and thriving; but, as to heaps of stones in a field, so to such in a vineyard; or to hillocks raised up

there for the plants of vines; and if the comparison is to plants themselves, it must be to withered ones, that are good for nothing. The note of similitude as is not in the text; and the words may be read without it, "I will make Samaria an heap of the field, plantings of a vineyard"<sup>f19</sup>; that is, it shall be ploughed up, and made a heap of; turned into a field, and vines planted on it; for which its situation was very proper, being on a hill where vines used to be planted, and so should no more be inhabited as a city:

*and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley*; the stones of the buildings and walls of the city, which, being on a hill, when pulled down, rolled into the valley; and with as much swiftness and force as waters run down a steep place, as in (~~300~~ Micah 1:4); where the same word is used as here:

*and I will discover the foundations thereof*; which should be fused up, and left bare; not one stone should be upon another; so that there should be no traces and footsteps of the city remaining, and it should be difficult to know the place where it stood. This is expressive of the total desolation and utter destruction of it: this was not accomplished by Shalmaneser when he took it; for though he carried captive the inhabitants thereof, he put others in their room; but this was entirely fulfilled, not by Jonathan Maccabeus, though he is said<sup>f20</sup> to besiege it, and level it with the ground; but by John Hyrcanus; and the account of the destruction of it by him, as given by Josephus<sup>f21</sup>, exactly answers to this prophecy, and, to (~~281316~~ Hosea 13:16); where its desolation is also predicted; he says that Hyrcanus, having besieged it a year, took it; and, not content with this only, he utterly destroyed it, making brooks to run through it; and by digging it up, so that it fell into holes and caverns, insomuch that there were no signs nor traces of the city left. It was indeed afterwards rebuilt by Gabinius the Roman proconsul of Syria, and restored by Augustus Caesar to Herod, who adorned and fortified it, and called it by the name of Sebaste, in honour of Augustus<sup>f22</sup>; though Benjamin of Tudela pretends that Ahab's palace might be discerned there in his time, or the place known where it was, which is not likely; excepting this, his account is probable.

"From Luz (he says<sup>f23</sup>) is one day's journey to Sebaste, which is Samaria; and still there may be perceived there the palace of Ahab king of Israel; and it is a fortified city on a very high hill, and in it are fountains; and is a land of brooks of water, and gardens, orchards, vineyards, and olive yards;"



but, since his time, it is become more ruinous. Mr. Maundrell, who some years ago was upon the spot, gives a fuller account of it;

“this great city (he says<sup>f24</sup>) is now wholly converted into gardens; and all the tokens that remain, to testify that there has ever been such a place, are only on the north side, a large square piazza, encompassed with pillars; and, on the east, some poor remains of a great church, said to be built by the Empress Helena, over the place where St. John Baptist was both imprisoned and beheaded.”

So say others<sup>f25</sup>,

“the remains of Sebaste, or the ancient Samaria, though long ago laid in ruinous heaps, and a great part of it turned into ploughed land and garden ground, do still retain some monuments of its ancient grandeur, and of those noble edifices in it, with which King Herod caused it to be adorned;”

and then mention the large square piazza on the north, and the church on the east. It was twelve miles from Dothaim, and as many from Merran, and four from Atharoth, according to Eusebius<sup>f26</sup>; and was, as Josephus<sup>f27</sup> says, a day’s journey from Jerusalem. Sichem, called by the Turks Naplus, is now the metropolis of the country of Samaria; Samaria, or Sebaste, being utterly destroyed, as says Petrus a Valle<sup>f28</sup>, a traveller in those parts.

**Ver. 7.** *And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces,* etc.] By the Assyrian army, for the sake of the gold and silver of which they were, made, or with which they were adorned, as was usually done by conquerors to the gods of the nations they conquered; these were the calf of Samaria, and other idols; and not only those in the city of Samaria, but in all the other cities of Israel which fell into the hands of the Assyrian monarch; (see <sup><23011></sup>Isaiah 10:11);

*and all the hires thereof shall be burnt with fire;* this the Targum also interprets of idols; such as escaped the plunder of the soldiers should be burnt with fire: Kimchi, by “hires”, understands the beautiful garments, and other ornaments, with which they adorned their idols, which were gifts unto them; and they committing spiritual adultery with them, these are compared to the hire of a harlot: or it may design their fine houses, and the furniture of them, all their substance and riches, which they looked upon as obtained by entering into alliances with idolatrous nations, and as the hire

and reward of their idolatry; all these should be consumed by fire when the city was taken:

*and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate*; such as were not broke to pieces, nor burnt, should be thrown down, and trampled upon, and made no account of, or carried away with other spoil. The Targum interprets it of the houses or temples of their idols, which should be demolished. By this and the preceding clause it appears, that, besides the golden calf, there were other idols worshipped in Samaria. In the times of Ahab was the image of Baal, with others, for which he built an altar and a temple in Samaria, and a grove, (<sup><1163></sup>1 Kings 16:31-33) (<sup><1206></sup>2 Kings 10:26,27); and at the time it was taken by Shalmaneser there were idols in it, as appears from (<sup><2300></sup>Isaiah 10:10,11 <sup><2369></sup>36:19); and there were still more after a colony of the Babylonians and others were introduced into it; the names of which were Succothbenoth, Nergal, Ashima, Nibhaz, Tartak, Adrammelech, and Anammelech. The first of these is thought, by Selden<sup>f29</sup> to be Venus; and the two last, both by him and Braunius<sup>f30</sup>, to be the same with Moloch, having the signification of a king in them, as that word signifies, and children being burnt unto them: they are all difficult to be understood. The account the Jews<sup>f31</sup> give of them is, that “Succothbenoth” were images of a hen and chickens; “Nergal”, a cock; “Ashima”, a goat without hair; “Nibhaz”, or “Nibchan”, as sometimes read, a dog; and “Tartak”, an ass; “Adrammelech”, a mule, or a peacock; and “Anammelech”, a horse, or a pheasant. And it was not unusual for some of these creatures to be worshipped by the Heathens, as a cock by the Syrians, and others; a goat by the Mendesians; and the dog Anubis, perhaps the same with Nibhaz, by the Egyptians<sup>f32</sup>. And though the inhabitants of Samaria might be better instructed, after Manasseh and other Jews came to reside among them in later times, still they retained idolatrous practices; and, even in the times of our Lord, they were ignorant of the true object of religious worship, (<sup><402></sup>John 4:22); and they are charged by the Jewish writers<sup>f33</sup> with worshipping the image of a dove on Mount Gerizim, and also such strange gods, the teraphim, which Jacob hid under the oak at Sichem; however, let their idols be what they will they worshipped, they are now utterly destroyed, according to this prophecy;

*for she gathered [it] of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot*; as all the riches of Samaria and its inhabitants were gathered together as the reward of their idolatry, as they imagined, so they should return to idolaters, the Assyrians; to Nineveh, called the well

favoured harlot, (<sup><3004</sup>Nahum 3:4); the metropolis of the Assyrian empire; and to the house or temple of those that worshipped idols, as the Targum; with which they should adorn their idols, or use them in idolatrous worship: or the sense in general is, that as their riches were ill gotten, as the hire of a harlot, and which never prospers, so theirs should come to nothing; as it came, so it should go: according to our proverb, “lightly come, lightly go”. The allusion seems to be to harlots prostituting themselves in the temples of idols, which was common among the Heathens, as at Comana and Corinth, as Strabo<sup>f34</sup> relates; and particularly among the Babylonians and Assyrians, which may be here referred to: for Herodotus<sup>f35</sup> says, it was a law with the Babylonians that every woman of that country should once in her life sit in the temple of Venus, and lie with a strange man: here women used to sit with a crown upon their heads: nor might they return home until some stranger threw money into their laps, and took them out of the temple, and lay with them; and he that cast it must say, I implore the goddess Mylitta for thee; the name by which the Assyrians call Venus; nor was it lawful to reject the price or the money, be it what it would, for it was converted to holy uses, and Strabo<sup>f36</sup> affirms much the same. So the Phoenician women used to prostitute themselves in the temples of their idols, and dedicate there the hire of their bodies to their gods, thinking thereby to appease their deities, and obtain good things for themselves<sup>f37</sup>.

**Ver. 8.** *Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked,* etc.] To his shut, putting off his upper garment; the rough one, such as the prophets used to wear; which he did as the greater sign of his mourning: sometimes, in such cases, they rent their garments; at other times they stripped themselves of them, and walked naked, as Isaiah did, (<sup><2308</sup>Isaiah 20:3,4); he went about like a madman, one disturbed in his mind, bereft of his senses, because of the desolation coming upon Israel; and without his clothes, as such persons often do: so the word rendered “stripped” signifies, as the Jewish commentators observe. This lamentation, and with these circumstances, the prophet made in his own person, to show the reality and certainty of their ruin, and to represent to them the desolate condition they would be in, destitute of all good things, and to them with it; as well as to express the sympathy of his heart, and thereby to assure them that it was not out of ill will to them, or a spirit of revenge, that he delivered such a message: or this he did in the person of all the people,

showing what they would do, and that this would be their case shortly. So the Targum,

“for this they shall wail and howl, and go naked among the spoilers;”

*I will make a wailing like the dragons*; as in their fight with elephants, at which time they make a hideous noise<sup>f38</sup>; and whose hissings have been very terrible to large bodies of men. Aelianus<sup>f39</sup> speaks of a dragon in India, which, when it perceived Alexander’s army near at hand, gave such a prodigious hiss and blast, that it greatly frightened and disturbed the whole army: and he relates<sup>f40</sup> of another, that was in a valley near Mount Pellenaeus, in the isle of Chios, whose hissing was very terrible to the inhabitants of that place; and Bochart<sup>f41</sup> conjectures that this their hissing is here referred to; and who observes of the whale, that it has its name from a word in the Hebrew tongue, which signifies to lament; and which word is here used, and is frequently used of large fishes, as whales, sea calves, dolphins, etc. which make a great noise and bellowing, as the sea calf; particularly the balaena, which is one kind of a whale, and makes such a large and continued noise, as to be heard at the distance of two miles, as Rondeletius<sup>f42</sup> says; and dolphins are said to make a moan and groaning like human creatures, as Pliny<sup>f43</sup> and Solinus<sup>f44</sup> report: and Peter Gillius relates, from his own experience, that lodging one night in a vessel, in which many dolphins were taken, there were such weeping and mourning, that he could not sleep for them; he thought they deplored their condition with mourning, lamentation, and a large flow of tears, as men do, and therefore could not help pitying their case; and, while the fisherman was asleep, took that which was next him, that seemed to mourn most, and cast it into the sea; but this was of no avail, for the rest increased their mourning more and more, and seemed plainly to desire the like deliverance; so that all the night he was in the midst of the most bitter moaning: wherefore Bochart, who quotes these instances, elsewhere<sup>f45</sup> thinks that the prophet compares his mourning with the mourning of these creatures, rather than with the hissing of dragons. Some<sup>f46</sup> think crocodiles are here meant; and of them it is reported<sup>f47</sup>, that when they have eaten the body of a creature, which they do first, and come to the head, they weep over it with tears; hence the proverb of crocodiles tears, for hypocritical ones; but it cannot well be thought, surely, that the prophet would compare his mourning to that of such a creature. The learned Pocock thinks it more reasonable that the “jackals” are meant, called by the Arabians “ebn awi”,

rather than dragons; a creature of a size between a fox and a wolf, or a dog and a fox, which makes a dreadful howling in the night; by which travellers, unacquainted with it, would think a company of women or children were howling, and goes before the lion as his provider;

*and mourning as the owls*; or “daughters of the owl”<sup>f48</sup>; which is a night bird, and makes a very frightful noise, especially the screech owl. The Targum interprets it of the ostrich<sup>f49</sup>; and it may be meant either of the mourning it makes when its young are about to be taken away, and it exposes itself to danger on their account, and perishes in the attempt. Aelianus<sup>f50</sup> reports that they are taken by sharp iron spikes fixed about their nest, when they are returning to their young, after having been in quest of food for them; and, though they see the shining iron, yet such is their vehement desire after their young, that they spread their wings like sails, and with great swiftness and noise rush into the nest, where they are transfixed with the spikes, and die: and not only Vatablus observes, that these creatures have a very mournful voice; but Bochart<sup>f51</sup> has shown, from the Arabic writers, that they frequently cry and howl; and from John de Laet, who affirms that those in the parts about Brazil cry so loud as to be heard half a mile; and indeed they have their name from crying and howling. The Targum renders it by a word which signifies pleasant; and so Onkelos on (<sup><B116></sup>Leviticus 11:16), by an antiphrasis, because its voice is so very unpleasant. Or, since the words may be rendered, “the daughters of the ostrich”<sup>f52</sup>, it may be understood of the mourning of its young, when left by her, when they make a hideous noise and miserable moan, as some observe<sup>f53</sup>.

**Ver. 9.** *For her wound [is] incurable*, etc.] Or her “stroke [is] desperate”<sup>f54</sup>. The ruin of Samaria, and the ten tribes, was inevitable; the decree being gone forth, and they hardened in their sins, and continuing in their impenitence; and their destruction was irrevocable; they were not to be restored again, nor are they to this day; nor will be till the time comes that all Israel shall be saved: or “she is grievously sick of her wounds”; just ready to die, upon the brink of ruin, and no hope of saving her; this is the cause and reason of the above lamentation of the prophet: and what increased his grief and sorrow the more was,

*for it is come unto Judah*; the calamity has reached the land of Judah; it stopped not with Israel or the ten tribes, but spread itself into the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin; for the Assyrian army, having taken Samaria,

and carried Israel captive, in a short time, about seven or eight years, invaded Judea, and took the fenced cities of Judah in Hezekiah's time, in which Micah prophesied;

*he is come unto the gate of my people, [even] to Jerusalem;* Sennacherib, king of Assyria, having taken the fenced cities, came up to the very gates of Jerusalem, and besieged it, where the courts of judicature were kept, and the people resorted to, to have justice done them; and Micah, being of the tribe of Judah, calls them his people, and was the more affected with their distress.

**Ver. 10.** *Declare ye [it] not at Gath,* etc.] A city of the Philistines, put for all the rest: the phrase is borrowed from (<sup><3000></sup>2 Samuel 1:20); where the reason is given, and holds good here as there; and the sense is, not that the destruction of Israel, or the invasion of Judea, or the besieging of Jerusalem, could be hid from the Philistines; but that it was a thing desirable, was it possible, since it would be matter of rejoicing to them, and that would be an aggravation of the distress of Israel and Judah:

*weep ye not at all;* that is, before the Philistines, or such like enemies, lest they should laugh and scoff at you; though they had reason to weep, and did and ought to weep in secret; yet, as much as in them lay, it would be right to forbear it openly, because of the insults and reproach of the enemy. The learned Reland<sup>f55</sup> suspects that it should be read, "weep not in Acco": which was another city in Palestine, to the north from the enemy, as Gath was to the south; and observes, that there is a like play on words<sup>f56</sup> in the words, as in the places after mentioned. Acco is the same with Ptolemais, (<sup><4207></sup>Acts 21:7). It had this name from Ptolemy Lagus king of Egypt, who enlarged it, and called it after his own name; but Mr, Maundrell<sup>f57</sup> observes,

"now, since it hath been in the possession of the Turks, it has, according to the example of many other cities in Turkey, cast off its Greek, and recovered some semblance of its old Hebrew name again, being called Acca, or Acra. As to its situation (he says) it enjoys all possible advantages, both of sea and land; on its north and east sides it is compassed with a spacious and fertile plain; on the west it is washed by the Mediterranean sea; and on the south by a large bay, extending from the city as far as Mount Carmel;"

*in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust;* as mourners used to do, sit in the dust, or cover their heads with it, or wallow in it; this is allowed to

be done privately, in houses or in towns distinct from the Philistines, as Aphrah or Ophrah was, which was in the tribe of Benjamin, (<sup><061823></sup>Joshua 18:23); called here “Aphrah”, to make it better agree with “Aphar”, dust, to which the allusion is: and it may be rendered, “in the house of dust roll thyself in the dust”; having respect to the condition houses would be in at this time, mere heaps of dust and rubbish, so that they would find enough easily to roll themselves in. Here is a double reading; the “Keri”, or marginal reading, which the Masora directs to, and we follow, is, “roll thyself”: but the “Cetib”, or writing, is, “I have rolled myself”<sup>f58</sup>; and so are the words of the prophet, who before says he wailed and howled, and went stripped and naked; here he says, as a further token of his sorrow, that he rolled himself in dust, and as an example for Israel to do the like. This place was a village in the times of Jerom<sup>f59</sup> and was called Effrem; it was five miles from Bethel to the east.

**Ver. 11.** *Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir*, etc.] A village, according to Eusebius<sup>f60</sup>, between Eleutheropolis and Ashkelon; perhaps the same with Sephoron; it is mentioned among the cities of Judah, in the Greek version of (<sup><061548></sup>Joshua 15:48). Calmet<sup>f61</sup> conjectures the prophet intends the city of Sephoris or Sephora in Galilee. Hillerus<sup>f62</sup>: takes it to be the same with Parah, mentioned with Ophrah, in (<sup><061823></sup>Joshua 18:23); so called from its ornament, neatness, beauty, and elegance, as both words signify, to which the prophet alludes: now everyone of the inhabitants of this place are called upon to prepare to go into captivity to Babylon; which would certainly be their case, though they dwelled in fine buildings, neat houses, and streets well paved. In the margin it is, “thou that dwellest fairly”<sup>f63</sup>; which some understand of Samaria; others of Judea; and particularly Jerusalem, beautifully situated, yet should go into captivity:

*having thy shame naked*; their city dismantled, their houses plundered, and they stripped of their garments, and the shame of their nakedness discovered; which must be the more distressing to beautiful persons, that have dressed neatly, and lived in handsome well built houses, and elegantly furnished, and now all the reverse;

*the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethazel*; or house of Azel, where the posterity of Azel, of the tribe of Benjamin, dwelt. Hillerus<sup>f64</sup> suspects it to be the same with Mozah, (<sup><061826></sup>Joshua 18:26); so called from Moza, the great grandfather of Azel, (<sup><13087></sup>1 Chronicles 8:37,38). Capellus takes it to be the same with Azal in (<sup><3845></sup>Zechariah 14:5).



This place being taken and plundered by the enemy occasioned great mourning among the inhabitants: and it seems to have been taken first, before Zaanan; perhaps the same with Zenan, (<sup><657></sup>Joshua 15:37); and is here read “Sennan” by Aquila; the inhabitants of which did not “come forth”, in which there is an allusion to its name <sup>f65</sup>, either to help them in their distress, or to condole them; they being in fear of the enemy themselves, and in arms in their own defence, expecting it would be their turn next, and that they should share the same fate with them. Some think that under the name of Bethazel is meant Bethel; and of Zaanan, Zion; and that the sense is, that when Bethel, Samaria, and the ten tribes, were in distress, they of Zion and Judea did not come to give them any relief; and when they were carried captive did not mourn with them, were not affected with their case, nor troubled themselves about them;

*he shall receive of him his standing*: either the enemy, as R. Joseph Kimchi, shall receive of the inhabitants of Zaanan his standing; that is, he shall make them dearly pay for stopping him, for making him stand and stay so long before their city before he could take it; for all his loss of time, men, and money, in besieging it; by demolishing their city, plundering their houses, and carrying them captive; who remained he put to death by the sword. Aben Ezra interprets the word “receive” of doctrine or learning, as in (<sup><104></sup>Proverbs 4:2); and renders it, “he shall learn”; either Bethazel, or rather Zaanan, shall learn, by the case of Bethazel, and other neighbouring places, what would be his own case, whether he should stand or fall.

**Ver. 12.** *For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good*, etc.] Or, “though [they] waited for good”<sup>f66</sup>; expected to have it, yet the reverse befell them: or “verily [they were] grieved for good”<sup>f67</sup>; for the good things they had lost, or were likely to lose; and which they had no more hope of, when they saw Jerusalem in distress. Grotius thinks, by transposition of letters, Ramoth is intended by Maroth, or the many Ramahs which were in Judah and Benjamin; but Hillerus <sup>f68</sup> is of opinion that Jarmuth is meant, a city of Judah, (<sup><655></sup>Joshua 15:35); the word Maroth signifies “bitterness”; (see <sup><102></sup>Ruth 1:20); and, according to others, “rough places”; and may design the inhabitants of such places that were in great bitterness and trouble because of the invasion of the enemy, who before that had promised themselves good things, and lived in the expectation of them:

*but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem*; meaning the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, which came into the land of Judea by the



order, direction, and providence of God, like an overflowing flood; which spread itself over the land, and reached to the very gates of Jerusalem, which was besieged by it, and threatened with destruction: or “because evil came down”, etc. that is, “because” of that, the inhabitants of Maroth grieved, or were in pain, as a woman in travail.

**Ver. 13.** *O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast,* etc.] Horses, camels, dromedaries, or mules. Some<sup>f69</sup> render the word swift horse or horses, post horses; others dromedaries<sup>f70</sup>; and some mules<sup>f71</sup> the two latter seem more especially to be meant, either dromedaries, as the word is translated in (<sup><1028></sup>1 Kings 4:28); which is a very swift creature: Isidore says<sup>f72</sup> the dromedary is one sort of camels, of a lesser stature, yet swifter, from whence it has its name, and is used to go more than a hundred miles a day; this is thought to be what the Jews<sup>f73</sup> call a flying camel; which the gloss says is a sort of camels that are as swift in running as a bird that flies; they are lighter made than a camel, and go at a much greater rate; whereas a camel goes at the rate of thirty miles a day, the dromedary will perform a journey of one hundred and twenty miles in a day; they make use of them in the Indies for going post, and expresses frequently perform a journey of eight hundred miles upon them in the space of a week<sup>f74</sup>: this may serve the better to illustrate (<sup><1023></sup>Jeremiah 2:23); and improve the note there: but whether these were used in chariots I do not find; only Bochart<sup>f75</sup> takes notice of a kind of camel, that has, like the dromedary, two humps on its back, which the Arabians call “bochet”, and put to chariots: or else mules are meant, for by comparing the above text in (<sup><1028></sup>1 Kings 4:28) with (<sup><1422></sup>2 Chronicles 9:24), it looks as if “mules” were there intended; and so the word here used is rendered in (<sup><1780></sup>Esther 8:10,14); and by their being there said to be used for posts to ride on expresses, it up pears to be a swift creature. Aelianus<sup>f76</sup> makes mention of mules in India of a red colour, very famous for running; and mules were used in the Olympic games, and many riders of them got the victory; and that these were used in chariots, there is no doubt to be made of it: Homer<sup>f77</sup> speaks of mules drawing a four wheeled chariot; so Pausanias<sup>f78</sup> of mules yoked together, and drawing a chariot, instead of horses; and the Septuagint version of (<sup><2361></sup>Isaiah 66:20); instead of “in litters and on mules”, renders it, “in litters” or carriages “of mules”: but, be they one or the other that are here meant, they were creatures well known, and being swift were used in chariots, to which they were bound and fastened in order to draw them, and which we call “putting to”; this the inhabitants of

Lachish<sup>f79</sup> are bid to do, in order to make their escape, and flee as fast as they could from the enemy, advancing to besiege them; as they were besieged by the army of Sennacherib, before he came to Jerusalem, (~~430~~2 Chronicles 32:1,9). Or these words may be spoken in an ironical and sarcastic way, that whereas they had abounded in horses and chariots, and frequently rode about their streets in them, now let them make use of them, and get away if they could; and may suggest, that, instead of riding in these, they should be obliged to walk on foot into captivity. Lachish was a city in the tribe of Judah, in the times of Jerom<sup>f80</sup>; it was a village seven miles from Eleutheropolis, as you go to Daroma or the south;

*she [is] the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion*; lying upon the borders of the ten tribes, as Lachish did, it was the first of the cities of Judah that gave into the idolatry of Jeroboam, the worshipping of the calves; and from thence it spread itself to Zion and Jerusalem; and, being a ringleader in this sin, should be punished for it: though some think this refers to their conspiracy with the citizens of Jerusalem against King Amaziah, and the murder of him in this place, now punished for it, (~~1248~~2 Kings 14:18,19);

*for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee*; not only their idolatry, but all other sins, with which it abounded; it was a very wicked place, and therefore no wonder it was given up to destruction. The Targum is,

“for the transgressors of Israel were found in thee.”

**Ver. 14.** *Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moreshethgath*, etc.] Since Lachish was the cause of leading Judah into idolatry, and was a city so very wicked; therefore it should be reduced to such distress as to send messengers with presents to the Philistines at Moreshethgath, a place near to Gath of the Philistines, and may include that and other cities of theirs, to come and help them against the Assyrians:

*the houses of Achzib [shall be] a lie to the kings of Israel*; a city of Judah, (~~0654~~Joshua 15:44); or of Asher, (~~0652~~Joshua 19:29); the same with Chezib, (~~0035~~Genesis 38:5); and called Ecdippa by Josephus<sup>f81</sup>, Pliny<sup>f82</sup>, and Ptolemy<sup>f83</sup>. The Jewish writers commonly call it Cezib, of which they<sup>f84</sup> say many things about that, and the land unto it, being subject to tithes, the laws of the seventh year, and the like. Maimonides and Bartenora say<sup>f85</sup> it is the name of a place which divided between the land of Israel, which they possessed who came out of Babylon, and that land which they enjoyed who

came out of Egypt; but the Jews are not agreed about the situation of it. One of their writers<sup>f86</sup> places it to the northeast of the land of Israel; but another<sup>f87</sup> observes, and proves from one that resided in those parts some time, and diligently inquired into and made his observation on places, that Cezib, and also Aco and Amana, frequently mentioned with it, were all on the western sea of the land of Israel, that is, the Mediterranean sea; in which he was right, without all doubt: the place is now called Zib by contraction, of which Mr. Maundrell<sup>f88</sup> gives this account;

“having travelled about one hour in the plain of Acra, we passed by an old town called Zib, situate on an ascent close by the seaside; this may probably be the old Achzib, mentioned (~~f89~~ Joshua 19:29 ~~f90~~ Judges 1:31); called afterwards Ecdippa; for St. Jerom<sup>f89</sup> places Achzib nine miles distant from Ptolemais (or Aco), towards Tyre, to which account we found the situation of Zib exactly agreeing.”

Now the houses or families that dwelt in this place, or the idols' temples there, as some, and the idolatry exercised therein, should be a lie unto, or disappoint the expectations of, the kings of Israel; which, according to Kimchi, is put for Judah, who placed confidence in them, and had dependence on them: there is an elegant play on words between Achzib and a “lie”,<sup>f90</sup>. The Targum is,

“thou shall send gifts to the heirs of Gath; the houses of Achzib shall be delivered to the people, because of the sins of the kings of Israel, who worshipped idols in them.”

**Ver. 15.** *Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah,* etc.] Another city in the tribe of Judah, mentioned with Achzib in (~~f91~~ Joshua 15:44); and by many thought to be the birth place of this prophet; and, if so, his faithfulness may be observed in declaring the whole counsel of God, though against his own fire place; and this must be an aggravation of the sin of the inhabitants of it, that they had such a prophet that arose from them, and they regarded him not. There is a beautiful allusion in the word “heir” to Mareshah<sup>f91</sup>, which signifies an “inheritance”; and here were an “heir” or heirs for it, as the Targum; not the Persians, as some in Aben Ezra, and in an Agadah mentioned by Jarchi, who descended from Elam the firstborn of Shem; and so had a right of inheritance, as those interpreters suppose; but the king of Assyria, who should invade the land, and seize upon this place among others, and possess it, as if it was his by right of inheritance, having obtained it by conquest: and this being by the

permission and according to the will of God, he is said to be brought by him to it. Capellus thinks, on the contrary, that Hezekiah and his posterity are meant:

*he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel*; another city in the tribe of Judah, a royal one, (<sup><6155></sup>Joshua 15:35); said by Jerom to be in his time no small village, and to be about ten miles from Eleutheropolis; called the “glory of Israel”, having been a royal city in Joshua’s time, (<sup><6215></sup>Joshua 12:15); and a fenced city in the times of Rehoboam, (<sup><4107></sup>2 Chronicles 11:7); and Eusebius says it was a large town; and Jerom says it was not a small one in his time; though some think Jerusalem is meant, the metropolis of the nation, Israel being put for Judah, as in (<sup><3001></sup>Micah 1:14); and to be read, “he [that is the enemy and heir] shall come to Adullam, yea, to the glory of Israel”<sup>f92</sup>; even to Jerusalem, the most glorious city in all the tribes; though others are of opinion that this is the character of the enemy or heir that should come thither, called so by way of contradiction, as coming to the reproach and disgrace of Israel; or, ironically, whom Israel before gloried in, when they had recourse to him for help. The margin of our Bible reads, “the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam”; that is, the great men, the princes and heads of the people, shall flee to the cave of Adullam<sup>f93</sup>, to hide them from the enemy, where David was hid from Saul; see (<sup><0201></sup>1 Samuel 22:1). Burkius<sup>f94</sup>, a very late commentator, takes Adullam for an appellative, and with Hillerus<sup>f95</sup> renders it, “the perpetuity of the yoke”; and the whole thus, “at the perpetuity of the yoke, the glory of Israel shall come”; that is, when all things shall seem to tend to this, that the yoke once laid on Israel by the Gentiles shall become perpetual, without any hope of deliverance, then shall come the Deliverer, that is, Jesus, the Glory of Israel; and, adds he, God forbid we should think of any other subject here; and so he interprets the “heir” in the preceding clause of the Messiah; and which is a sense far from being despicable.

**Ver. 16.** *Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children*, etc.]

Which is said, either with respect to Mareshah, or to Adullam, or to the whole land, as Kimchi observes; rather to the latter; and that either to Israel, or to Judah, or both; the prophecy in general being concerning them both, (<sup><3001></sup>Micah 1:1); making baldness, whether by plucking off the hair, or by shaving it, was used in token of mourning, (<sup><8011></sup>Job 1:20 <sup><2072></sup>Jeremiah 7:29); and so it is designed to express it here: the inhabitants of the land are called to lamentation and weeping for their children taken from them,

whom they dearly loved, and brought up in a delicate manner. The Targum is,

“pluck off thy hair, and cast it upon the children of thy delight;”

and Sanctius observes; that it was a custom with the Gentiles to cut off their hair, and cast it into the graves of their kindred and friends at their interment, to which he thinks the prophet alludes:

*enlarge thy baldness as the eagle*; when it moults, and cast off all its feathers, as it does in old age, and so renews its youth; to which the allusion seems to be in (<sup><193B></sup>Psalm 103:5 <sup><24B></sup>Isaiah 40:31); or every year, as birds of prey usually do at the beginning of the spring. The Jewish writers<sup>f96</sup> say this happens to it every ten years; when, finding its feathers heavy and unfit for flying, it makes a tour to the sun with all its force it can, to get as near it as possible; and, having heated its plumage excessively, it casts itself into the sea for cooling, and then its feathers fall off, and new ones succeed; and this it does until it is a hundred years old; and to its then state of baldness, while it is moulting, is the allusion here; unless it can be thought any respect is had to that kind of eagle which is called the bald one. In Virginia<sup>f97</sup> there are three sorts of eagles; one is the grey eagle, about the size of a kite; another the black eagle, resembling those in England; and a third the bald eagle, so called because the upper part of the neck and head are covered with a sort of white down: but the former sort of baldness seems to be intended, which is at certain stated times, and not what always is, and is only partial; for it denotes such an universal baldness to be made, as to take in all the parts of the body where any hair grows; as expressive of the general devastation that should be made, which would be the cause of this great mourning:

*for they are gone into captivity from thee*; that is, the delicate children of Israel and Judah, and so were as dead unto them, or worse: this was accomplished in Israel or the ten tribes, partly by Tiglathpileser, and more completely by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, (<sup><2153></sup>2 Kings 15:29 <sup><2176></sup>17:6); and in Judah or the two tribes, when Sennacherib came and took their fenced cities; and doubtless some of the inhabitants and their children were carried captive by him, though not Jerusalem; and therefore cannot be addressed here, as some do interpret the words, unless the prophecy is to be extended to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.