

#25. MINOR PROPHETS - GROUP TWO OBADIAH, JONAH, AND MICAH

1. Key Themes of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

- “God calls for people everywhere to exhibit lives of justice, mercy, and compassion.”
 - **Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah** - are calls for mercy to the undeserving, justice to the mistreated and compassion to those who are victims of treachery.
- Obadiah’s prophetic rebuke reminds us that when Messiah returns, He will call every nation into account, call for true justice, and banish all evil. The focus of such judgment in this context is Edom, but the same themes are echoed with the whole world in mind in the New Testament (Matthew 13:36-43; Revelation 20:11-15; Acts 17:30, 31; Romans 2:3-11; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).
- Jonah paints an image of a merciful God who is willing to receive the most barbaric nation of its day (Assyria). Israel saw Yahweh as their own God, not as a savior for the nations. Jonah called out for his own deliverance from the great fish and received it gladly. But when God extended the same mercy to Nineveh, Jonah was greatly agitated. The resentment of Jonah became the perfect backdrop to showcase the mercy of God.
- Micah reminded the people of Israel that God will judge with perfect wisdom in order to set right what has been perverted in terms of true justice. We may not initially agree with God’s definition of justice, but God’s determinations will be vindicated in the Day of His Kingdom.

2. The Book of Obadiah

- **The Author:** Obadiah, whose name means *Worshipper of Yahweh*. There are about a dozen men in the Old Testament named Obadiah, but no specific information is given as to the prophet’s identity. Some have court of Ahab, but there is no reason to believe that such was the case.
 - An attack on Jerusalem is the setting for Obadiah’s prophecy. In that case, the date would be around 853-840BC. Some scholars feel it is the total destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar that Obadiah recorded. If so, the date is probably around 586-584BC. There were four significant invasions of Jerusalem in the Old Testament:

- 925BC by Shishak, king of Egypt, during the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:25; 2 Chronicles 12).
 - 853-841BC by the Philistines and Arabians during the reign of Jehoram in Judah (2 Chronicles 21:8-20).
 - 790BC by Jehoash, king of Israel (2 Kings 14; 2 Chronicles 25)
 - 586BC by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.
- Only the invasion by the Arabians and Philistines, and the final invasion by Nebuchadnezzar seem to match the description by Obadiah. Many scholars assign the event to the earlier invasion since the total destruction of Jerusalem doesn't seem to be alluded to. However, strong similarities between Obadiah 1-9 and Jeremiah 49:7-22 indicate a later date if Obadiah was compiling quotes from Jeremiah. Since we don't know who borrowed from whom, it is also possible that Jeremiah, possibly writing over 250 years later, was referencing the earlier writing of Obadiah. If the earlier date is correct, then Obadiah was a contemporary of Elijah and Elisha. There simply is not enough contextual information to know for sure when Obadiah was written, and there are fairly strong arguments for both views. I personally lean toward a later date.
 - The focal point of Obadiah's oracle is Edom. The dispute between Israel and Edom has its roots in the conflict of Genesis 27. Jacob and Esau's descendants parted company, with Esau's family settling in Edom (south of the Dead Sea), and Jacob's descendants proceeding toward the Land of Canaan. Hostilities continued, as depicted in Numbers 20:14-21. When Babylon invaded Judah over a period of twenty years (606BC-586BC), Edom joined forces against Judah and assisted in pillaging the land, destroying Jerusalem and selling refugees into slavery (Psalm 137:7; Lamentations 4:21, 22; Ezekiel 25:12-14).
 - The central message is two-fold: (1) God will not forget His people and (2) God will not forget the treacherous deeds of Edom. The people of Judah who were left behind were few in number, with little more than burned-out ruins left to them. Most families were scattered or slaughtered. In time, the God of Israel would set things right.
- **Key Verses**
 - "Because of the violence you did to your close relatives in Israel, you will be filled with shame and destroyed forever. When they were invaded, you stood aloof, refusing to help them. Foreign invaders carried off their wealth and cast lots to divide up Jerusalem, but you acted like one of Israel's enemies." Obadiah 10,11 NLT
 - "The day is near when I, The Lord, will judge all Godless nations! As you have done to Israel, so will it be done to you. All your evil deeds will fall back on your own heads." Obadiah 15 NLT

- “But Jerusalem will become a refuge for those who escape; it will be a holy place. And the people of Israel will come back to reclaim their inheritance. The people of Israel will be a raging fire, and Edom a field of dry stubble. The descendants of Joseph will be a flame, roaring across the field, devouring everything. There will be no survivors in Edom. I, the Lord, have spoken!” Obadiah 17, 18 NLT

- **Key People**

- The devastated survivors of either the second or fourth invasion of Jerusalem.
- The Edomite's - the estranged, embattled cousins of Israel who lived south of the Dead Sea.

- **Key Places:** the ruins of Jerusalem.

- **The Themes of Obadiah**

- **Pride** - an intoxicating sin that will surely be followed by humiliating judgment.
- **Vengeance** - God will accomplish revenge against the enemies of His people.

- **The Contents of Obadiah**

- God will judge Edom (1-14).
 - Edom's punishment (1-9).
 - Edom's wickedness (10-14).
- God will judge the nations (15, 16).
- God will restore Israel (17-21).

- **Worth remembering**

- Obadiah is the shortest book of the Old Testament.
- Edom is the object of God's wrath more than any other nation in the Old Testament (Psalm 83:5-18; 137:7; Isaiah 11:14; 21:11, 12; 34:5; 63:1-6; Jeremiah 49:7-22; Lamentations 4:21, 22; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11, 12; 9:11,

12; Malachi 1:2-5).

- **When Reading Obadiah**

- Observe the standard pattern of a *doom oracle*:
 - The pronouncement of doom (vv. 1-9)
 - The reasons for the impending judgment (vv. 10-14)
 - The promised restoration for the victims (vv. 15-21)
- Keep in mind that Edom was the most persistent enemy of Israel throughout the Old Testament (Genesis 25:24-34 for the seed of the conflict).
- Take note the judgment against Edom is in the form of *lex talionis* (*an eye for an eye*).

3. The Book of Jonah

- **The Author:** Jonah, son of Amittai, and a native of Gath-Hepher of Zebulun, about 3 miles northeast of Nazareth (2 Kings 14:25).
 - The date of writing is during the period of Jeroboam II, about 793-753BC. He prophesied just before Amos and probably wrote his story between 785 and 760BC.
 - Jonah's name is from a word that means *Dove*.
 - The message of Jonah, though delivered to Assyria, was really a message for Israel. The Lord's desire is to show mercy to anyone who will repent. Such mercy, though offensive to Jonah, was part of the Abrahamic covenant to bless all the peoples of the earth through Israel (Genesis 12:3). Unlike the other books of the prophets, all of which contained a prophetic message, in Jonah the story of the prophet is the message itself.
 - Jonah was unique as a missionary to a Gentile city (Nineveh of Assyria). Elijah lived in Zerephath for a season (1 Kings 17:8-10), Elisha went to Damascus (2 Kings 8:7), and Jeremiah reluctantly travelled to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 43), but Jonah was peculiarly commissioned with a message for a pagan nation. He was commanded to travel 800 miles east to Nineveh, the capitol of Assyria. In rebellion, he travels toward Tarshish instead. During the voyage, he is supernaturally preserved in a great fish and was delivered via *whale mail* back to his assignment. As he proclaimed the message of The Lord, Nineveh repented, but not to the

approval of Jonah. He resented the opportunity given them for repentance. Mercy for Nineveh meant the possibility of continued Assyrian harassment of Israel.

- **Key Verse**

- “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?” Jonah 4:11 NASB

- **Key People**

- Jonah - son of Amittai; resident of Gath-Hepher near Nazareth; a prophet to the northern tribes of Israel.
- The captain and crew of the ship en route to Tarshish

- **Key Places**

- Joppa - an Israelite seaport now known as Jaffa.
- Tarshish - probably refers to a city near Gibraltar on the coast of Spain. Josephus identified it as Tarsus of Cilicia, but the likelihood is minimal. Any ship with the ability to travel a great distance was referred to as a *Ship of Tarshish*. It may have been a place, or it may have meant that Jonah was seeking to get as far away as possible.
- Nineveh - the capital city of the Assyrian empire. Founded by Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:6-12); perhaps the largest city of the ancient world. It was destroyed in 612BC just as Nahum predicted (Nahum 1:1 ff.).

- **The Themes of Jonah**

- **Mercy** - God’s response to repentance from anyone is mercy.
- **Evangelism** - One of the promises to Abraham is that through his seed, all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Israel was turning inward and were forgetting they were the representative of God to the Gentiles (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

- **The Contents of Jonah**

- Jonah Refuses His Mission (1:1-2:10)

- Jonah's call (1:1,2)
- Jonah's rebellion (1:3)
- God's pursuit of Jonah (1:4-16)
- Jonah's miraculous journey (1:17)

- Jonah Repents (2:1-10)
 - Jonah's helplessness (2:1-3)
 - Jonah's repentance (2:4-9)
 - Jonah's deliverance (2:10)

- Jonah Fulfills His Mission (3:1-10)
 - The calling renewed (3:1,2)
 - The obedient messenger (3:3,4)
 - The repentant city (3:5-9)
 - The Lord extends mercy (3:10)

- Jonah and His Issues (4:1-11)
 - The complaint of Jonah (4:1-5)
 - The correction of Jonah (4:6-11)

- **Worth Remembering**
 - There is only one verse detailing the message to Nineveh - "Repent! Forty days from now, Nineveh will be destroyed!" (Jonah 4:3).

 - Jesus regarded the story of Jonah as an historical fact. He validated the miraculous nature of the story (Matthew 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32).

 - Even though Jonah was rebellious, angry, and sullen, he faithfully told the story! This indicates a deep repentance and humility on the part of this special Man of God.

- **When Reading Jonah**

- Remember that even though Nineveh repented, they would eventually return to their wicked ways and conquer Israel in 722BC.
- Remember that God showing mercy to Assyria was actually God showing mercy to Israel as well. The revival delayed the capture of Israel by many decades.
- Jonah's mission was not only designed to reveal God's heart for the nations, it was crafted in order to shame Israel. Though Nineveh repented, the people of God stubbornly refused to do so.
- In Jonah 4:6-11, take note of the way God contrasted His care with Israel's hardened heart:
 - God cared for the citizens of Nineveh - Jonah's concern was for a shade plant.
 - God cared for others - Jonah cared only for himself
 - God created and lovingly tended Nineveh - Jonah didn't create or tend to the plant that brought comfort.
 - The souls of Nineveh were eternal - Jonah's plant was temporary.
 - God was pro-life - Jonah was pro-comfort.

4. The Book of Micah

- **The Author:** Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea; he lived about 20 miles from Jerusalem in Moresheth. He was primarily a prophet to Judah, but included a brief message to Israel and also contained messages to various surrounding nations.
 - This book was probably written in parts over a long period of time. Portions appear to have been compiled before 722BC, since Micah presents the fall of Samaria as a future event. Other portions seem to speak of Sennacherib's march which occurred in 701BC. His ministry spanned the reigns of Jotham (740-732BC), Ahaz (731-716BC), and the early days of Hezekiah (716-686BC).
 - Micah is roughly divided into three sections, each beginning with the word *Hear*. The sections deal with Judah's sins, the sure judgment to follow, and a strong message of restoration through Messiah.
 - Micah's name means *He who is like Yahweh*. It is also rendered as Micaiah. Like Amos, he was a *country boy* chosen by God to deliver a message to princes and politicians.

- The prophecy of Micah is written as poetry, using many word pictures and rhythmic patterns of speech. Unfortunately, some of the beauty of the message is lost as we translate from Hebrew into other languages.
- The political/spiritual situation in which Micah lived is depicted in 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 26-30.
- Specific instances of oppression included:
 - plotting evil (2:1)
 - violence and fraudulent practices (2:2)
 - theft and dishonesty (2:8)
 - evicting helpless women from their homes (2:9)
 - hating good; loving evil (3:1, 2)
 - perverting justice (3:9)
 - murder (3:10)
 - accepting bribes (3:11)
- **Key Verses**
 - “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8 NASB
 - “Therefore thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity from which you cannot remove your necks; and you will not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time’”. Micah 1:3 NASB
 - “And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. ²Many nations will come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Micah 4:1, 2 NASB
 - “But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. ⁸Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; Though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me. ⁹I will bear the

indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out to the light, *and* I will see His righteousness.” Micah 7:7-9 NASB

- **The Themes of Micah**

- **Oppression** - people of power and wealth were poor stewards of what they had received. Instead of making society better, Judah was groaning under the weight of injustice.
- **Messiah** - Micah uses poetic images to reveal the beauty of the coming Deliverer.
- **True Religion** - Micah’s message was the Old Testament foundation for the message of James 1:27 - “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

- **The Contents of Micah**

- God calls Judah to a place of judgment (1:1-2:13)
 - Micah’s call (1:1)
 - Israel and Judah will face judgment (1:2-16).
 - Oppressors will face judgment (2:1-5).
 - False prophets will face judgment (2:6-11).
 - Deliverance is coming (2:12, 13).
- God judges the rulers of the land (3:1-5:15)
 - Political and religious leaders have failed (3:1-12).
 - Messiah will deliver and restore (4:1-5:15).
 - Lack of ethical behavior (5:1-6:14)
- Summary of charges and the promise of restoration (6:1-7:20)
 - Messages of correction and reproof (6:1-7:6)
 - Messages of confidence and hope (7:7-20)

- **Worth Remembering**

- Remember the twin sins of idolatry (1:7; 5:12-14) and social injustice (2:1, 2; 8-11; 3:1-3, 8-11; 6:10-12; 7:2, 3) are Micah's primary topics.
- Remember that a century later, these words of Micah are spoken against King Jehoiakim when he attempted to assassinate Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:17-19).

- **When Reading Micah**

- Remember he is a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah.
- Micah's theology seems to be centered on Deuteronomy 28-30.