

Micah 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.

Analysis

Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked (על-זאת אָסְפָּה) (al-zot espedah we-eylelah eilkhah sholal we-arom). Micah's response to Samaria's judgment is radical identification with the mourning. סָפָד (saphad, wail/lament) and יָלָל (yalal, howl) express intense grief. Going **stripped** (sholal, stripped) and **naked** (arom, naked) imitates captives led away in humiliation (Isaiah 20:2-4). This isn't mere sympathy but prophetic embodiment—living out judgment to shock audiences into recognition.

I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls (אָשָׁה) (e'eseh misped ka-tannim we-evel kivnot ya'anah). תָּנִים (tannim) likely refers to jackals (not mythical dragons), known for eerie nighttime howling. בָּנוֹת יָעָה (benot ya'anah, daughters of the desert) are ostriches, whose mournful cries echo through wastelands. Micah compares his lament to desolate creatures inhabiting ruins—a sonic picture of devastation.

Why does the prophet mourn enemies' judgment? Because he understands

1. the tragedy of wasted potential—Israel was chosen, redeemed, privileged
2. covenant violation grieves God's heart (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11)
3. Judah faces similar danger (v. 9).

Prophets don't gloat over judgment but weep with God's broken heart. Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44); Paul wished himself accursed for Israel's sake

(Romans 9:1-3). True love mourns sin's consequences even while affirming justice's necessity.

Historical Context

Prophetic sign-acts were common in Israel—Isaiah walked naked and barefoot three years (Isaiah 20:2-3), Jeremiah wore a yoke (Jeremiah 27-28), Ezekiel enacted Jerusalem's siege (Ezekiel 4). These dramatic performances communicated God's word visually, breaking through audiences' hardened indifference. Micah's public mourning would shock comfortable Judeans who viewed Samaria's fall as distant northern problem.

The historical context: Assyria destroyed Samaria in 722 BC; Micah prophesied until roughly 700 BC, witnessing Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (701 BC) when the angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35). Verse 9 warns judgment has reached Judah's gate—Jerusalem barely escaped. Micah's mourning aimed to provoke repentance before Judah suffered Samaria's fate. Jeremiah later employed similar mourning (Jeremiah 9:1, 10-11; 13:17) to no avail; Judah persisted in sin and faced Babylonian exile (586 BC).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Micah's mourning over sinners' judgment challenge Christians to grieve over the lost rather than adopting triumphalistic attitudes toward hell?
2. What does the prophet's willingness to publicly humiliate himself teach about the cost of faithful ministry?
3. In what ways should awareness of coming judgment provoke urgent, mournful intercession rather than satisfied complacency?

Interlinear Text

עַל	זֹאת	אֲסַפֵּד הַ	אַיִלְךָ הַ	אַיִלְלָה	שִׁלְל	וּמְ	עַר
H5921	H2063	Therefore I will wail	and howl		H1980	stripped	and naked
		H5594		H3213		H7758	H6174
אֲשַׁׁעַת	אֲשַׁׁעַת	מְסַפֵּד	מְסַפֵּד	אַיִלְלָה	כְּבָב וֹתְ	וּמְ	עַנְהָה:
I will make	a wailing	like the dragons	and mourning	as the owls			H3284
H6213	H4553	H8577	H60	H1323			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 22:4 (Parallel theme): Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.

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