MARGINALIA IN MICAH

by

H.G.M. WILLIAMSON

Oxford

The Hebrew text of the book of Micah contains many obscurities. In some cases these lead to serious doubts about the purport of the passage in which they occur, while in others the general meaning may not be in question, but commentators nevertheless believe that corruption has occurred.1 In this article a few passages in the latter category are examined and either new solutions are proposed or fresh arguments are advanced to support proposals which have already been advocated by others.

(1) Micah ii 8 wo'tmūl 'ammū l'ōyēb y'qômēm
mimmūl ṣālmā ʾeder tapṣîṯūn
meʾōbʾrīm betâḥ šāḇē milhāmā

The Masoretic text of the first line of this verse appears to state, “But yesterday (i.e. recently?) my people have become an enemy”. This raises difficulties of both grammar and sense, however. Elsewhere, the po’lel of qwm is always transitive (“to raise up”). To avoid this difficulty, some scholars2 have suggested that the hiph’il can be used internally (hence intransitively, “to arise”) and that the same may therefore be the case here. Both steps in this argument are uncertain, however, and it is hazardous to build one conjecture upon another. It would be preferable to vocalize as a contracted form of the hithpo’lel, yiqqômēn.3

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1 Cf. D.R. Hillers, Micah (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 1: “Micah abounds in textual problems . . . Not all portions are equally affected, some being very lucid and well-preserved, but others, such as the last poem in chap 1 (10-16), are well-nigh hopeless.”
3 As noted by W. Rudolph, Micha—Nahum—Habakuk—Zephania (Gütersloh, 1975), p. 57, with reference to GK § 54c (though Rudolph himself does not adopt this solution); the proposal is regarded as “certainly possible”, though less likely, by W. Robertson Smith, The Prophets of Israel and their Place in History to the Close of the Eighth Century B.C.
but against this conjecture it should be noted that this type of assimilation with $q$ does not appear to occur elsewhere prior to the time of Ecclesiasticus (xi 9, xxxii 9).

The sense of the MT also raises suspicion. In particular, (i) in the following verse "my people" are the object, rather than the source, of oppression, and (ii) the passage continues both in the next line and beyond in the second-person plural.

For these reasons the majority of modern commentators have adopted the conjecture of J. Wellhausen or something closely similar to it, so redividing the awkward first word of the line and further emending the difficult last word. The second error may be regarded as consequential upon the first: $w^*\textit{attem} l^*$ (or $'\textit{al}$) $'\textit{ammi} l^*\textit{oyeb qam Muhammad}$ (or $t\textit{aqam}\mu$), "but you arise against my people as an enemy".

The effect of this contextually attractive conjecture is to mark the line emphatically as the start of the prophet’s response to his opponents’ words in the previous verse by the use of $w^*\textit{attem}$, a device used elsewhere in the book (cf. $w^*\textit{attah}$, iv 8 and v 1; $w^*\textit{hemmah}$, iv 12). Some further slight support in favour of this interpretation may come

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(London, 1895), p. 429. Emendation to $\textit{teqmmu}$ with P. Haupt, "Critical Notes on Micah", AJSL 26 (1910), pp. 201-52 (207), is textually unjustified. 4 This is rightly recognized by J. Reider, "The Etymology of Hebrew $m\text{"ul}$ or $m\text{"ol}$ and its Bearing on $tm\text{"ol}$ and $etm\text{"ol}$", HUCA 12-13 (1937-38), pp. 89-96, but his argument that $'etm\text{"ol}$ = "friend" is not convincing.

5 Those who defend the MT here either overlook this point or explain it away in a manner which is not convincing; see, e.g., H. Donat, "Mich 2-6-9", BZ 9 (1911), pp. 350-66, and J.T. Willis, "Micah 2:6-8 and the 'People of God' in Micah", BZ N.F. 14 (1970), pp. 72-87. It is noteworthy that both scholars in fact propose some changes to the text of the line. Since, as maintained above, the corruptions are probably interrelated, the virtue of textual conservatism does not apply in this instance.


7 E.M. Collin argues on the basis of the LXX that the MT must represent a late corruption; see "Recherches sur l'histoire textuelle du prophète Michée", VT 21 (1971), pp. 281-97 (294). Since this is the only place where the common word $\textit{epmo\theta\epsilon\eta}$ renders $'etm\text{"ol}$, it is odd that Barthélemy states that "les témoins textuels n'attestent pas de variant" (p. 735).