

בלק

Micah, chapter 5, verse 6 to chapter 6, verse 8

Introduction

Connection of haftarah and sidra:

The sidra tells the story of King Balak of Moab engaging Balaam, son of Be'or, to curse Israel—a plan that God turned into its opposite. In the haftarah (6:5), Micah recalls this famous event in Jewish history.

The setting:

Micah was a younger contemporary of the First Isaiah, and lived toward the end of the 8th century B.C.E. in a small town in Judah. The Northern Kingdom had been destroyed by the Assyrians, who now threatened Judah as well. Micah, like Amos before him, was convinced that the terrible social injustices that existed in the country and especially in Jerusalem would cause God to allow the downfall of the nation and the destruction of the Holy City. What God demanded was not more sacrifices but ethical living, “to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with your God” (6:8).

For more on Micah and his time, see our *General Introduction*.

The message:

The haftarah contains five diverse and unrelated orations that have been assembled by the editor. They deal with subjects of mission, idolatry, war and peace, with an argument between God and Israel, and end with a memorable summation of God's ultimate demand.

1. Israel's mission. (5:6)
2. The destruction of Israel's foes. (5:7)
3. The destruction of the implements of war and idolatry. (5:8-14)
4. How God dealt with Israel in the past. (6:1-5)
5. What God demands of us. (6:6-8)