

Carolyn J. Sharp. *Micah: Introduction and Commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2025. 480 pages. \$64.99.

Carolyn J. Sharp's latest commentary convincingly argues that the book of Micah engages the "depth, complexity, and blazing urgency" of the present moment (124). For preachers who witness to a living God in a season of ecological and social unraveling, Sharp's analysis of Micah as a "iconic performer of refusal, ... declining the idolatries ... that distort his community's identity and dishonor God," is crucial reading (51).

Over years, Sharp has devoted her scholarship to the excavation of "emancipatory biblical interpretation ... through holistic, radical pedagogy" (56). In other words, she brings her formidable textual-critical skills into the service of students, within the academy and without, who would commit their course to a God whose heart is bound to the suffering. This holistic approach leads her to understand her scholarship as self-consciously homiletical, written with an eye toward the preacherly work of congregational formation while also giving attention to the homiletical rhythms of biblical texts themselves. She notes, with some frustration, that much Christian preaching on the prophets leaves these homiletical insights on the cutting-room floor. In contrast, her commentary on Micah insists that the book offers more than theological pronouncements. Its structure, rhetoric, genre, and performative character provide practical strategies for "resilience, resistance, reformation, [and] rejoicing" in the face of violent displacements and corrupt political leaders (123). Each biblical chapter that Sharp exegetes engages this four-fold spiral toward communal wholeness. It is a commentary oriented around practices of restoration in and after moments of profound loss.

Sharp helpfully narrates the debates around Micah's complex compositional history, even as she questions the usefulness of such "redaction-critical logics" (27). She is more interested in the structures and patterns visible in the shape of the present text, and her insights on this front are formidable. She describes the book as a piece of visual art, composed as a diptych on a hinge. Micah's portrayals of judgement and restoration echo and reframe the other, giving a complex cohesion to the whole. But Sharp also brings a performative ear to the text. She points out Micah's call-and-response character, helping the reader recognize, in the text's pastiche of scriptural references and voices, a kind of liturgical readers' theatre. Particularly in Micah's final chapter when the Daughter of Zion speaks for herself, Sharp's attention to the responsiveness of the text's characters yields rich interpretive dividends. The book may begin with a single, grief-stricken prophet, but by the text's end, the prophetic witness is expanded and shared. The community is now a participant in this prophetic work, an insight relevant to the homiletic guild's increasing interest in dialogical preaching (27, 370-79). The impact of Micah's final chapter, likely written long after the text's earliest passages, is more than affective; it is subversive – amplifying the voices of terror's survivors.

Sharp sees in Micah's resonance through various periods of exile and occupation an invitation to press the implications of its testimony across broader expanses of time and space. This is a biblical book that has been returned to repeatedly in moments of communal crisis, and Sharp is convinced that it is a valuable resource for the present. To that end, she brings biblical research on poverty in ancient Israel and Judah into conversation with contemporary poverty studies (42). She underscores the significance of Micah's timely critique of land transfer from subsistence farmers to the wealthy elite (44). Most significantly, in every chapter, Sharp carefully outlines Micah's fierce connection between ecological justice and the holy. Familiar passages

like Micah 6:8 read differently through the lens of global ecosystem collapse (341-2). Sharp's intertextual eye sharpens her interdisciplinary engagement.

Indeed, one of the most impressive things about this commentary is the wide scope of its conversation partners. This is, in some ways, expected by a volume in Eerdmans' *Illuminations* series. One of the hallmarks of *Illuminations* commentaries is their attention to the historical reception of biblical texts across various faith communities. But Sharp's range of conversation partners also grows from her intersectional feminist commitments. Sara Ahmed's concept of the feminist "killjoy" in *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017) and Marquis Bey's understanding of "fugitivity" in *Black Trans Feminism* (Duke University Press, 2022) become touchstones for Sharp's analysis. Sharp places Micah's dangerous truth-telling alongside Ahmed's feminist "killjoy," who "dares to name the sordid and tragic truth of systemic patriarchal violence" (52). The differences in these witness are significant, certainly. But Sharp also points to a shared prophetic resistance to oppressive power. Through Bey's explorations of "fugitivity," Sharp does something similar. She places Bey's descriptions of fugitive testimonies, "refusing, enduring, resisting and thinking beyond that status toward future possibilities of unconfined freedom," alongside the testimony of fugitive Zion in Micah 7 (54). This fugitive Zion has "escaped the obliteration willed for her by her enemies." This is a Zion "who will be restored – which is to say, a Zion who has survived" (56). In placing these texts in conversation, Sharp illumines the ways that Micah "incites flight from dehumanizing violence and envisions other worlds and new collectives" (55). Critically, Sharp does not drop these references to contemporary theorists like pebbles in a pond. She walks with these authors throughout her text, letting them influence her reading in sustained, substantive ways.

Part of what is at stake for Sharp, I think, is her argument that Micah can be a valuable resource for feminist praxis. This is a complex assertion. There are significant feminist critiques of Micah's text, which Sharp respectfully enumerates (50-1). Sharp is convinced, however, that biblical texts can call "for justice beyond that which the prophetic author might have known" (51). And this commentary does exactly that. The book reads like a fireworks display of generative thought – backed up by careful scholarship and the wisdom of an assured scholar. Even those who maintain that the text's limits are obscured in Sharp's emancipatory framing will find the commentary a tour de force.

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*The following review was not solicited by the Book Section Editor but the Managing Editor who has overseen its inclusion in *Homiletic*.