

Micah 3 - Sins by their Leaders; Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold

III. Condemnation of Israel's corrupt leadership in comparison to future kingdom glory and messianic deliverance (Micah 3:1—5:15)

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(1) God's court case against Judah's leaders on account of their sin (3:1-12)

(A) Rulers (3:1-4)

(a) Sin of injustice (3:1-3)

1 And I said, "Hear now, you leaders of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel: **Is it not for you to know justice?**

1 And I said, "Hear now, heads of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel. Is it not for you to know justice?

1 "He will say, 'Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you officials of the house of Israel! You should know justice, should you not?—

1 And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

— "...Hear" - second of three major messages (Micah 1:2; 3:1-5; 6:1—7:20)

— These are the judges and magistrates; the same as Isaiah had in view:

— Is 1:10: Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

— "...Is it not for you to know justice?" - was it not their special duty and responsibility to know justice?

— They were not unknowledgeable: they were *deliberately perverting justice*

— They were, thus, inexcusably aware of the judgment that awaits *them* for their deeds

— Their condemnation is the greater when their deliberate failure lies in the very realm of their special duty

2 "You who **hate good and love evil**, Who tear off their skin from them And their flesh from their bones,

2 "You who hate good and love evil, Who tear off their skin from them And their flesh from their bones,

2 you who despise good and love evil, who tear off the skin of my people, along with the flesh from their bones.

2 Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

— "...hate good and love evil" - their attitudes (hate... love...) were *habitual* (so the Hebrew verbs)

3 Who **eat the flesh of my people**, Strip off their skin from them, Smash their bones, And chop *them* up as for the pot, And as meat in a cauldron!"

3 Who eat the flesh of my people, Strip off their skin from them, Break their bones And chop *them* up as for the pot And as meat in a kettle."

3 You eat the flesh of my people, flaying their skin from them. You break their bones, chopping them in pieces like meat for a pot, like meat destined for a soup kettle.'

3 Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

— "...eat the flesh of my people" - like cannibals, feeding on those whom it is their responsibility to defend

— This is far worse than the issues in Chapter 2: here they are attacking the people themselves, feeding on the lifeblood of the nation

(b) Their judgment (3:4)

4 Then they will cry out to the LORD, But He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time Because they have practiced evil deeds.

4 Then they will cry out to the LORD, But He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time Because they have practiced evil deeds.

4 "Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not listen to them. In fact, he will hide his face from them at that time, because they were so wicked in what they were doing."

4 Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

- Micah again sees the poetic justice in the day when the Lord will not hear them

— This cry which God refuses to hear is the cry for deliverance from anguish only, not the cry that arises from true repentance over sin

— Since they refused to heed the cries of the needy, the Lord will recompense them in like kind

- This is the essence of "*hell*": God hiding His face from them...

[Jer 11:11]

(B) Prophets (3:5-8)

(a) Sin of falsely proclaiming peace (3:5)

5 This is what the LORD says concerning the prophets who **lead my people astray**: When they have *something* to bite with their teeth, **They cry out, "Peace!"** But against him who puts nothing in their mouths They declare holy war.

5 Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray; When they have *something* to bite with their teeth, They cry, "Peace," But against him who puts nothing in their mouths They declare holy war.

5 "This is what the LORD says about the prophets who are causing my people to go astray, who are calling out 'Peace' when they're being fed, but who declare war against those who won't feed them:

5 Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

- "...lead my people astray" - the prophets misled the people by not denouncing their sins which calls forth the displeasure of God

— They lulled the people of God into complacency and carnal security instead of declaring fearlessly the truth and will of God

- "...They cry out, Peace!" - they fed a "feel good" message; they knew better

— They were not prophets for Baal; they were prophets of the Living God, who knew the truth and preferred to speak lies

(b) Their judgment (3:6-7)

6 Therefore *it will be* night for you—without vision, And darkness for you—without divination. **The sun will go down** on the prophets, And the day will become dark over them.

6 Therefore *it will be* night for you—without vision, And darkness for you—without divination. The sun will go down on the prophets, And the day will become dark over them.

6 'You will have nights without visions, and darkness without prophecy. The sun will set on the prophets, and the day will darken for them.

6 Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

- Since they have outraged the office of the prophet, there are several different ways that calamities will fall on them

- "...The sun will go down" - darkness was a common figure for calamity and distress

[Is 8:22; Amos 5:18; 8:9]

7 The seers will be put to shame, And the diviners will be ashamed. Indeed, they will all **cover their lips** Because there is no answer from God.

7 The seers will be ashamed And the diviners will be embarrassed. Indeed, they will all cover *their mouths* Because there is no answer from God.

7 Those who see visions will be put to shame, and the diviners will be disgraced—every one of them— they will cover their faces, because there will be no answer from God."

7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

- "...cover *their lips*" - their end would be with shame. Like a leper, they would "cover their lips" (Cf. Lev 13:45; Jer 5:13; Ezek 13:3; Matt 18:6-7)

(c) Micah contrasted as a true prophet (3:8)

(i) Spiritual power (3:8a)

(ii) Justice (3:8b)

(iii) Covenant enforcement (3:8c)

8 On the other hand, **I am filled with power— With the Spirit of the LORD—** And with justice and courage To make known to Jacob his rebellious act, And to Israel his sin.

8 On the other hand I am filled with power— With the Spirit of the LORD— And with justice and courage To make known to Jacob his rebellious act, Even to Israel his sin.

8 "As for me, I am truly filled with power by the Spirit of the LORD, filled with judgment and power to announce to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

- "...I am filled with power—With the Spirit of the LORD" - how, then, could Israel ever have failed to recognize the spurious from the genuine?

— Their luxurious living, their low moral conditions, and their unconcern for the things of God blinded their eyes and dulled their sensibilities to these vital issues.

— This is an example of the Spirit unveiling something that has not been revealed before: The ministry of "revelation" of the Spirit in relation to Scripture. See also 2 Sam 23:2-3; Ezek 2:2; 8:3; 11:1,24; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor 2:9-10; 2 Peter 1:21. Also see [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete list of ministries of the Spirit.

(C) Jerusalem hierarchy (3:9-12)

(a) Sins (3:9-11)

(i) Injustice (3:9)

9 Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who despise justice And twist everything that is straight,

9 Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And twist everything that is straight,

9 Please listen to this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you officials of the house of Israel, you who hate administering justice, who pervert the very meaning of equity,

9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

- Micah now puts v8 into practice. Here he also shifts from the Northern Kingdom to the South: "the House of Jacob"

(ii) Violence (3:10)

10 Who build Zion with bloodshed, And Jerusalem with malice.

10 Who build Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with violent injustice.

10 who are building up Zion by means of bloodshed, and Jerusalem by means of iniquity.

10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

- By their hatred of justice and perversion of all that's right, the heads and rulers were building Zion with extortion and robbery, at the cost of human misery, woe, and murder.

- Wealth gained from the rightful owners was used to entrench the selfish and wicked interests of the leaders (Cf. Jer 22:13; Ezek 22:27; Hab 2:12)

(iii) Materialism (3:11a)

(iv) False optimism (3:11b)

11 Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD not in our midst? Catastrophe will not come upon us."

11 Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us."

11 Her leaders judge for the money, her priests teach only when they're paid , and her prophets prophesy for cash. Even so, don't they all rely on the LORD as they ask, 'The LORD is among us, is he not? Nothing bad can possibly happen to us!'

11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

- In a grand indictment of all three classes: judges, priests, and leaders—he nails all three for their unbridled greed

- Judges were making judicial pronouncements for reward

— This was distinctly forbidden in the Torah (Ex 23:8; Deut 16:19)

— Impartial meting out of justice is impossible once a bribe has been received (Prov 29:4)

- Priests were no better: they tailored their messages to the market

— The word "divine" is never used in the OT in a good sense

— Like Balaam and the other heathen prophets, they were willing to make favorable pronouncements for a price

- Hired by Balak, King of Moab:

— Rebuked by his donkey (Num 22)

— Refused to curse Israel (Num 23-24)

— Taught how to defeat Israel (Num 31:16)

 (b) Judgment: Zion to be plowed as a field (3:12)

12 Therefore on account of you, Zion will be plowed *like* a field, **Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins**, And the mountain of the temple *will become* high places of a forest.

12 Therefore, on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple *will become* high places of a forest.

12 "Therefore, because of you, Zion will be plowed up like a field, and Jerusalem will become heaps of rubble, and the Temple Mount like a forest high place."

12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

- "...Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins" - this is a prediction that for their sins there will be a *complete desolation of the city of Jerusalem*

Jeremiah quotes Micah as having said this, which is a confirmation of the prophecy (Jer 26:18). This destruction did take place when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem. In the first chapters of the Book of Nehemiah, Jerusalem was nothing but debris, ashes, rubble, and ruin. The Talmud records that at the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 AD, Rufus, an officer of the Roman army actually plowed up the foundations of the temple with a plowshare. (The Jewish historian Jerome, and the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, also noted it.)

Other passages indicate the literal fulfillment of these words of Micah (Neh 2:17; 4:2; Lam 5:18; et al.). The invasion and destruction by Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled Micah's prophecy with sad accuracy. Truly the wages of sin is death, *and death in every realm and sphere of life.*

Historical Setting

In 734 BC, the Assyrians carried away all of north Israel; in 721 BC, Shalmanezer of Assyria attacked the northern capital of Samaria and overthrew it, and deported the remaining people of the Northern Kingdom ("House of Israel"). Eight years later, Sennacherib, Shalmanezer's successor, attacked the Southern Kingdom ("Judah"). ("Sin-ecerib" = "sin multiplies his brothers"; they worshiped the moon god, "Sin.")

At one point, the field commander appeared before the walls and challenged them for surrender; Sennacherib sent a letter to the same effect (2 Kings 19:10-12). Hezekiah spread this letter before the Lord and received confirmation through Isaiah that the city would be spared; Sennacherib would fail. Hezekiah organized a revival, and smashed the idols of his predecessors; even the original brazen serpent (Num 21:8-9) which, after almost 1,000 years, had become a fetish to which they were burning incenses (2 Kings 18:3-4).

The Hidden Hero?

However, Micah isn't mentioned. Isaiah is the well-known prophet of that period, with direct access to the king. But we know from an incident a century later that it was actually because of Micah's preaching that the people repented and Jerusalem was spared. Jeremiah, 120 years later, was prophesying over the impending destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 26:4-6). His message offended the priests and the false prophets, so they seized him and brought him before the officials, demanding his death. Jeremiah gave his defense, citing the previous experience of Micah:

Jeremiah 26:18-19:

18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed

like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

As a result, Jeremiah was spared: 120 years later, Micah's words were remembered and used by God to spare Jeremiah. In fact, it appears Micah lived to see the beginning of Hezekiah's revival...