

## Comments on Micah 2

This chapter and the next form a series of legal arguments against Israel in general (ch. 2), and more specifically Israel's leaders (ch. 3). The underlying context is the Sinai Covenant, as was the case with ch. 1. The people are held up against fundamental teachings of the Law of Moses and are shown to be in violation of them. The result is judgement and imminent punishment. The general tenor of this chapter is the same as that of Isa. 10:1-4.

1 WOE to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2 And they covet fields, and take [them] by violence; and houses, and take [them] away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. 3 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time [is] evil. 4 In that day shall [one] take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, [and] say, we be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed [it] from me! turning away he hath divided our fields. 5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

v1-5 A legal argument against Israel and Judah. Verses 1-2 form the accusation, v. 3 is the judgement, and v. 4-5 the punishment.

v1-2 The KJV on v. 1 is a poor translation that reads like some kind of act of unchastity. It is referring to premeditated crimes by people who stay up all night planning (v. 1, cp. Ps. 36:4) how they can extort and swindle people tomorrow (v. 2).

v1 "because it is in the power of their hand", meaning "it is in within their power to do it". They do it because they can. Their greed is not reigned in by their religion.

v3 The Lord sees their iniquity and judges them. He will punish them such that the yoke placed upon them will drag their high heads down low. In other words, He will humiliate them by afflictions, per Lev. 26.

v4-5 The result of the curse from v. 3 is Israel will become the subject of laments. The lament characterizes Israel as

complaining their lands have been given over into the hands of their foes. This is a common covenant curse, cp. Lev. 26:32-33.

v5 An obscure reference to the acquisition of a piece of land, cp. Joshua 18:6 and ct. Ps. 16:5-6. The Israelites will no longer have lands for their inheritance because foreigners occupying them, cp. Amos 7:7-8, 17.

6 Prophecy ye not, [say they to them that] prophecy: they shall not prophecy to them, [that] they shall not take shame. 7 O [thou that art] named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? [are] these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? 8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war. 9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever. 10 Arise ye, and depart; for this [is] not [your] rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy [you], even with a sore destruction. 11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, [saying], I will prophecy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

v6-11 Micah characterizes the kind of response he gets from Israel and Judah (v. 6-7), the reason why they respond this way (v. 8-10), and what kind of prophesying they really want (v. 11).

v6-7 Wicked Israel's response to Micah's condemnation in v. 1-5. The KJV is obscure, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation is plainer:

"Stop preaching!" they preach.  
"That's no way to preach;  
Shame shall not overtake [us].  
Is the House of Jacob condemned?  
Is the Lord's patience short?  
Is such His practice?"

To be sure, My words are friendly  
To those who walk in rectitude;

Verses 6-7c form the response of wicked Israel, while verses 7d-e is Micah's reply, and is best grouped with v. 8-10. Israel's characterization of the Lord reveals general ignorance of the Law of Moses in addition to specifically ignoring Micah's

warnings. They love sin so they do not study the Law and do not listen to the Lord's prophets. They then fabricate self-serving notions of how the Lord operates.

V7d-10 Micah's rebuttal states they are in gross violation of the Law. He starts by stating his words are friendly to the just, and therefore harsh on the unjust (v. 7d-e, cp. 1 Ne. 16:2). Micah then accuses them of being their own enemy in violating the Law on two fundamental points: pledges on loans (v. 8, cp. Exod. 22:26-27, Deut. 24:13-17), and widows and orphans (v. 9, cp. Exod. 22:22, Deut. 10:18, Deut. 14:29). The result is they have defiled the land and will be cast out rather than rest there in comfort (v. 10, cp. Lev. 26:32-39).

v8-9 The underlying premise of the Law being addressed is Israel should be caring and sensitive in its treatment of the poor, the downcast, and the bereaved. Presently, Israel is not doing this at all, but is selfish and materialistic. It is exploiting the poor, downcast, and bereaved for personal gain per v. 1-2.

v8 "my people is...an enemy", Micah's characterization of Israel as its own worst enemy is in reply to v. 6. There Israel tells Micah to shut up and stop preaching against them, as though he were the enemy. This is similar to the exchange between Ahab and Elijah where Ahab accuses Elijah of harassing Israel, but Elijah points out to him that he is simply projecting, cf. 1 Ki. 18:17-18.

v11 Micah indicates what kind of preaching Israel wants to hear, in contrast to v. 1-5 which they are telling him they don't want to hear in v. 6-7c. They want someone filled with the spirit of falsehood to preach lies in favor of wine and liquor, then that person would be an acceptable prophet to them.

12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of [the multitude of] men. 13 The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

v12-13 An obscure passage with three possible readings. It could be a straightforward prediction of the eschatological

delivery of the remnant of Israel, or it could be another example of the kind of prophecies the people love to hear. Thirdly, it might be an ironic characterization used by Micah to lampoon the Israel's ignorance.

Reading the passage as a prediction of the future redemption of the remnant of the imminently scattered Israel is possible, but does not fit the context well. If the text were among that of ch. 4 or 5, then the reading would be plain. However, among the series of accusations against wicked Israel and threat of imminent destruction, this reading does not fit the context. Those who forward this reading suggest it is placed here to mitigate the harsh judgements of v. 3-5 and indicate the Lord will not utterly annihilate Israel.

The second possibility is this may be an example of the kind of acceptable preaching the people want to hear, per v. 7 and 11. All they want to hear is the Lord is at their head no matter what and their king will always deliver and lead them, cp. 3:11. This reading better fits the context as Micah's presentation of the Lord thus far has been as judge and punisher.

The third reading would be that Micah is using the false teaching, which is superficially pleasing to them, to expose their ignorance. The Lord will in fact gather "the remnant of Israel", or those left over after the punishment, by acting as their king and breaking them out of the sheep pen of false prophets and false teachers. Micah is playing on their ignorance of the Law in presenting something that sounds good, but in reality is talking about their general destruction with only the righteous remnant being delivered.

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