

### Comments on Micah 3

The legalistic accusations continue from the previous chapter, but here the political and religious leaders are specifically addressed. The previous chapter addressed Israel in general, and they want prophets and leaders who preach lies, telling them what they want to hear. Well, now Micah addresses the prophets and leaders who preach lies.

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

v1-4 The leaders of Israel, who know better (v. 1) but choose evil (v. 2), are exploiting the people of Israel for their personal gain (v. 3). The result is the Lord will reject them when they cry out to them at their convenience (v. 4).

v2-3 The leaders of Israel are exploiting their position of authority to enrich themselves. The same accusation is leveled at Pharisees by Jesus, cf. Matt. 23:14. Taking advantage of those who were easily exploited is a particular onerous crime in the Law, cf. Exod. 22:21-24.

The implicit accusation is the leaders are taking away the food and substance which the Lord in His compassion is giving the poor and downtrodden to survive, cf. Deut. 10:17-18, Deut. 24:19-21, Deut. 26:12-15. They are not taking care of their own, and this forces the Lord to intervene, but even when He does they steal that as well.

The imagery of these verses draws on that from 2:12-13 to say the only interest these leaders have in shepherding Israel is so they may consume them along the way, cp. Ezek. 34:1-10, Ps. 14, Prov. 30:14.

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. 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. 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. 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.

v5-8 Micah now addresses the self-serving prophets in Israel who are more interested in filling their stomachs than in preaching the word of the Lord (v. 5). Micah tells them all prophecy shall cease for them (v. 6) and they will be humiliated because God will not speak to them (v. 7). In sharp contrast to this is Micah, who is filled with the Spirit and telling Israel the truth about their spiritual state (v. 8).

v7 "cover their lips", a sign of mourning and humiliation, cf. Ezek. 24:17-22, Lev. 13:45. Strictly speaking the "lips" is a paraphrase. A literal translation of the Hebrew would be "moustache" or "beard".

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

v9-12 Micah addresses the rulers and chieftains of Israel and calls them crooked and unjust (v. 9). All of the efforts to build Zion are completely contrary to the nature of Zion (v. 10). The judges can be bribed and priestcraft is rampant, ye they say the Lord is with them and everything is just fine (v. 11). As a result of this hypocrisy Jerusalem and the Temple will be sacked and made desolate (v. 12).

v10 "build up Zion with blood", the meaning is the wealth used to build up Zion is obtained by the shedding of innocent blood, cp. Jer. 22:13, Ezek. 22:27, Hab. 2:12.

v11 "for reward...for hire", this is explicitly prohibited in

the Law, cf. Exod. 23:8, Deut. 16:19.

v12 For the fulfillment of this prediction, see Nehem. 2:17, Lam. 5:18. For a similar warning that is considerably more verbose see Isa. 7:17-25.

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