

MICAH CHAPTER TWO

Pronouncement of Woe: Crimes and Consequences

15 March 2020

Review Contexts

- Historical: Micah was an eighth century BC prophet (Book of the Twelve) and a contemporary of Isaiah.
- The southern kingdom enjoyed prosperity and expansion under Uzziah for 52 years. His successor, Jotham (a good king) expanded to the *shephelah*, but by the time Ahaz took over, the circumstances had turned. A major factor was his apostasy.
- Philistines took major cities in the *shephelah* from Judah (2 Chron 28); Judah was also pressured from Edom to the southeast, and from the northern kingdom allied with Syria. Upshot: Ahaz was in a tough place politically. Hezekiah's reforms did not protect him from the heavy hand of Assyria.
- Geographical: Micah's home was on the "frontlines" when enemies approached Judah from the SW.
- Theological: Covenant relationship - Israel chosen to be a blessing
 - Blessed with Torah, Land, God's Presence (Tabernacle and later Temple)
 - Because of disobedience (idolatry), they were exiled from the Land; the Temple was destroyed
 - Prophets summoned God's people back to the covenant (with special reference to Lev 26; Deut 4, 11, and 28-32); prophetic oracles alternate between judgment and promise ["covenant enforcement mediators"]; they also interweave God's and Micah's words
 - Salient covenant matters: "Ten Words" – "no other gods", "no idolatry" and "do not covet"; concern and provision for the poor and marginalized; warnings against false prophets; reading/teaching the Torah

Review Chapter One

- The Sovereign LORD's lawsuit against Samaria and Jerusalem
- Destruction and mourning
- Steady march toward the "gates of Jerusalem" (1:9, 12) through vulnerable cities

Chapter Two:

God's People Were Utterly Corrupt; the Declaration of Woe Was Deserved

Approach to the Text:

- Read a (painfully literal) translation
- Ask questions: what stands out in each section? How have the people abused the covenant? How would God respond? What other biblical connections do we note? Why are they important?

Translation

1 Woe to those who devise trouble and those who work evil on their beds! In the light of the morning they perform it, because it is in the strength of their hand.

2 And they covet fields and they seize [them]; [when they covet] houses, they take. They practice extortion against a man and his household, a man and his inheritance.

Crimes? Consequences? Canonical connections?

Translation

3 Therefore thus says the LORD: Behold I am devising evil against this family, from which you will not be able to remove your necks; you will not walk proudly, for it will be an evil time.

4 In that day, a proverb will be raised against you; and a lament—a mourning song—will be wailed: "destroyed, we are destroyed; he has altered the portion of my people. How he has taken away [what belongs] to me! He has divided our fields to an apostate."

5 Therefore, you will not have one who will cast the measuring line by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

Crimes? Consequences?

Summary So Far: 2:1-5 – Initial Indictment and God's Responses

- abuses of power [2:2 may be an allusion to a prior narrative in the northern kingdom's history: Naboth's vineyard seized by Jezebel for Ahab]; land grabbers
- Violating inheritance principles: (Lev 25:13-23; Num 27:1-11; 33:53-54; **36:7-9**)
- God's responses would be measure-for-measure
 - They plotted moral and social evil; God would plot destructive evil against the whole "family"
 - They seized fields, houses, inheritance; God would overrule any process in the assembly for portioning out the land [and the land was *His*]
 - Their former pride and arrogance would be reduced [wearing a yoke]; they would be ridiculed

Translation

6 "Do not drip [words]!" they drip. "They should not drip concerning these things. Reproach will not overtake [us]."

7 Is it said, O house of Jacob, "Is the spirit of the Lord short, if these are His works?" "Do not my words do good with the one walking in integrity?"

What's the problem now?

Translation

8 And lately my people—they have been rising up as an enemy. From the front of a garment you strip off the mantle [glory?], from those passing by secure, those returning from battle.

9 The women of my people you drive away from her luxurious house; from her young children you take my glory forever.

10 Get up and go! Because this is not the resting place; because it is defiled, it will be ruined, and a sickened destruction.

11 If a person comes and lies, [with] a spirit of falsehood: "I will drip for you about [or for] wine and beer," this is the dripper for this people!

Crimes? Consequences?

Summary So Far: 2:6-11 – Prophetic Office Twisted; Social Fabric Torn

- What kind of prophets were these? And do we have contemporary parallels?
- Presumption of immunity countered by call for integrity
- Men robbed of garments (see Exod 22:26-27; Deut 24:12-13,17); women driven from homes; children's experience of God's glory shattered forever.

The Beginnings of a Promise

[and a radical shift]

Translation

12 I will certainly gather, O Jacob, all of you; I will certainly bring together the remnant of Israel. I will set them together as a flock in an enclosure, as a herd in the middle of pasture; they are in tumult from [fear] of men.

13 One who breaks through has gone up before them; they have broken through and have passed the gate. They have gone out through it. Their king has passed before them, and the Lord will be their head.

What is the promise?

2:12-13 – [An Abrupt Transition] Remnant Gathered – When, Where, and By Whom?

- "Men" are possibly strangers who have caused fear – the tumult is akin to psalms of lament.
- In chapter one, as each city fell, refugees were streaming toward Jerusalem. Micah had seen town after town fall – until Jerusalem was left alone (Is 1:8), the only city left. Sennacherib's boast – Hezekiah trapped like a "bird in a cage" in Jerusalem.
- God was shepherding his people into this safe place.
- God would also go before them to break the Assyrian siege and bring them out.

A Lesson: Through the very grimmest of times, God shepherds and protects His people.