

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway, Session 3, Micah 2

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This is Dr. Elaine and Perry Phillips in their teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 3, Micah 2.

Well, we're about to move into Micah chapter two, and we're continuing our study of this prophet who was outside the Beltway in terms of his hometown, most likely preaching in Jerusalem, which is why he's identified as Micah the Merashti or the Merashtite.

Chapter two deals primarily, if we're thinking back in our structural issues, with a judgment against woe, crimes, and consequences. We're going to do a little bit of review first, so let's move in that direction just to keep ourselves on target. A quick review of the historical political materials that we've talked about just to make sure we're there.

Moving on to another look at the map that we need to get a handle on, both in terms of the ancient Near East as well as the Shephelah that we're now very familiar with, I hope. A quick look at some of the literary material that we've begun to deal with and seen a lot in terms of chapter one with regard to those word plays and the structures that are there. And, of course, we would be remiss if we didn't review the theological importance that is continuing to shine through this book, particularly in terms of God's covenant with his people and what happens when they are disobedient, and yet the promises that he will give them.

Perry talked about the lament, particularly, and some of the judgmental issues in chapter one, so we'll review that as well. So, first of all, quickly, some review. The historical context ran like this.

Southern Kingdom is the primary focus, not entirely because Samaria has been there, but primary focus and we have learned in reading the historical materials and chronicles, especially that the Southern Kingdom enjoyed prosperity and expansion under Uzziah, who reigned for 52 years. I mentioned, however, just in brief that we can maybe get a sense that there were some systemic abuses, and we're going to see those, particularly with regard to the early parts of chapter two, if you have some taking of inherited lands and so forth and so on. So, the good economic advancement and prosperity that were part of Uzziah's reign may have had some other things going on.

Uzziah's co-regent, as well as successor, Jotham, continued the expansion near the Shephelah, but then we spent quite a bit of time talking about Ahaz, whose apostasy

really brought God's judgment down upon him, and God's judgment involved some serious aggression from the Northern Kingdom, 2 Chronicles 28, allied with Syria, also called Aram, and also some incursions from Edom to the southeast and the Philistines to the west. So, Ahaz is going to suffer considerably. Looking at those Philistines, they retook major cities.

Perry had mentioned that Gath was sort of back and forth. Sometimes the Philistines had it, sometimes the Israelites had it, but the Philistines had taken some of these major re-cities. Judah was pressured by Edom, as I've already mentioned.

The whole thing boils down to Ahaz being in a very tough spot politically, and even when Hezekiah came along, his reforms, as wonderful as they were in terms of drawing people's attention back and celebrating the festivals and so forth, did not prevent the heavy hand of Assyria coming down upon him, conquering Samaria in 722 BC and certainly making life miserable for Ashdod and then those cities in the Shephelah. So that's our quick review from the historical perspective. We also just need to look at the map once again.

We see that in the ancient Near East, the eastern Mediterranean, we have again Assyria, the city of Nineveh, Ashur, those locations up there from whence these rulers in succession would send their forces, oftentimes their target being not just the land between in that corridor, but also Egypt. In between, we do have both Israel to the north and Judah; we've talked about them considerably, and then we also want to make a note of the fact that this second buffer zone, if you will, between the major superpower of Assyria and what's going on in the southwest end of the Fertile Crescent, Aram, is important in an ongoing basis. Moving to the Shephelah itself, just revisiting it yet one more time with the map, I can't emphasize enough that threats, not exclusively, but major threats over the centuries came from folks going up and down the coastal plain or living there like the Philistines and then moving in through those Shephelah valleys.

It was the east-west valleys that provided these invasion routes. Depending on where they were aiming, they may have left through one of those five valleys. And here they all are in red this time, as opposed to blue the last time around.

It's the one that is the lowest that we're going to be the most interested in, or we were the most interested in, in terms of chapter one and the position of Lachish. Jerusalem, however, protected and yet maybe presuming to take that protection for granted on time, on occasion. We also saw where Micah's home area was.

Maresha and Maresheth-Gath very clearly associated together, the whole point being, however, in the Shephelah, they were in this buffer zone and outside the Beltway. I just want to make a mention as well, reviewing these structure and style matters. No matter whether we divide it into three parts or four, and we talked our

way through the advantages and disadvantages of considering one or the other. However, you do it; each part of Micah has trauma, mainly trauma, with some triumph in terms of restoration and regathering.

Judgment, main judgment, but also, some hope built in as well. Perry closed down his lecture last, the end of chapter one, referring to the hope that is very much part of the beginning of chapter five. Stylistically, we've mentioned how the language itself is broken.

It's turbulent. There are parts where it almost falls apart. Of course, one of the challenges always is when you have translators who are trying to render this book into English, the people in the pew or people who are reading it can understand some of that brokenness has to be dealt with and smoothed over.

But the fact of the matter is that the syntax just grinds to a halt from time to time, especially in chapters one and two and even beyond that. I'll mention some of those in the areas forthcoming in chapter two. We've talked about lament and understanding how sometimes those expressions are visceral, weeping, or wailing.

The words are lamenting words. The actions are lamenting actions. Rolling in dust, mentioned in chapter one, is very much part of that cultural lament.

It's not just verbal. It's physical as well. We talked about dialogue, and we're going to see this, especially in chapter two, verses four through seven, because there are points where we're going to wonder who's speaking. And you have layers of speakers, and we have to parse those out as best possible. Part of that is because the voices of Micah and the Lord will merge together at the same time, they're quoting other voices, and we'll see that happen, especially in chapter two.

And then we also mentioned figures of speech being part of the stylistic presentation. It's this wonderful prophet. Just a quick review on the covenant relationship.

Israel has been chosen by the Lord to be a blessing. It goes all the way back to Genesis chapter 12, where Abraham and his seed are to be a blessing, kind of the centerpiece of that. And they are blessed themselves.

They're blessed with the Torah, God's instructions on how to live best to be fruitful. They're blessed with the land. It's part of the covenant promises.

They're blessed with God's presence with them. And this, of course, is remarkably important, all the way from the tabernacle, which was constructed in the wilderness, right on through the temple that, unfortunately, they began to take for granted,

especially when we get to Jeremiah, we see some of that. As we've already seen, their disobedience, particularly embedded in this constant temptation to idolatry.

But that, for generations, went on and on and on. And because of that, they were warned that they would be exiled, and they were indeed. First, we see the north, and we see that happening in the tenure of Micah, as a matter of fact, and eventually the south, with the temple being destroyed.

And as Perry has said, we see the temple's destruction, particularly in chapter three. The people are summoned by the prophets, God's covenant enforcement mediators, to return to the covenant. And again, the point of all of these chastisements was to draw them back, draw them back to the Lord.

So, just to kind of draw that together, Micah's oracles alternate between judgment, the trauma, and promise, the promise of hope. And just to repeat, they interweave the Lord's words and Micah's words. After all, his name means who is like the Lord.

There are a couple more things we want to say with regard to the covenant that are going to be especially important for the indictments in chapter two. First of all, the Ten Commandments, which maybe some of us have memorized, special focus on not having other gods, on no idols or idolatry, no false witness, don't bear false witness, i.e., don't lie. And then, of course, all of it closing down with the Tenth Commandment, do not covet.

And that word is going to show up, especially in chapter two, right from the get-go. In addition to that, in terms of the covenant and the stipulations of the covenant, the Lord made it very clear that they were to be concerned for and provide for the poor and the marginalized. And this would have to do with land and all kinds of other things.

So that concern is important and it too will show up in a rather unusual way, partway through chapter two. Obviously, warnings against false prophets. They were given instructions on how to tell a false prophet from a true one, Deuteronomy 13 and 18.

But the warnings against the false prophets are tremendously important. False prophets are going to show up in Micah, and that's going to be one of our interesting issues in sorting out the dialogue.

Another major feature in terms of the covenant was God's justice because justice would always be measure for measure. The measure of their infraction measured by God's response to it.

This is even reflected and refracted, if you want to put it that way, through the words. And again, it's something we're going to see in chapter two. The way Micah

uses words to depict their sins, those words are echoed in how God responds to them.

And then we've talked about the importance of Torah and losing the Torah anchor. Serious stuff. Once they were no longer reading.

The king, by the way, was supposed to read the Torah, Deuteronomy 17. But once the king ceased to do that and there was no longer teaching of the Torah, they were on the road to destruction. Well, that's sort of our canonical, literary, theological, geographical review.

Just a quick sail through chapter one as Perry has done. Sovereign Lord's judgment against both Samaria and Jerusalem was mentioned with the exposure of the foundations and the stones falling down into the valleys of Samaria. Destruction.

Destruction of the cities and the towns and the Shephelah and the mourning that was going to be part of that. All the mourning things that are built into those difficult expressions. There's a steady march of some sort of enemies, and I'm going to say plural, over perhaps a period of time against some vulnerable cities.

Although, of course, we don't want to miss the fact that Sennacherib did brag about getting 46 cities in the area of Judah. And then finally, the gates of Jerusalem are an objective that shows up twice in chapter one. Well, with those reviews in mind, now we move to chapter two.

And I will confess to you that we are going to do a bit of an experiment. I have yet to figure out whether this is going to work. I'm trying it on my virtual audience, and you all can decide amongst yourselves whether it'll work.

We're going to study chapter two together, and the process is going to be as follows. I'm going to section by section, sometimes verse by verse, presents a painfully; it will be a painful, literal translation of each segment. And you'll see that that will indeed be the case.

And then before we move forward, and this is where we're going to imagine having an interaction over it and just use your imagination, but we're going to ask some questions. And I want you to ask yourself some questions before we move forward. For example, what's standing out in this particular verse or collection of verses? What jumps out at us before I make it jump out for you, as it were? And, of course, a big issue is going to be how the people have been abusing the covenant. Right? And is there a response of God in this particular segment? How is he responding? And then what other biblical connections might we want to note, and why are they important? And you know what? If we had a class here, an in-person class, we would probably raise a bunch of other questions as well.

But those are at least going to be the kind of thing we want to focus on. So, with no further ado, chapter two, starting out with a painfully literal translation. And I'm going to read it through to you, and I'm going to read it slowly, and presumably, you are noticing some things.

Look at those yellow questions. Presumably we're going to maybe see some serious covenant abuses and whatever else there might be. So here we go.

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

By the way, things in brackets are not in the Hebrew, but I'm just adding them in. Let me do verse two again. And they covet fields, and they seize.

Houses they take. They practice extortion against a man and his household and a man and his inheritance. I'm guessing you're probably noticing some things here that jump out at you.

And I'm going to just stall a little bit longer for you to notice a few more before I'm kind of indicating to you the kinds of things that I'm noticing, which is not an exhaustive list by any means. But here we are. Woe starts this.

There are several different ways of saying "woe" in Hebrew. But it's an expression. It's an exclamation.

Things are serious right now. They are absolutely serious. Some people take this Hebrew word and say, oh, it means alas.

This is just a lament, a mourning kind of thing. But there are enough uses of this word where it really means woe to you. Judgment coming.

I just noticed several of them, and there are others as well. Isaiah 5 has a gathering of these woe expressions.

And I've simply noted two of them. The first one is quite appropriate for where we're going in chapter two. Against those who appropriate property, i.e. expand your boundaries, your holdings, your real estate.

And then, after a number of other woes, Isaiah 5:20. Kind of the whole thing put together against those who call evil good and good evil. Their moral anchor is an absolute disaster.

So that's the first thing I'm guessing that jumps out to you. And I've blocked off a few other things that ought to jump out. Devise, I want you to hang on to it because we're going to see devise showing up in the Lord's responses.

Do you remember, measure for measure? They're busy devising trouble. Well, he's going to devise a response to that. The same Hebrew word is used.

But in the meantime, stop and think about working evil on their beds. It doesn't say planning evil on their beds. It says working evil on their beds.

Micah, by the way, has a tendency to take kind of standard idioms that show up in other parts of the Hebrew Bible and tweak them a little bit. And this is one of them. But as he does so, we get some sort of an idea that these people are so engrossed in their evil that they're not just cogitating on it at night, but they're actually beginning to work through how they're going to do it so that once they hop out of bed, they can just have that continuity from their evil plans right on through to the performance of that evil.

So, woe to those who devise trouble. They work evil on their beds. And then notice in the morning, and we're going to see some morning versus darkness things coming through in the rest of Micah as well.

And it's in the strength of their hand. It's in the strength of their hand. Now, just one quick note.

Hand in Hebrew can already mean power. Sometimes it has that sense of power. But this idiom is particularly interesting because it is in the L. That's the word for God.

It's in the L of their hand, Yod. So, they are intent on using every part of their power to work out this evil. That does not speak kindly of them.

And then, of course, verse two, coveting. We know how bad that is. After all, the Tenth Commandment is a strong admonition.

Worse than that, or better than that, it's saying don't covet because coveting prompts all these other kinds of actions. They seize them, they take, they practice extortion, and they're grabbing inheritance. By the way, the Apostle Paul talks about idolatry as being greed, right? And so greed is going to, and coveting, those two are very much together, is going to interface with their idolatry as well.

These are not separate social, economic sins on the one hand and religious sins on the other. It's not that divided up. Hang on to the inheritance thing.

Just hang on to that. We have a little bit more to do with the next couple of verses, and then we're going to take some time to pause and summarize. So, moving on to our read, we think.

There it goes. Verses three through five. Response from the Lord.

Again, we are looking out for what we're seeing here. Therefore, this is a response. Thus says the Lord, behold, I am devising evil against this family, from which you will not be able to remove your necks.

Okay, get that image. You will not walk proudly, for it will be an evil time. In that day, one will take up a proverb.

This is the Hebrew word for proverb, by the way, but it probably means taunt here. We'll come back to that. One will take up a taunt against you, and a lament, a mourning song will bewail.

And now we're going to quote it. Are you noticing already, a series of speakers and so forth? The Lord is speaking. In verse four, someone, the Lord says, is going to start speaking a proverb.

And now that person speaking is quoting somebody else. So, we've got layers of text in here. Anyway, here it is.

Destroyed, we are destroyed. This is probably a bit of a mockery. 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. Close quote.

Therefore, you will not have one who will cast the measuring line by lot in the congregation of the Lord. Well, if you're like me, the first time you read this, your head's kind of spinning. Not only the question, what stands out in the Lord's responses, but who's speaking them? And what is being drawn and knit together here? What's being said? Let's see what we can do with it.

This is not exhaustive, but at least it's something to help us begin to understand it. I told you to hold "devise" in your minds because we have a measure for measure response. I am devising evil, the Lord says.

And notice it's against this family. Well, that introduces a new component, doesn't it? Family. It's God's family.

We have Amos using the same kinds of phraseology, but this is a family that is in terrible disobedience against him. And it's fractious. I'm devising evil against this family.

Let me suggest one other thing as well. The idea of family and inheritance go together, all right? And so that's important. From which you will not be able to remove your necks.

The suggestion here, again, is intimated, but if there's something on their necks, it's probably a yoke. And it's probably a yoke that is heavy enough to make them bow down. And whereas they had been walking with a certain degree of hubris, now they will not walk proudly.

They're going to be bent over. This is going to be a humiliating time. And then we have more details in verses four and five.

And let me see if I can unpack this just a little bit. In that day, whenever it is, someone's going to take up this proverb or this taunt against you. And lament, morning song, wailed.

In Hebrew, I'm going to come back to this in the next slide. This is very interesting because the same root is part of that. The same Hebrew set of consonants is part of that. So, we have lament, morning song, and wail, but they're all related.

And that's going to be part of the audible part of this message. And then here's the quote. This is the mockery of the person who's saying, ah, these people that have taken all this stuff, now they're bemoaning it because somehow the Lord is now judging them.

Quote, destroyed. We are destroyed. He is probably the Lord.

He has altered the portion of my people, taking away what belongs to me.

He has divided our fields to an apostate. God reapportioning land. Now, is that a perfectly assured interpretation? Maybe not.

Maybe the "he" is somebody else. But I think it makes sense that they're seeing something happening, especially since it goes on in verse five and says, therefore, you, those people that have been grabbing land and in verses one and two, seizing things, seizing houses, seizing property, they are now going to be bereft of the stuff they've taken. God has reapportioned the land.

I'll come back to the apostate thing a little bit later on. But the idea is that measuring line by lot in the congregation of the Lord probably refers to a cultural thing where,

and I'm depending on Leslie Allen's commentary at this point. He says this is probably referring to the sacred assembly. Now we see that primarily in the Pentateuch earlier, much earlier on, and the book of Joshua, but that's where they gathered together, and by lot, they doled out the inheritance portions.

He says maybe that continued on in terms of sacred assemblies. At any rate, let's see if we can move this forward. Yes, let's do a summary so far and what we have in terms of a few more items, ways to think about the indictment, and God's responses.

Clearly, abuses of power, seizing and coveting, but the suggestion is that perhaps this is something that was familiar to them because they knew their own heritage. If you read, when you read 1 Kings 21, you have a really ugly situation. Ahab wants a property that is owned by a guy named Naboth.

It's a vineyard, and he wants it. And what's fascinating is he's been sulking on his bed just as these guys were planning on their beds to do evil. So, there are some interesting connections there, even verbally.

Well, Ahab is sulking on his bed. Jezebel arranges for a false accusation and so forth and so on so that Naboth's inheritance property should have stayed with him, should have stayed within the tribe, can indeed be taken because he is falsely accused, he's framed, he's put to death, and then Ahab gets his property. In addition to that, again, kind of responding to or trying to unpack this initial indictment a little bit, I said this earlier and it's a subtext.

It's not directly in the text, but perhaps when you have all the prosperity that was part of Uzziah's kingdom, the expansions, perhaps there were landowners who were just increasing their holdings and doing so in ways that were not appropriate. Hosea refers to people moving boundaries and how appalling that was in the Lord's sight. Maybe some of that stuff is going on.

I've intimated this already, but this could be, it is clearly a violation of inheritance principles. I won't read the material in Leviticus 25, which is all about the land being the Lord's, or these passages in Numbers 27 and 33, but in Numbers 36, verse 7, and repeated in verse 9, we have the following. The inheritance for the children of Israel shall not pass from tribe to tribe, for every Israelite shall cling to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Now, granted that was a number of centuries prior to this, but it seems like it has been completely dismissed as any kind of a socio-economic religious practice. God's responses? Measure for measure. They plotted, that's the word devise, moral and social evil.

God would plot destructive evil against the whole family. We've talked about that already. They seized, and again, that's a strong; it's a word for grasp, grab, fields, houses, which means the inheritances.

God would overrule in the assembly, and so, in some ways, he would seize back from those who were doing it illegitimately. The land, after all, was his. Obviously, those who had been perhaps somewhat prideful, etc., big landowners, their arrogance would be reduced.

The symbol, as we've seen, is a yoke, and a yoke is heavy. In addition, once we have this taunt or this parable being quoted, there seems to be built in some ridicule. Let me see if we can make that make sense.

The parable is, before the quotation actually starts, you have Naha, Nahi, Nahia. That's not too far from, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's conveying the same thing, you know.

They're getting their comeuppance, and the person, it's just called the one who is quoting this parable, is introducing it with that sort of a put-down, Naha, Nahi, Nahia, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Then he goes on and quotes what they had to say. Well, because we need to move forward, and again, I'm well aware that there are some parts of these verses that I have not necessarily dealt with in utter thoroughness, but I'm making the most sense of it as I can, and we're going to leave verse five, even though it's a bit challenging, and move on through six and seven.

So here we go. When we talked about linguistic things, I warned you ahead of time that the use of this word, drip, was going to be important. So here now we have, Do not drip.

Presumably, words, they drip. They ought not drip concerning these things. Reproach will not overtake, or could be translated leave, and then possibly us.

Verse six is really challenging. Are you getting that sense? It's really challenging. I'm going to come back to that later on.

Is it said, O house of Judah, and then now presumably the house of Judah, has been saying, this next quote, is the spirit of the Lord short if these are his works? A major break. Another speaker. The last part of verse seven.

Do not my words do good with the one walking in integrity. Well, we're going to revisit that with the usual highlights, etc., but I want you to notice how we have to slow down in between each segment because, with the changes in speakers, it's necessary to pause and figure out what's going on. So, what do we notice here? That's one question.

And then my second observation is, we've got to sort out the rhetoric. And so I've tried to do a little bit. I'm going to redo it again.

Prior to this, the Lord has spoken via Micah. Those are those preceding verses. Therefore, the Lord says.

And then we have the stuff that we've just been dealing with in verses four and five, which has its own set of quotes. Now, starting with verse six, Micah is quoting, but he's quoting the false prophets who are pushing back on the previous message if that's making sense. And so, the "they drip" is Micah saying, okay, everything on either side of they drip, before, after it, are what the false prophets are saying.

So, they are saying, as Micah represents it in verse six, don't prophesy. I'm using that prophesy word, and he didn't say drip. And then he's alluding to it; it's those guys who are saying this stuff.

Then he goes back and says they ought not drip concerning these things. Reproach will not overtake. And then we have another voice, the first part of verse seven, and yet another voice, the second part of verse seven.

So, there's the challenge. And I'll try and make it a little, I'm going to do it again now with colors and so forth. Because if I haven't made sense, just trying to unpack the rhetoric, maybe we'll have a little more help here.

Do not drip. Take a moment and skip down to what I have at the bottom of the page. The Hebrew word translated drip is more frequently, in fact, most frequently used with regard to liquid dripping, water dripping.

As we see in Amos chapter nine, the fruit and the wine are going to drip in that wonderful love song, song of songs. Myrrh drips. In Proverbs five, which is not exactly a positive one because it's about the woman who is the adulterous woman, honey drips off her lips.

Rain drips. This is liquid dripping, and most references are that. There are, however, some occasions, and Ezekiel 21 is a key one where he will use the term drip, *nataf* is the Hebrew word, and it's going to be used in the sense of prophesy.

So that is a very interesting way. They have been accusing Micah of dripping. As he re-quotes them, verse seven, he says they're busy dripping.

And so you've got these double accusations or at least snide things. They're probably really snarky comments that are being made back and forth. One other thing to note

here is they, once he starts quoting them again, suggest that maybe Micah's not alone.

Sometimes we have the sense that Micah's all by himself uttering these messages, but if these prophets are saying they ought not to drip concerning these things, I'm going to come back to these things in a moment, then he may have other people that are prophesying with him. Maybe. That's a hopeful suggestion, anyway.

But by the way, there are different ways of translating this. Most people say drip is prophesying. As you know already, I'm not convinced by that.

Drivel is another word. Don't drivel. That's one way to deal with it.

Some say don't spout. At least that gets kind of the drippy water thing to it. But at any rate, there you have it.

Now, what are these things? They ought not drip concerning these things, and then these shows up in verse 7 again. And the suggestion is that the false prophets are really miffed. Why is Micah and his gang prophesying about judgment? Subtext, we don't deserve judgment.

Why are they talking about judgment? How could they possibly do that? And now, as Micah leaves their whole thing, by leaving verse 6, we're going to leave it too, and he says, oh, is it said, O house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord short? In other words, they're basically saying, how can God possibly get angry with us? Come on, how can he possibly? We're his family. How can he possibly be angry? How can these be his works? These, again, refer to the judgments that Micah has been warning them about. How can that possibly be the case? How does this all make any kind of a picture whatsoever? Now, if you're having trouble putting that all together, here's a suggestion.

Just as false prophets are false, it may be that the rhetoric here is conveying the incoherence in what they're saying because the rhetoric itself does not hang together. And by the way, I didn't even bother to address that overtake, leave us, because that is really a mess to try and figure out what it means. The Hebrew word is hard; it's difficult, and it could just represent the fact that what they say doesn't, in the end, cohere.

Maybe that's part of this message, too. At any rate, verse 7 has two radically opposite expressions. The first part of verse 7 is a continuation of these people who just can't believe that God would be mad at them.

Why is he saying anything about this stuff? The second part is after a very distinct pause and change in speaker because it's probably Micah and the Lord's words

together. Do not my words do good to those who are walking in integrity, i.e., they haven't been walking in integrity, so how in the world are they asking anything about whether the Lord could do these things? Of course, he will if they haven't been walking in integrity. Okay, we're not through yet.

By the way, if we had a class, we would probably pause for a lengthy discussion at this point, but you're the class, you can discuss it amongst yourselves. Here's verses 8 through 11. We've had the first socioeconomic abuses.

We've had the second; the prophets are spouting all kinds of things, and Micah calls them on it, but they don't understand why God's doing what he's doing. Now comes the third, and it, too, is challenging. The read-through first, and you know to look for things that are challenging.

I didn't even write that in here. Lately, my people, they've been rising up to become an enemy. From the front of a garment, you strip off the mantle, glory, not sure.

From those passing by, secure, presumably, those returning from battle. The women of my people, you drive away from her luxurious house. Notice the change from plural women to singular her.

From her young children, you take away my glory forever. Get up and go, because this is not the resting place. Because it's defiled, it will be ruined, and the sickened, destruction.

If a person comes and lies with a spirit of falsehood, quote, I will drip for you about wine and beer. Or maybe that preposition could mean, I will drip for you for wine and beer. In other words, if they pay enough wine and beer, he'll drip whatever they want him to say.

At any rate, this is the dripper for this people. All right, let's see what we do with this one. My people, we've seen that already, and now they've become an enemy.

And we need to see that for all the horror that it is. My people, they're rising up to become an enemy, an enemy against whom? Is it an enemy amongst family things? Is this referring to, obliquely, maybe, that conflict between brothers from the north, Israelites, Northern Kingdom, and Judahites, in that zero Ephraimite war, when over 100,000 people were taken, lots of people died, lots of captives? Is that what's going on? We don't know for sure.

But at any rate, they, my people, are rising up to become an enemy. And then some details, again. You just have to get a sense of how horrible this is.

And even the difficulty of translating it and making it make sense gives us a sense of what it would be like for people coming home from that kind of conflict that is being abused in one way or another. From the front of a garment, you strip off the mantle or maybe some sort of insignia. Not sure what that word means.

From those passing by, who presume that they are secure. They were supposed to be able to return in security if they were coming back from battle. And then, not only are those, let's call them war veterans.

They're not honored. They're being abused. And then it goes to the women.

The women of my people, you're driving away from her luxurious house. And not only women but children. From her young children, you take away my glory forever.

And of course, if all the stuff with the socioeconomic challenges, the post-war or middle of the-war trauma, the flight of people who are refugees from war, it's just a disaster. And what happens to children in the next generation? You take away my glory forever. Whatever that means.

Verse 10, get up and go. Notice rising up in verse 8. They've been rising up in enmity. Now the Lord says, get up.

You're going to rise up, but it's going to be a different kind of getting up. It's going to be getting up because you're going to have to leave. This is not the resting place.

We're going to come back to what that might be. Whatever it is, it's defiled, ruined, a second destruction. The words are just jammed together there to emphasize how awful it is.

And then kind of a closure, a sandwich, if you will, with that whole dripping business in the beginning of this oracle, verse 6. Now, verse 11. If a person comes and lies with a spirit of falsehood, there is lots of false stuff going on here. I'll drip for you.

I'll drip for your wine and beer. And again, falsehood is sheker. Word translated beer here.

I think this is the NIV translation is shekar. You're supposed to hear the difference there or the similarity. This is the dripper for this people.

All right, let's summarize some of the things that we have kind of been drawing out of this. First of all, it's really clear that the prophetic office is twisted. They are not able to understand, and they are ridiculing Micah.

He ridicules them back. It's also really clear that all aspects of the social fabric are torn. If they're treating people returning from war in the way that they are, if women and children are being abused, it's gone.

It's a mess. So, we know the prophets are not great prophets. I already mentioned the fact that this very arresting image of dripping shapes this thing.

It's the beginning and the end. It's sort of an inclusio, if you will. And inside, we have the rising up and then rise up and go into exile.

So, there's even some wonderful literary structure as this stuff is being conveyed. And I'll repeat this as well because it's worth noting. Sheker, Shechar.

You're going to hear that. Part of the picture then, particularly as it comes through, is that how could the Lord be angry with us? I've paraphrased that, but that's probably what's going on, is countered because they're presuming that they're God's people, my people, et cetera, part of a family. That's countered by the Lord's call for integrity.

The one who walks with me will do what he's supposed to do. We'll live and walk in integrity. Just some additional notes.

Again, to summarize the things that I've been kind of wondering on about. When people were robbed of garments, that went against very basic Torah instructions. For example, they were not supposed to keep a garment of somebody overnight, even in pledge.

Giving you some references there. Even more, if these are war veterans coming back, that would be our term for them, to have them stripped of whatever honoring insignia they have left. That might be what's meant by that word for mantle.

And cloak as well is the absolute utmost in abuse. Women are driven from their homes, possibly their widows, if the folks have been killed in the war kind of context. By the way, Micah doesn't use the standard terms for people who are marginalized and disenfranchised.

That would be widows, aliens, and orphans. He doesn't use that. Instead, he uses descriptions to get the point across and to make us think because the Torah over and over again uses the terms widows, aliens, and orphans.

By the way, they're extremely meaningful and important. But if those folks had become a little bit too familiar with what maybe had become jargon for them, Micah would be capturing their attention. The suggestion, then, is that the children are not

going to have, as the Lord says, my glory. Their experience of God's glory is going to be shattered completely.

Well, just in terms of the resting place, some folks think that the resting place and the defilement of it specifically refers broadly to the land. It could be, and I'm referencing and quoting here from a bigger passage. And by the way, Leviticus 18 is all about defilement in sexual activities.

Perry mentioned uncovering the nakedness of. That expression shows up over and over and over again in Leviticus 18. But at any rate, at the end of that chapter, the Lord says, do not defile yourselves in any of these ways.

Uncovering, uncovering, uncovering. Because this is how the nations that I'm going to drive out before you have become defiled. Even the land was defiled.

Even the land was defiled. So, I punished it for its sin. The land vomited out its inhabitants, but you must keep my decrees and my laws.

And if you defile the land, it too will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Remember that the verse in Micah emphasizes three different expressions. Just the vileness, the defilement, the destruction, the ruin is there.

And so maybe the resting place is referring to the land. However, there are other echoes of this term resting place. I'm just mentioning one, which happens to be Psalm 132.

Something we can go back and read in another time frame. But Psalm 132 has as an ongoing focus Zion. And I'll just draw out a couple of verses that are significant here.

The context in that whole Psalm is David's oath that he will not rest until he finds a place for the Lord Almighty, a dwelling for the mighty one of Jacob. I will not rest, he says. Now, as we know, he's not the one who builds it, but he certainly plans for it, and Solomon will build it.

The Psalm goes on, God's presence with them when they would worship, as the theme of this Psalm develops. And here's the quote, verse seven: let us come to his dwelling place and worship at his footstool. And then verse eight, arise Lord and come to your resting place.

And then, finally, the Psalm closes with, this is my resting place forever and ever. And so, we have that promise in terms of resting place. And that will actually help us as we transition from these terrible things that have been dealt with in the first 11 verses to what's going to go on in the last two verses of Micah chapter two.

First of all, back to our pattern, I'm going to read it. I will certainly gather, O Jacob, all of you. I will certainly bring together, by the way, for those of you who are Hebrew, these are infinitive absolutes, which emphasize God will do it.

That's the certainty. I will certainly bring together the remnant of Israel. I'll set them together as a flock in an enclosure, as a herd in the middle of pasture, security.

They are in tumult from men, maybe fear of men. And now I'm pausing because that's the gathering image. Verse 13, one who breaks through has gone up before them.

They've broken through and passed the gate. They've gone out through it. Their king has passed before them and the Lord will be their head.

So, we're shifting in a number of ways here. And the question is, what images do we see? Well, you can certainly see something about shepherding. And you can certainly see something about a king.

That's clear. But let's see what else is happening here in terms of what else should we notice? I will certainly gather, certainly bring together two words that are used synonymously. And God is declaring that that is what's going to happen.

Jacob and, again, Israel. And here, we have our use of the term remnant, which will show up again in Micah. There's security, a flock who desperately needs to be in a secure place.

Enclosure, herd in the middle of pasture. Again, these are parallel expressions. But now, something is a little unsettling even here.

They're in tumult, and we need to notice that. Then, one, how that works, what he does, and the breaking through is interesting. He's going up before them.

They break through and pass the gate. But somehow we transition from maybe going in, passing a gate into a secure enclosure, a middle of pasture. Now we go 180 degrees.

They've gone out through it. And their king has passed before them. The Lord will be their head.

Well, there are lots of interesting things here. And by the way, we're going to see this gathering together image further on in Micah. We're going to see remnant again in Micah.

So, this is not the last we've seen of them. The breaking through for those in the audience who would have known their earlier narratives, when the Lord was fighting on behalf of David, parazine, he broke through. And the places named that because the Lord broke through.

That would be an echo back into the David narratives as well. Let's see what we've got. It's an abrupt transition.

Some people think it's a later addition to the text, but we're not going to go into that whole thing. I think it's part of it. And it's a promise that needs to follow what we've had.

Possibly, I raised an issue in terms of, after that gathering into security, what that tumult is all about. And it may be that this is continuing some sense of the uncertainty. Tumult is a word that shows up in the Psalms of lament.

And we've certainly been dealing with lament. Perhaps this is an allusion to the fact that there are still those around who are a source of fear and uncertainty, and they need to be dealt with, which is why the one who breaks through is going to go out and do that.

That might be the connection there. Going back to pick up the last part of chapter one might help us. So just remember, as Perry talks through the word plays and just the distress and the different ways that were expressed, probably as these cities that are noted and others as well fell before whatever the enemies were, whoever they were, refugees are streaming.

This may be not only the Shephelah towns. It may refer, as I suggested earlier, to some of the refugees from that conflict between the north and Judah. Who knows? It's just a horrible time all the way around.

It's two decades of terror. At any rate, as they're streaming, maybe they're headed for Jerusalem. It's the last place that may be somewhat secure.

Will they make it to the gates? And as I suggest to you, with reference to chapter one, Micah has seen town after town fall. And if this is reaching the end of that eighth century, 701 Sennacherib, Jerusalem is pretty much alone. A reminder of what Perry said, Sennacherib did say he had Hezekiah trapped like a bird in a cage, and yet he had to withdraw.

The upshot of this brief little two verses, which is an adumbration of God's intervening again with hope, but here God is both shepherding his people into a safe place, shepherding his people into a closure, but he's also going to go out before

them. He's going to break whatever the problem happens to be, the men causing tumult, causing fear. He's going to break that and he will bring them out in safety.

Well, we're going to pause because this pretty much draws our time of chapter two together, but simply a lesson that I think is especially germane for closing this particular chapter. These people have been through really grim times. Just to repeat myself, the language itself and the brokenness of the language makes that really clear.

The crimes that have been described in the early part of the chapter have made some people really victims in many, many ways, and yet through all of that, God will shepherd and protect his people, and that's the promise that's bound into these very last verses. We'll move on to chapter three next.

This is Dr. Elaine and Perry Phillips in their teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 3, Micah 2.