

Dr. Perry Phillips, Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway, Session 4, Micah 3

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This is Drs. Elaine and Perry Phillips and their teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 4, Micah 3.

Hello again, Perry Phillips, I'm back for chapter three.

The topic, Introduction to Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. It's a study of various aspects of Micah, canonical, geographical, historical, theological, and literary, and we are heading toward chapter three. First, a little review for extensive review of what we've done up to this point.

We invite you to take a look at the introduction and chapters one and two, where we get in more detail with the geography, the topography, et cetera. But in a historical and geographical milieu, chapter one lays out the covenant dispute. That is the charge that the Lord as prosecutor, judge, and I should add witness as well, has against Israel and Jacob for breaking the covenant.

Then, in chapter two, the sins of the leaders, oppression primarily, and of the prophets, which is falsehood. And this will be expanded upon as we move along. Well, here is an introduction to chapter three.

This has a chiastic structure. What we mean by that is the following: It is a poetic structure that emphasizes the material that is being discussed.

In this particular case, what we can do is break this chapter up into three units. Verses one to four deal with the rulers, the leaders, and the heads. Micah is speaking by heads.

I mean the heads of state. And then the second part of the trilogy, if you might call it that, verses five to eight, deals with the prophets. And this is the Lord speaking.

And then finally, verses nine to 12, get back to the rulers, and Micah is speaking again. So we go, Micah, the Lord, Micah. And that's what we mean by a chiastic structure, just the way it has been put together with some parallels.

And then we note the four verse, four verse, four verse layout. Almost close enough. The dispute or the judgment oracle, which we saw begin in chapter one.

This is the dispute that the Lord has against the people because they are breaking the covenant. And this comes from R. B. Y. Scott in his work, *The Relevance of the Prophets*. This is page 109.

And I am quoting what he says. What we find here in chapter three, verse one, is a summons to the accused. In other words, you are being summoned now by the court to come and to present your case.

So, in verse one, we have the heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel. This is the summons. In verse two, we have the indictment.

You who hate good and love evil, this is what you are accused of. And Elaine had mentioned previously Isaiah 5:20, woe to you who substitute falsehood for truth and truth for falsehood. This is the kind of thing that is happening here.

Then, the connecting link to the divine judgment is in verse 12, the first part of verse 12. Therefore, because of you, this is what is going to happen. Now, the sentence of the judge, which is the second part of verse 12, which is the last verse in this particular chapter, Zion, will be plowed as a field.

So, let's just look at that again. There's a summon to the accused. In other words, appear before me here now.

This is the indictment. You have turned things upside down. You're calling truth falsehood and falsehood truth.

Now, as a result of that, there is going to be judgment, and that comes at the end of the chapter in the first part of verse 12. And then, finally, this is what the sentence is going to be. Zion will be plowed as a field.

In other words, Zion, the city of Jerusalem, is going to be destroyed. Well, let's do an exposition now of chapter 3 as we get into the details of the 4-4-4 structure. Verses 1 to 4, the condemnation of the rulers.

Verse 1, and I'm using the New American Standard Bible for this particular chapter. And I said, and here we're talking Micah, here now heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, is it not for you to know justice? This is obviously a rhetorical question. Of course, they should know what justice is.

It's being asked rhetorically. And you'll notice at the very top of this particular slide that I have notes, one over three. And what I mean by that is I have three parts to this note, and this is the first part.

And you can see the denominator number, so you can tell how long-winded I'm going to be for this particular explanation. But at any rate, this is the first part of the analysis of this particular chapter. And I said, in verses 1 to 4, these are coming from Micah's heart, because he's saying, my people elsewhere.

God said in verse 5 that this is similar to Jeremiah, where Jeremiah's words merge with those of the Lord. Elaine had already discussed that. The words of the Lord and the words of the prophet, which we know from reading Peter, are guided by the Holy Spirit.

So, when the prophet speaks to the Lord of the Holy Spirit, he is speaking in the place of the Lord. So, the words of the Lord and the words of the prophet are one and the same because of inspiration. And then we also see, as we saw in chapter 2, verse 12, the use of Jacob and Israel includes both the northern and the southern kingdoms in this particular case.

And then, finally, the leaders are called heads and rulers. The former may well include judges, which means the legal system was as corrupt as the ruling class. And we will see that because we will find that justice, Hebrew mishpat, justice has been perverted by the leaders.

And so, what we find is really corruption throughout the whole system. The prophets have been corrupt. We've seen that. The leaders and the political leaders are corrupt.

The priests, as we see, are corrupt. And all the institutions that make up the society have become corrupt. And the result is they have gone away from Torah.

They have turned away from the Lord to the idols that profit nothing. Also, no justice. The leaders, as the rhetorical question said, shouldn't you know justice? This is the mishpat I was talking about.

Actually, this implies more than just cognitive knowledge. As one commentator, Lindblom, has said, it's the sum of all that is incumbent upon the people because of the covenant. In other words, justice, mishpat, is something that pervades the whole social, theological structure of the society.

And justice, what does it imply? A sense of fairness, equity in government administration and in the courts. All people should be seen the same under the law. But this is not what is happening, as Elaine brought out when she was discussing the previous chapter.

No, there are those who have the power to take property unjustly from others, and this is part of what is going to be judged. And then what we find is that the guardians

of justice, the ones who should really make sure that there is equity under the law, these are the ones that become the abettors and the participants in crime, especially siding with land barons, which again was mentioned previously by Elaine. Under Uzziah, you had a great expanse in the prosperity of the nation and prosperity of the southern kingdom, and apparently, that led then to the extension of boundaries illegally.

We will see an instance of that as we move along here. Well, how should justice take place? We have Jeremiah, a later prophet, who prophesies before the Babylonians come and destroy Jerusalem. He, too, is interested in the injustices that are happening in Jerusalem. And here's what we read in Jeremiah 22, verse 16.

He, King Josiah, judged the cause of the poor and the needy, then it was well. Is not this to know me, declares the Lord. And this is the way leaders should be behaving.

And then we find the same thing expressed in the New Testament in James, chapter 2, where James says that our love for the Lord is really going to be expressed in the love that we have for other people and the way that we take care of other people, not by abusing them. Moving on to verse 2. Well, the rhetorical question is, shouldn't you know justice? And, of course, the answer is yes, but they don't. We see that in verse 2, where we read the following: you who hate good and love evil, who tear off their skin from them and their flesh from their bones.

Whoa, this is a pretty serious charge that's being done against the leaders. What could it mean? You who hate good and love evil rather than, as we find in Amos chapter 5, verse 15, what does the Lord tell the people through Amos? Hate evil, love good, establish justice in the gate. And just the opposite now is happening in Jerusalem.

Isaiah chapter 1, these are the verses, last part of 16 and verse 17, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan. Exactly what Elaine said they should have done, they are not doing. And this comes up in chapter 3 as well.

Finally, plead for the widow. These are the people who could not defend themselves. Again, I repeat myself: the leaders, instead of performing mishpat for these particular people, are the ones who are abusing them for their own gain.

This picks up the theme of chapter 2, verses 8 and 9 in very vivid terms. Note the analogy to a wild carnivore. What do carnivores do? They grab prey, they tear it apart, and they chomp on the bones.

This is vivid language of the wretched treatment that the rulers are showing towards the populace. The leaders should be watchdogs, but rather they have become

ravenous beasts of prey. Instead of being watchdogs, they become dogs, like wild dogs that basically attack prey and then tear it apart.

This could be what Micah is referring to, or Micah may be referring to the cannibalism that's going to occur when Jerusalem will be under siege. Now that was not the case with the Assyrian siege, because they never got into the gates of Jerusalem. But in the Babylonian siege, there was very much cannibalism that was going on.

And so, the tearing apart, the ripping of the flesh, etc., horrible to think about it, but it might be people who are falling upon others in the city because they are so hungry, they're so out of food that they are resorting to cannibalism. This expression, the idea of cannibalism, also shows up in 2 Kings chapter 6, when there is an attack from the north, and the city of Samaria is locked up, tighter in the drum, and there's a discussion between two women who have been using their children for food. And that you can read for yourself.

Again, 2 Kings chapter 6. Micah might be likening the leaders who abuse the people to cannibals. They're not cannibalizing literally, but they're cannibalizing the justice that really belongs to the people. The use of the word tear is the Hebrew *gazel*.

And the word used in Micah 2, chapter 2, verse 2, for tearing away fields, for coveting fields, and tearing them away, interestingly enough, is the same word. So, it has to do with gross social oppression and the taking away, the taking away of the land, the taking away of the inheritance from the widows and from the orphans. And we have war veterans coming back.

Well, there's war. There are people who died in the war that aren't coming back. And so, what is the wife going to do? What are the children going to do? Well, one of the land barons may come and give them pennies on the dollar for their land, but they need to take that deal otherwise they're just going to starve. Ecclesiastes uses the word *gazel* as well.

And he says, if you see *gazel* of the poor in the *Mishpat*, well, he goes on to say, don't be too surprised because in some parts of the world, this is just the way things are. And finally, Isaiah chapter 61, God loves *Mishpat*, but he hates *gazel*. So, it's not just Micah who's getting upset at this.

The Lord himself, of course, is getting upset at this as well. In short, and I'm just summarizing what I've already said, the leaders were supposed to practice *Mishpat*, but they are practicing *gazel*. Verse three, again, the leaders, you 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.

So, the previous word talked about tearing the flesh off. And this one now says you're actually cooking them, eating the flesh. This is a common term for oppression, basically.

So apparently, this is a vivid way of saying that a gross, gross oppression is taking place. We see this in other parts of scripture. Psalm 14, verse four: do all the workers of wickedness not know who eat up my people as they eat bread? Well, they're not doing it literally.

It just means there's gross oppression that is taking place. You find it in the Psalms also. Psalm 27, verse two: when evildoers come upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.

In other words, they're oppressing me. They are ready to fall upon me like the animals, like the carnivores. Proverbs chapter 30, verse 14, says that there is a kind of man whose teeth are like swords and his jaw teeth like knives to devour the afflicted from the earth and the needy from among men.

You understand that that language now that Micah is using is a very serious accusation against the leaders who are these ravenous wolves that are ready to devour whoever gets in their way and to take their property and to commit *gazal* instead of *mishpat*. And finally, strip off the skin, break, and chop up the bones. This shows the violence with which the oppression is taking place.

Verse four, this is the end of the first part of archaistic structure. Then they, the leaders, 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.

See, this is getting now back to the measure for measure that Elaine was talking about. You act this way? Oh, yeah, you were fine when nobody was looking over your shoulder when nobody was attacking you when nobody was oppressing you, but now you're being oppressed by the Assyrians coming in, and now you're calling to me. Uh-uh, that's not going to work.

I'm going to treat you measure for measure the same way that you are treating the people that you've been oppressing. Measure for measure, the *lex talionis*, one of my good friends says, if you don't throw some Greek or some Latin into a lecture, nobody thinks you're intelligent. So, here's the Latin part.

Do not you do not hear the cry of the people, so the Lord will not hear your cry. Measure for measure. So, this is a strong Hebrew construction, by the way, that emphasizes what is going on because, or in accordance with, or specifically for that reason, since you have oppressed others, you did not hear their cries when they cried to you for mercy.

Now I'm not going to listen to you. You're going to suffer exactly the same thing that they have suffered. And then the Lord is going to hide his face because of covenant disobedience.

You break the covenant, don't expect me to be helpful. And it's interesting the verb hide his face, meaning you're not going to see me acting with you in any good way. I'm going to hide from you.

The idea of hiding his face actually comes out in the covenant in Deuteronomy; the same term is used. You can see how Micah and the other prophets, who are covenant enforcers, pick up the language of Moses and then use it at their particular time as well. In Deuteronomy 31, verse 17, if the people disobey, then the Lord says the following: My anger will be kindled against them in that day.

I will forsake them and hide my face from them. So, the idea of hiding the face is I'm forsaking them. I've had it with them.

We see it again in chapter 32 of Deuteronomy. But I will surely hide my face in that day, that is disobedience, because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods. And that is exactly what is happening now in the time of Micah.

They have turned to other gods, God has rebuked them, and now he's going to turn his face away from them. He's going to reject them. From Micah's contemporary Isaiah, in the very first chapter, when you spread out your hands in prayer, oh Lord, save us.

And what does he say? I will hide my eyes, a similar expression to I will hide my face from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

And remember, Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries. So, let's take a look at the general principle here. Psalm 34, 16, the face of the Lord is against evildoers to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

And he certainly did that with a lot of the people that Micah is talking about. Proverbs chapter 21, verse 13, says that he who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor, which certainly the leaders of Micah were doing, will also cry himself and not be answered. You don't listen to them, I don't listen to you.

On the other hand, here's the hope. When the psalmist, Psalm 102 says, do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress, incline your ear to me in the day when I call, answer me quickly. Presumably, the psalmist had not shut his ears or hidden his face from those who were in distress.

For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteousness, the upright will behold his face. This is Psalm 11. So, you see the way that hiding the face, beholding the face, the appearance of the face of God, we see how that is used.

And then finally, in Psalm 105, seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. In other words, look for his help and do it by helping others. Now we get to the second part of our chiastic structure.

This is verses 5 to 8. These are the false prophets in contrast to the true prophet Micah. And here is where the Lord himself begins to speak. Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray.

When they have something to eat, they cry, peace, but against him who puts nothing in their mouths, they declare war. This gets back to what Elaine was saying in chapter 2, and that is, these are the prophets that drip. If you pay them enough, they will drip. They will prophesy good things for you.

These are like soothsayers, basically. If you give them enough money, they'll say something good. But if you haven't paid them enough, then they will predict evil upon you.

And it appears that the cahoots between the prophets and the leaders, you'll be sure that the people will get what is coming to them as the prophets declare because they're not paying them enough money. This is kind of a prophet governmental complex that we're talking about here. Now, as I mentioned before, note the difference between, and I said, to, thus says the Lord.

You see the intermixture here that Elaine was talking about, where the prophet's words are the words and vice versa. False prophets basically became soothsayers who prophesied good when paid well and evil when not. This happened in Jeremiah's time as well.

Jeremiah had his hands full with false prophets, and Micah faced false prophets who prophesied for those who paid them. And note the same, as I mentioned previously, in what Elaine was mentioning, this also happened in Elijah's time. And so, there's a long history of false prophecy in Israel.

In the passage that I have here in 1 Kings chapter 17 and then 22, we read about the false prophets that stood up against Elijah. That did not end well for the false prophets with the sacrifices that were done on Mount Carmel. And Deuteronomy 13 and 18 have instructions on how to tell the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet, and that has to do with whether the prophecies come true or not.

Have something to eat. The prophets have something to eat if they have something to eat. Literally, it doesn't say if they have something to eat, it says who bite with their teeth, the Hebrew nashak, and the word has to do with the deadly bite of a serpent.

In other words, they will really latch onto you if you don't pay them the amount that they're looking for. And another form of nashak, however, interestingly enough, deals with lending money with interest. And this is the word that is used in Deuteronomy chapter 23, when he says, you shall not charge interest to your countrymen.

You shall not nashak your countrymen. You shall not charge interest. And some people translate that as excessive interest.

Well, you wonder what is excessive interest. And interestingly enough, when you go to Nehemiah, the people there are charging 1% interest, and Nehemiah condemns them for that. They had to give one part in a hundred to the person that they received the money from, and Nehemiah said, no, you can't do this.

You even cut that out. How that ties in with modern finance, I leave as an exercise to the listener. But it might also refer to the veracity by which the false prophets are willing to makeup, that is, to cry peace in order to receive their bribes.

So, the whole language here for the leaders and for the prophets is violence, veracity, violence. This isn't being done in back corners. This is being done right out in the open.

It's obvious to everybody, but the leaders don't care. There's no mishpat. Micah is outraged because of what the false prophets are doing.

Several times Micah uses the phrase, my people. He identifies with the people. What is happening to the people is an affront to him personally because he loves the people, and he does not want to see them abused.

As I mentioned, it's used a lot in Micah, and these are the passages in which it is used. In short, Micah is not just delivering God's message. As I mentioned previously, he is personally affronted by the evil that the false prophets are committing.

Look, it looks bad in his profession. Verse six, therefore, it will be night for you, who the prophets, without vision and darkness for you, without divination. The sun will go down on the prophets, again false prophets, and the day will become dark over them.

The last thing a prophet wants is not to have visions. Night for you, false prophets, without vision, interestingly enough, that particular word is used because this word for vision is the same word as in Micah, chapter one, verse one, that starts out the whole book, and it says, this is what Micah, who saw what was determined for Samaria and for Jerusalem. It's the same word that is being used.

But there will be darkness. In other words, the false prophets will not see the truth. That's not the kind of vision they are going to have, and the parallel teaching employing the sun as an example is when the sun goes down, there is darkness, and the sun is going to set.

It's going to go down on the false prophets. Now, interestingly enough, what this may mean, well, I'll get into that in the next verse. The seers will be ashamed.

That's just another word for prophet, prophet, seer, and diviner; interestingly enough, more magicians, more of the people who do, as the witches endure, will be embarrassed. Indeed, they will all cover their mouths because no answer comes from God. Seers, instead of prophets, is the same word for vision and is used for prophets who are called seers as well, but the false ones in this particular case will be embarrassed, of course, because their visions aren't going to be coming true.

No, they'll get their money and then flee to the next sucker who hires them to prophesy. There's no answer from God, we are told in this verse. Does this imply at one time, maybe they did get answers but became proud, and now are not in it to relay the message of God, but in it to relay their own messages and to gain from it? Very interesting, there's no answer from God.

They cover their mouths, literally cover their mustache, and lepers, we are told, were to cover their mustache. Well, probably, you know, the mustache is on top of the list, so you cover your mouth, and they were to yell, unclean, unclean. This is what the prophets are going to do, but it's going to be because of shame.

It's going to be a sign of embarrassment that we see in the verses that I mentioned here, Zechariah and Isaiah. Then, in Ezekiel, chapter 24, it is a sign of mourning. So, it seems to imply both embarrassment and mourning.

We don't know where the original custom came from. Perhaps it was to avoid conversation while mourning. You know, I'm mourning, please don't bug me.

Maybe it's a little bit like wearing a black armband today that just shows you're mourning. The last thing you want to do with a person wearing a black armband is go and talk about the football game over last weekend. Verse 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.

Quite the opposite for Micah. He knows that he's been filled by the Spirit of the Lord. Unlike the false prophets, Micah is filled with the Spirit of God, and we refer to the New Testament, 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 21, no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

And that is the difference between the true and the false prophet. And having God's Spirit gives Micah courage. It's very interesting, when you look at Acts, chapter 4. The apostles were filled with the Spirit and spoke boldly.

So, in spite of all the opposition that Micah is receiving from the false prophets, from the leaders, but from the priests as well, he is still able to speak boldly because he is filled with the Spirit of God. And unlike the false prophets, Micah will tell the truth, to make known to Jacob, even to Israel, their transgressions and their sins. It's not an easy message.

One doesn't want to go to one's own people and say, you have sinned, you have broken the covenant, God is going to judge you, and then have all the opposition, then continue to preach the truth anyway. But this is the state that Micah is in. One characteristic of false prophets, we find, is their propensity to tell the people what they want to hear.

It's like politicians running for office, basically. Oh, what do you want to hear? Oh, you want to have a chicken in every pot? Okay, fine, I'll do it. 1 Kings, chapter 22, is very interested in that respect.

There is King Ahab and King Jehoshaphat who have gotten together in Samaria, and the question is whether King Ahab is going to go attack Ramoth Gilead. And there are a few prophets before him that say, yeah, yeah, go up, go up, you'll be victorious, etc. They're false prophets.

But there is one prophet who tells him the truth. What is interesting is that somehow, Ahab realizes, maybe I ought to get some other prophet who has a history of telling the truth to tell me what's really going on. And so, he calls another prophet, Micaiah.

What is interesting in this context is the person who goes and gets Micaiah says to him the following: behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them and speak favorably. In other words, just follow what everybody else is saying.

Well, Micaiah did not do that. He told him, Ahab, if you go up to battle, you are going to die. And that is exactly what happened.

And this is happening in Jeremiah. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace, because that's what the people wanted to hear. In 2 Timothy, we find that the time is coming in the last days, which by the way, in my opinion, covers the time from Jesus's ascension till he comes again.

But Paul says through Timothy, for the time is coming where people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teacher to suit their own passions. Again, sounds like politicians. Well, let's go to the last part of our chiastic structure, back to condemning the leaders.

So, we had leaders and prophets, and now we're going back to leaders. Verse 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. Well, this sounds very much like what we've seen before.

The leaders make the straight crooked, and they act totally contrary to what they should do. And I refer to Isaiah chapter 5, verse 20. Woe to you who call evil good and good evil, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, who put darkness for light and light to darkness.

That is the whole passage. Mishpat and Gazal have been turned around. Justice has been turned on its head.

There is none. Leaders despise justice. Oh, they went, no, we're leaders, we don't despise justice.

And yet, in reality, by their actions, of course, they do. They do not admit to this, but it's true de facto by the way that they act. The word despise that is used, Hebrew ta'ab, also means to abhor, detest, loathe, hate.

So, the leaders, they don't love justice. They abhor it. They detest it, loathe it. They hate it. And basically, what they think of the populace is just, they're just pawns for our gratification and our enrichment. And you find the same kind of thing going on in Job, where Job says, I'm abhorred by my friends and family. Verse 1:19, also, I hate, that is I'm abhorred by falsehood. And Amos is similar to Micah.

Verse 10, these leaders, false leaders who abuse the people like ravenous wolves, they build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with violent injustice.

This is the way they're expanding their estates, shall we say, with violence. And let me just make a side note on urban renewal that is going on in Jerusalem at this time. Now, this is during the time of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah was a good king, but apparently, he also got into a little bit of helping the land barons expand and also using what we might call eminent domain in order to take people's houses. Now I'll show what I mean by that. This comes from Isaiah chapter 22, verses 9 to 11.

You, meaning the people, perhaps Isaiah himself, saw that the city of David had many breaches in its defenses. Okay, it was left that way by an earlier attack. You stored up water in the lower pool.

You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. In terms of storing up water in the lower pool, this is a channel that Hezekiah built in order to bring water from an upper spring down to the lower part of the city. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool.

By the way, that can be visited today when later on it becomes a pool of Siloam that we read about in chapter 9 of the Gospel of John. But you did not look to the one who made it or have regard for the one who planned it long ago. Is it wrong to build up defenses? No, but unless the Lord protects a city, the watchman watches in vain.

And unless the Lord builds a house, the builders build in vain. This is what he's getting to. But here's what's interesting.

After the 1967 war, when Israel was able to retake Jerusalem, the building that began, first of all, had to clear away the rubble before they could rebuild the old city of Jerusalem, a part that is known as the Jewish Quarter. Here, we have a picture of that before the construction of the modern buildings that one visits at this point. And this is the remnants of a wall.

This is the base of a large wall. And I'll show you how large it was in a moment because here you see a person. So, this is a very large wall.

In fact, the person who discovered it was calling it the Broad Wall at that particular time. What is interesting is that on both sides of this wall, you can see remnants of houses—houses that were torn down to build this wall, probably by eminent domain.

We don't know what happened to the people who own these houses, but apparently, the Lord is telling the people who built the wall, no, you should not have done this. You should have relied upon me and not have taken the property of the people whose houses you ruined in order to be able to build this particular wall. Well, that's the foundation.

What does it look like now? There you go. Here's the wall. And these are the buildings that are around it.

What is interesting is that here's a remnant of some of the houses that I showed in the previous slide. And you wonder how tall was the wall? And there's the original height, eight meters, about 24 feet. Now, how do we know it was that high? Well, because of all the rubble that was part of the wall that they found when they were clearing the place out in order to make the buildings.

And by looking at the amount of rubble, they were able to estimate the height of the wall. So, this was not only a broad wall, and this was a tall wall. And yet, apparently, it was built on injustice.

In verse 11, we go on to read, her leaders pronounced judgment for a bribe. Wait a minute, I thought it was just the prophets that did this. No, the leaders are doing this.

In other words, I'll give you mishpat if you pay me enough, you know, what we call baksheesh in the Middle East. Her priests instruct for a price. The priests were supposed to instruct the people on the Torah, but now they're doing it for a price.

Everybody's getting into the act. 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.

Huh, you get what's going on here. Oh, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. God isn't going to destroy us because his temple is here.

He's not going to destroy his temple. Basically, everyone is doing their job based on the amount of the bribe. Proverbs tells us as much.

A wicked man receives a bribe from the bosom to pervert the ways of mishpat. Note the unholy trinity here of corruption. The prophets claim a message from the Lord when it's not.

The priests teach it. The leaders use the revelation in quotes to exact property from the people. Hey, we have the Lord's blessing.

The Lord told the prophets this is the Lord's will and they use it to exploit the people. Note the wording, three different words for taking money here that is being used. Leaders take a bribe for justice.

The priests instruct for a price. The prophets are divine for money, okay, or silver. So, you've got a bribe, a price, and money.

In other words, everything is done for the almighty buck. Yet they all feel secure. It's not the Lord in our midst.

We're safe. The leaders feel secure because the Lord, they think, dwells with them in the temple, but the temple without the Lord's presence is simply a structure on a hill. Note Jesus' reference to Jeremiah 7. He gets into the same thing.

In Jeremiah's time, the people were saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the Babylonians will never come in here because the Lord is not going to let his temple be destroyed. What is interesting is that Jeremiah says, no, you've turned it into a den of thieves, and it will be destroyed. And just take a look at what happened in Shiloh, where my tabernacle was destroyed. My presence was supposed to be there, but you were so evil. I hid my face, and Shiloh was destroyed.

What is interesting is Jesus quotes this passage to the people in his time, and the people think of Jeremiah 7 and maybe are thinking, hmm, does that mean this temple is going to be destroyed? Well, it was. It was about 40 years after Jesus. Well, note the side note on priests.

This is the only place, by the way, Micah mentions them. And people brought the most difficult cases to the priest that they might obtain the will of God for themselves. But now what they're doing, even the priests have become corrupt.

Well, let's get to our last verse. Therefore, on account of you, prophets, leaders, and priests, because of you, Zion will be plowed as a field. Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins.

And you saw some of that, right? From my previous slide that I showed. And the mountain of the temple will become a high place in a forest, justice at last. Because you, plural, because of the unholy trinity, politico, prophetic, sacerdotal, Zion, which equals Jerusalem, will come under very harsh punishment since this is the center of all three activities, governance, prophecy, and sacrifice.

It was all there in Jerusalem. All these were the center of the nation of Judah and their institutions. And the leaders had built Jerusalem with injustice and violent act, which we saw in verse 10, and so they are responsible for unbuilding it.

It will become a heap of ruins. You built it on injustice, now I'm going to unbuild it, but it's going to be injustice. Plowed like a field, this prophecy was actually fulfilled in the time of Jeremiah, which we read about in Jeremiah chapter 26.

And the mountain of the Lord will become high places for a forest. The word that is used is bama, bamot, plural, high places for a forest. So, wait a minute, the temple was there, now we're talking about trees planted there? What could that possibly mean? Here are some suggestions.

Bamot, as I said, is a word for a cultic site, but this is going to be on Mount Zion. Will bamot be for nature, which will worship the true God? In other words, nature doesn't have any trouble recognizing who its creator is. We read in the Psalms that the trees clap their hands in praise of the Lord.

So, are we planting forests there and returning it back to nature in true worship of the Lord? Isaiah also says, break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it. Is that what the image is, that it's finally going to turn into something that will worship the Lord in truth? Or does a forest represent a place of wild animals, ruin, and death, with no praise? We leave that as an exercise to the listener. Well, what are the lessons? Here, I summarize Leslie Allen's commentary, page 321, which is apropos.

Micah's words were remembered in the time of Jeremiah, and that was about 150 years later. they should be remembered today as well because every generation of God's people should take Micah's word to heart. To wit, God's people should not miss you; service to God is a cloak for one's own glory and profit. And I ask you a question: can you think of any examples that would be the case, not just in the civil part of society, but also in the religious part of society, where people are more interested in lining their pockets than in doing what they have been put in the institution to do, what they have been voted in or have appointed to, whatever the case may be.

And Micah's words warn us not to talk the talk without walking the walk, to use a modern expression. In other words, creed and conduct should be consistent. And that was anything but in the time of Micah.

And other thoughts I leave to you. With that, I will learn many languages. Thank you.

Be well.

This is Drs. Elaine and Perry Phillips and their teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 4, Micah 3.