

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway, Session 5, Micah 4

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This is Dr. Elaine Phillips and her teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 5, Micah 4.

We're picking up now with Micah chapter four.

And again, this is our subtitle, Prophet Outside the Beltway, because we need to keep remembering that he's from a very critical area, even though he's most likely preaching in Jerusalem. Speaking of Jerusalem, it's in chapter four that we're going to have our very significant line, the Torah shall go forth from Zion. And we're going to spend some time working up towards that and then following it afterward.

That brings us to where we're going. So, just a quick note in terms of what it is we're planning to do in this next hour or so; I want to spend a little bit of time just with a very brief historical overview. Not much, because you can always go back to the preceding presentations and get that.

However, because chapter four is such a contrast, especially the first five verses with what preceded it, we're going to do just a bit of a review of the highlights of chapters one through three. Beyond that, we'll spend some time looking at chapter four with these kinds of things in mind. First of all, we need to spend some time thinking about Jerusalem and some of the references in chapter four to the geographical parts of Jerusalem and Mount Zion.

And then because chapter four introduces some terminology that has to do with time frames, we're going to spend some time on that too, related to this next thing in the last days and in contrast with but now. So, we'll work back and forth in terms of restoration oracles, destruction, and then hopeful restoration again. So that's pretty much what happens.

We'll draw towards the end some brief lessons that we might take away in terms of where we are in the 21st century, in particular, the Western Church. As I said, a quick historical overview, and this time we're going to use a chart that's very helpful, taken from Jim Monson's Regions on the Run. This is a partial of a very significant whole chart.

Of course, we want to notice where Micah is located, along with the other 8th-century prophets to whom we were briefly introduced in our introductory lectures. So, Micah and Isaiah especially, you want to notice that they're down there together. They've been preceded by Jonah, Amos, and Hosea by a little bit.

We've already mentioned the key kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and then Hezekiah. Those will be important just to sort of backdrop. We're going to return to this chart once more when we deal with chapter 6 as well.

So, first of all, after that historical overview, just a couple of notes. As I said, we need to review chapters 1, 2, and 3. So here are the highlights in review, again, because they're in contrast to what we see at the beginning of chapter 4. So, when Perry dealt with chapter 1, it was a focus on the transgressions of both Samaria and Jerusalem, laments over the cities in the Shephelah as they had to deal with severe attacks. We'll put that in the plural.

And then somehow the gates of Jerusalem are important at this point. Chapter 2, terrible injustices. God's responses, which were measure for measure.

We see some of these same things coming back with even more viciousness and seriousness in chapter 3. Midway through chapter 2, we have some broken kinds of language that may refer to or allude to returnees from a war context. We saw that as well. And then, at the end of chapter 2, as rather a sudden change, we have the Lord of Shepherd and King.

Chapter 3, same kinds of things, violent and vile leaders. The whole of leadership was in bad shape at that point. And as Perry noted, they're all busy making money off it as much as they possibly can.

False prophets, diviners, seers, and they promise peace in response to what they might happen to get paid for it. By way of contrast, in verse 8 of chapter 3, Micah is called, and he's filled with power from the Spirit to prophesy against the people who specifically have built Zion with bloodshed. That's a theme that may be coming back to us, especially when we move forward in chapter 6. In the meantime, however, chapter 3 closes down with the destruction of the Lord's house foretold, which is, of course, seen as nearly as treasonous as it could possibly be.

That's serious business. And when Jeremiah had the temerity to reference that about a hundred years later or not reference Micah, but he said the same thing, the elders in his day would remind the people around about the fact that Micah had already prophesied that serious business. With those things in mind, we want to just look at the connection between what we have at the end of chapter 3, which, by the way, is about midpoint through the entirety of the book of the 12 prophets.

So, there's something interesting about that as well. But chapter 3, verse 12, talks about this utter desolation of Jerusalem. And chapter 4 starts right off with a remarkable shift, the promise and the promise of restoration.

So, I just want to take a moment to look at some contrasts between what we've seen already, especially in chapters 2 and 3, and then contrasted with a more hopeful look in chapter 4. So, in the previous chapters, if anything, the picture was the absence of any kind of holiness. Instead, they were profaning the sanctuary by all the kinds of things they were doing. Chapter 4 starts us off with God's presence and God's house on God's holy mountain.

In addition, chapter 3 talks about the wicked heads of the people. Chapter 4 starts off with this will be the head of the mountains. The same term being used is clearly a contrast.

Chapter 3, bloodshed had built Zion. But now when we move a little further into chapter 4, we've got Torah going out from Zion. So again, it is an incredibly wonderful contrast.

In chapter 1 and then maybe chapter 2 as well, refugees are probably coming to Jerusalem. But by the time we have chapter 4, we've got pilgrim nations who are coming to Jerusalem again. The context is quite different in terms of the types of people who will be involved.

The prophets had been preaching falsely, peace if they got paid enough. But in chapter 4, we see the promise of real peace forthcoming. And then finally, the priests who were being paid to teach and teaching and instruction is in quotation marks because it was not true teaching.

But we have the Lord's instruction, the Torah again, going forth from Zion. And we're going to return to each one of those things that are in that right hand, in a more positive column shortly. Before we do that, however, we need to just get a little bit of a view into some important locations because they're going to be referred to, especially in a little segment of verses 6 through 8. So here we go with a photograph, an aerial photograph.

And for those of you who have been in Jerusalem, you can get a sense of how old this picture is because there are houses and structures all over those hills where they're just sort of thinly dotted right now, or not at all. But we could spend a lot of time talking about what's in this picture as opposed to what's not. But for our purposes, we simply want to note the following.

In the ellipse, we have the city of David, the small little spur of a hill, probably not even a mountain, that David conquered. It's small, it's probably about 11 acres. It had a water source, which is why it was important for millennia.

North of that, we have here an arrow pointing to the area where the temple would eventually be built. The threshing floor of Araunah was there, and David would offer sacrifices there.

That's something I'm going to come back to a little bit later on in this lecture. But it will be Solomon himself who will build the temple there. Solomon's temple then was on the mountain of the Lord's house.

And then it's also referred to as the house of the God of Jacob, the temple location. Now, that is an elevation higher than the city of David. But if you were to stand in that general area and look around in all directions, you would see that the hills around it are even higher.

Not monstrously higher, but higher. And that, too, is going to figure in a little bit to the kinds of things we're going to say. We also will encounter a term called the Ophel.

And I've got a very schematic way of presenting it here. It's referred to in a number of biblical passages. I'm going to come back to those.

But by and large, it's the area just south of where the Temple Mount would have been, or Temple Mount is, and Temple Platform and so forth would have been. And at the northern end of the city of David, again, we're going to come back to that when we actually get into the text. But for our purposes of trying to locate it, here it is.

And then, as I've already noted, the hills that are surrounding this area are all going to be higher in elevation. That could lead us to a lot of excursions, but we're not going to go there right now. Just hold on to that in terms of chapter 4, where it talks about how the Mount of the House of the Lord will be raised up.

A couple of other things we want to keep in mind in terms of specifics about the Ophel and so forth. Verse 8 is going to refer to Migdal Eder. Migdal is the word for tower, and Eder is probably to be understood as a flock.

There was a time when scholars used to try and locate an actual place called Migdal Eder, but that's probably not true. It may just be another way of referring to the security of Jerusalem's location in general. Ophel, depending on what translation you read, might be calling it the stronghold.

And it does come across that way in scripture because you have several passages which represented it as being fortified. Nehemiah is probably our most interesting one because that talks about the people all around the city in Nehemiah's day who

are busy building. It turns out the people who lived in that area were fortifying the Ophel against possible attacks as well.

Nehemiah chapter 11, verse 21 also tells us the temple servants lived there. And so, it makes sense that they would be proximate to the temple area itself. The word Ophel comes from a Hebrew root, which means to bulge.

That's a very interesting reference in and of itself. And so, there are those who suggest that it's actually referring to a geographical, topographical feature at the northern end of the city of David, which kind of bulges out a little bit just south of the Temple Mount there. Again, if this were a lecture on the city of David and geography and all those kinds of things, we would probably spend a little more time on that.

Having said that, however, more needs to be said with regard to Jerusalem and then, specifically, now, the daughter of Zion; both terms, daughter of Zion and daughter of Jerusalem, are used. Now, sometimes daughters in the plural, when it's used in the Hebrew Bible, refers to villages and small settlements around a larger area. But in this case, it seems to be a very specific personification, particularly with regard to the Lord's relationship to his chosen city, Zion, Jerusalem.

There are references that indicate a tender, vulnerable relationship. In the next slide, I'll give us just several of those, both in terms of what might happen to her with God's punishment, even though he loves her dearly and she's very much a joy to him. There's a punishment that's forthcoming, and God will be sorrowful over that.

But nevertheless, a reference, more than one, but one we're going to look at in Isaiah, will talk about the promises of restoration as well. And then I have a little note that by the time we get to the end of chapter four, this tender, delicate daughter of Jerusalem might surprise us just a little bit. So we'll hold on to that as well.

I just want to put a couple of passages up here to unpack a little bit of what I was saying a moment ago. Jeremiah. This is, of course, about a century after Micah's time, and things are in a disastrous state by Jeremiah's time.

And so, in chapter six, this is during the reign of Josiah that these initial oracles of Jeremiah are uttered: flee for safety, flee from Jerusalem, for disaster looms out of the north. Perry talked the other day about looming out of the north and things coming in attack from the north, even terrible destruction. I will destroy, the Lord speaking, the daughter of Zion.

So beautiful and so delicate. So, you see a tenderness coming through there, even in spite of the justice that's going to be effected upon them. In 2 Kings 19, there is a quite different reference because we have a description of an oracle that has spoken

against Sennacherib because he has been blaspheming Zion, Jerusalem, and Hezekiah.

So, quote, the virgin daughter of Zion despises you, Sennacherib, and mocks you. The daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee, which has everything to do with possibly some of the historical context, which we have been speaking about as a backdrop for parts of Micah, at least. And then one more promise looking ahead.

Isaiah 62, verse 11, says to the daughter of Zion, see, your savior comes. Look, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. So, there's hope and destruction, but all through it, there is that personification that is intimating the relationship of this beloved daughter of Zion to the Lord.

So those are some geographical and then of course, textual considerations to go along with that. Just a quick note about some things that have to do with the ways of indicating time frames. Micah is very interesting in this regard.

And there are several terms that we're going to want to put together and kind of unpack as we make our way through this. I'm indebted to Bruce Waltke's monumental commentary on Micah for how to parse through some of this stuff. So here we go.

Chapter 4, verse 1. We'll use the expression in the last or in the latter days. It's been a temptation to think that's referring to eschatological considerations, but it may not be. One of the reasons for its being located in the end times in a number of people's ways of thinking is because the Septuagint translates it with eschaton and then that association is just made.

That may not be so true. And so, I'm just giving you perhaps a more nuanced presentation of this, as Waltke indicates. This refers to an envisioned future.

An envisioned future distant from the speaker's time, to be sure, and certainly necessitating God's intervention to change what the current circumstances happen to be. However, in hindsight, looking back from our perspective, it seems to include restoration all the way from the exile into the new heavens and the new earth, not just new heavens and new earth kinds of time. So whatever the restoration happens to be, it's going to be over a much longer time frame.

The second chronological indicator that we want to just spend a little bit of time on is the phrase that's often translated to the future and beyond. In other words, forever and ever. And the Hebrew word that's part of this is le'olam, which is a broad, broad term.

Olam is a broad term. It can have both chronological as well as spatial considerations. But Waltke suggests that we translate to the distant future and yet beyond that, or from now to that le'olam distant future.

And both are pointing to a very idealized future. Now, within that, and of course, we have two terms now that are pointing forward. One seems to have a time frame again from exile and beyond, and the other is an idealized future.

Within that, we have another temporal indicator in that day. Waltke suggests that this is probably a mediating link between the future glory of whatever those last days happen to be and a very grim present. In contrast to that, there's a steady drumbeat, but now, but now, but now.

And I've given you the verses, and we're going to see them again as we work our way through this. We're talking with the but-nows in terms of whatever the current realities happen to be. The things that are closer to the perspective of the writer and the audience or audiences will involve both suffering and deliverance.

Most of those but-nows that are in chapter four are pointing to a kind of tough time that's forthcoming. All right, so that's some geographical backdrop. It's kind of a temporal orientation.

We need to just say one more thing about this segment of Micah chapter four, because it is paralleled in Isaiah chapter two. It has the same imagery, the same phraseology, and the same order of the images, but there are some distinctions. So, I haven't copied both of these texts, but I've noted where there are some things we want to just notice.

Again, I'm just remembering that Micah and Isaiah are contemporaries. So, they would probably share this very familiar, very amazing, very astonishingly hopeful prophecy. In Micah, as we've just noted, right before chapter four, verse one, we have the whole mountain of the house of the Lord is going to be destroyed.

This is a dire warning about the ruin of Jerusalem. Interestingly enough, chapter one, right before chapter two in Isaiah, closes with Zion's shame over past idolatry. I'm not talking about some destruction, but there's still a kind of negative ambiance about that.

And then they continue on pretty much the same, but in Micah, coming back to him after we have the promises, at which we are going to look shortly about the nation's coming and learning Torah and then going out with the Torah going out from Zion. There is a promise in verse four in Micah, which talks about security. Everyone's going to live under his own vine and fig tree because the Lord God has spoken.

That's not in Isaiah. Interestingly enough, after the swords and spears are transformed into pruning hooks and hoes or whatever they are, Isaiah simply closes with, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Whereas verse five in Micah expands that and says, the nations are going to keep walking according to their gods, but we, we are going to walk in the name of the Lord.

After that, Micah will shift to the things that we're going to look at momentarily about Zion's daughter. Whereas Isaiah will go back to further condemnation of idolatry, which is the ongoing challenge here.

Well, with all that said, that's simply by way of introduction, let's take a look at the text and work our way through the text itself.

Starting with verses one and two, I'm going to read them first and then just take some time to parse out the things that might be most interesting to us as we try and tie this together. Familiar as it is, there are some things we probably want to notice. It starts out with, and in the last days, and we now know that that's a broad designation.

The mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the head of the mountains or at the head of the mountains and head here again, contrasting, rosh is the Hebrew word, with the heads in the preceding chapter that have been human leaders who are so appalling. It will be lifted up above the hills, which is going to imply one of two things, at least, maybe more. One could be that symbolically, it is now going to take precedence.

It is going to have the kind of honor that it hadn't had for quite some time, especially after the destruction that's been mentioned. But if we read Zechariah, maybe at some point there's going to be some seismic upheaval as well, and maybe that hill will be lifted up a possibility. At any rate, the peoples will stream to it, and verse two, many nations will come, and they will say, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.

Parallelism is there, and he may teach us from his ways so that we may walk in his paths. I'm going to come back to the implications of those things shortly. Four, from Zion, Torah will go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

As you can see, especially in verse two, there are sets of parallelisms that are just driving this home in stronger restatements of the issues. So, let's see what's happening. The symbolic place is going to be restored.

That's the point here. Now, it's going to be restored to do all the things that were supposed to be important there. Mountain of the house of the Lord, raised above all others, in whatever way we might imagine that I've mentioned already.

Just a reminder, it's a distinct contrast with what we've seen before. Then it had been razed, R-A-Z-E-D. Now, it's going to be raised and elevated.

Just kind of a connection. Obviously, this is pointing to some very different circumstances from what we've had. We're going to have, in some sense, the Lord's rule over the whole earth.

When? Well, it may come in stages. The kingdom scene that we have in Isaiah 25, and I won't read that whole thing, but we have the Lord of hosts, Adonai Tzevaot, who will prevail a banquet on this mountain and abolish death for all peoples on this mountain. And then Daniel as well.

The stone becomes a great mountain. So, the mountain imagery and the symbol of the mountain being so significant as a place where God's holy presence will be and where he will establish reconciliation, the banquet indicates that. Very important in terms of place.

But we have some other things we need to say as well. The people go up to. They're streaming.

That's an interesting thing, by the way, because when you think of streaming, generally you think of going down. But now people are streaming up, and streaming implies a rather large quantity. This is significant when you think of water streaming through valleys.

Now, they're streaming towards the presence of God and their intent on learning God's ways. And let me just unpack that just a little bit because we can read through it way too quickly if we're not careful. Ways is a very common word.

Ways and paths, which show up a little bit later in this verse, are used interchangeably. But ways has a much broader set of connotations. And basically, as they are learning God's ways, that's going to involve learning how he has acted in history on behalf of his covenant people.

That's part of his ways. That's Torah. Those are all the narrative parts of the first five books of the Bible.

They're going to learn that. But they're also then intent not only on those recitals of God's acts in history but also on his statutes, his precepts, and his requirements. All that is part of learning God's ways.

So, we're going to come back to that as well when we think a little bit further about our part in doing this sort of thing. Once, well, I shouldn't put it this way because I'm

making it sound like they have to get all these ways into their brains, and then they're going to be sent out. But the point is, as the people who have streamed to God's presence are busy learning God's ways, they also conduct themselves appropriately.

They're going to walk in his paths. That's what walking means: conducting oneself. They'll walk in his paths.

And then here's the fun part. This is how Torah is going to go forth from Zion. It's not like you're going to have a sort of abstract word shooting out there.

Now, as Mike and Isaiah present it here, it's going to be the embodiment. It's going to be these things that are truths. They're going to be learned by God's people who have been streaming up to be in his presence and to learn.

And now they're going to go forth. And they're going to be the ones who accomplish his purposes because they're conducting themselves according to God's ways and his word. So, I've just noted a possible New Testament perspective on this.

Paul refers in 2 Corinthians 3 to our being living epistles. And in some ways, this is kind of the Micah, First Testament counterpart to that. And we have other references as well.

Isaiah 51, I note for you here, the law will go forth. The law will go forth from Zion. And it has a purposeful point to that.

It will bring about justice, righteousness, and salvation. Well, that's just the beginning of this wonderful oracle of promise. Let's move on to verses 3 and 4. Continuing to read, and he, this is the Lord, will judge between many peoples, and he will settle disputes for powerful nations.

That ought to cause us to pause when we think of our international and global crises. And the Lord is capable of settling those, and there will come a time when he does. Settle disputes for powerful nations from far off.

They will beat their swords. That was the implement of the war of choice back then, into cutting implements. I realize that hose is often there, but cutting implements and their spears into knives for pruning little tendrils.

Nation will not lift up a sword against another nation and they won't learn war anymore. Incredible promise. Let's do verse 4 as well.

Each man will dwell under his vine and under his fig tree. No one will cause terror. For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

All right, I've mentioned some of the things I already want to point out about this. But above all, we're dealing with a truly radical transformation that's coming across the board because it's going to affect, as I mentioned a moment ago, international global situations. And it's also going to transform people.

Let's see how this works. God is going to judge even to the point of settling international disputes, which is just remarkable when we think about it and hope for it and pray for it. This, again, is contrasting to all the petty bribery and injustice and all the other things that we mentioned earlier, especially Perry mentioned in chapter 3. The next step, however, in this radical transformation is this.

Because God's going to arbitrate these disputes, they're going to be settled, and they're going to be dealt with. The wars are going to cease. There's going to be no reason for war and all the things that are the cause of war.

Because that's true, then, they will retool the entire arsenal. Again, back in the first millennium B.C., that arsenal consisted of swords and spears and those kinds of things, primarily swords and spears. Those are the terms that show up most often.

We can rethink those and retool them into our own arsenal environment as well. But swords are going into cutting implements. Probably not hoes because swords are not long enough to be an effective hoe, but something that's going to cut.

There are some interesting articles that have been written on what these probably really were. Neither term, the one that's translated as cutting implements here or pruning knives, is used very frequently. So, it's kind of a guess from a couple of other contexts in terms of what these mean.

But this is as good as any. The most important and encouraging thing is nobody is going to learn war anymore. Intimating that would get to do away with all of our war colleges and all the places where people learn to be hostile and kill each other.

Now, in truth, there's a day of judgment coming, and the book of Joel, chapter 3, verse 10, is going to use this same imagery, but he's going to shift it around. And there is going to be a time when it's going to be necessary to have some judgmental instruments. These cutting implements will be turned back into swords for a time and the knives into spears.

The peace, continuing to unpack this particular thing, the peace is going to be based on God's teachings, not on the empty promises of false prophets. That's when the people were all into disobedience. Now, it's going to be entirely different because people will have been learning God's teaching, and therefore, there's going to be real peace.

And then there's this promise that shows up in Micah, as I said, not in Isaiah, but each one will sit under his own vine and fig tree. In 1 Kings 4, verse 25, we have a description of the circumstances when Solomon was king, when things were stable, and when there was peace within the expanded empire. And this is the expression that is used.

Everyone sits under his own vine and fig tree. And then, finally, as part of this tremendous promise, there's going to be no one causing terror. No one causing terror because, remember Leviticus 26, is one of the places where we have the articulation of covenant blessings and curses.

And if they're obedient, one of the blessings is they're not going to be afraid. There's not going to be anybody that's going to come and cause them a good deal of fear. Well, let's see what we have next.

The basis for these transformations? Because it's the Lord Almighty who has spoken. Again, the word of the Lord is powerful. We forget that from time to time.

The Lord Almighty has spoken. It's based on the guarantee that these verses are based on God's own faithful word. If we had time, we could take an excursus into all the places that talk about not only the power of the word but the purity of the word and the truth that's a result of that.

Just one additional note, however, this is the Lord Almighty has spoken and our term or our translation, Almighty, it's often translated this, but it's a Hebrew word that means hosts, armies. And basically, it's used, among other places, for the heavenly armies. Psalm 103 at the end of the psalm has several verses devoted to the heavenly panoply, the beings that are up there who do the Lord's bidding.

They do his bidding. They do what he tells them to do. So, if the heavenly hosts are doing that and we have the word of the Lord of hosts speaking, we've got pretty good assurance that things are going to work out.

Things are going to be going the way he says they will. Now, in the meantime, we have our part to do, and we want to just have a quick look at verse five, and then that'll move us on to the next segment. Verse five, as I said earlier, is unique to Micah.

We have just a shorter version of the second half in Isaiah. Though all the peoples continue to walk each in the name of his gods, we, and I've got that twice because the Hebrew emphasizes it, we, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever. Okay, so there's an assurance there that, well, it's an admonition or exhortation, I

suppose I should say, because we may be surrounded by all kinds of people who are not busy doing what they should be doing.

They are doing what they want to do, but Micah declares that they will walk in the name of the Lord. I've already mentioned that walking in his paths meant conducting themselves. And walking in the name of the Lord means then that amidst these others who are just doing again in accordance with the ways of the powers of the air and the gods of the world, we're supposed to be distinctive.

Walking will be conduct that distinguishes us. And I've intimated this already, this is a contrast to nations who will stay with their own idolatrous worldviews. Presumably, they had not joined that throng of people earlier on that was streaming towards Zion and declaring they wanted to learn from the Lord.

But the we will walk in the name of the Lord is also characterized, or I should say defined further by to the distant future and beyond. And this is what will characterize those who are faithful remnants. Even though there might be all kinds of things in the interval that are difficult and grim, the faithful remnant will continue with that affirmation.

We will walk in the name of the Lord. One good place to turn at this point, just as sort of an exhortation, is Psalm 86:11, because it encapsulates what we've just been talking about. In the song tradition of God's people, teach me your way, oh Lord.

Well, that's what we've been seeing in these verses in Micah, that I may walk or conduct myself in your truth. And then unite my heart to fear your name. And that's something that we'll come back to later on in the book of Micah.

Well, that's a closure to the first part of Micah chapter four. Now let's do verses four through six, which have a different flavor to them. Do you remember that day is sort of that mediating temporal thing?

We talked about the vast picture. Now, in that day, declares the Lord, he's going to do something. I will gather the lame.

And I'll bring together those who are thrust out. That term isn't used too often. Neither is the term for lame.

I'll come back to those. To whom I have brought this evil. Notice the Lord is not shy about saying that he's the one who has caused this.

It's in keeping with the covenant. And I will make the lame a remnant and those driven away a strong nation. And the Lord will rule over them on Mount Zion from now and to the distant future.

That temporal indication again. And then verse eight. And you, oh tower of the flock, the awful daughter of Zion.

Something about security in that, but also God's personal relationship. Unto you will come. Now, the translation of this is a little bit difficult.

I've sorted through it as best I can. Unto you will come the first dominion, and the kingdom will come to the daughter of Zion. Let's see what we can do with that.

This is an injured flock. They're lame. The word translated lame is the same word that shows up in Genesis 32 when Jacob is wrestling with, well, a man, an angel, the Lord, because he says, I saw the face of God.

And you'll remember from that narrative that he gets smote in his hip, and he's limping. When he's limping, that's the word that is here. And it shows up in Zechariah as well.

So, we're talking about injuries. They need a shepherd. Isaiah 40 talks a little bit about the nature of that shepherd.

That shepherd carries the ones who are young in his arms. Well, as we said already, this particular segment lies time-wise in that day inside our bigger framework, the latter days. The imagery, both lame and those thrust out, recall our sheep.

The end of chapter two was just that shift to the fact that people streaming toward Jerusalem were going to make it there. They were going to have a shepherd that would bring them into safety in that context. So, there's going to be gathering and reassembling people who have been injured and who have been thrust out.

Those who are thrust out may well refer to exiles, which then makes this a long-range kind of thing. I'm going to come back to that long-range in a moment. And just an additional note: I've said this already, but at the end of verse six, it's the Lord who acknowledges that it's he, it's a causative verb form, he has brought them to this current evil state.

I've used the word disastrous, but the word is evil in Hebrew. That's the translation of the end of verse six. In keeping with the covenant, when they were disobedient and did evil, the Lord would respond in kind.

Again, it's a measure-for-measure kind of thing that's happening here. Well, there's hope for this daughter of Zion in spite of all these things. The Lord promises to transform the remnant into a powerful nation, and he will rule over them.

Mount Zion, as I've already intimated about the kinds of things we've said about tower and Ophel, etc., is going to be a place of security. And we've already seen intimations of that at the end of chapter two. Here it is again.

Those last references that I mentioned a moment ago as being a little bit difficult to put together syntactically, however that works, and there are two references, a former dominion and a kingdom, both of which will come. It does seem, no matter how we put it together, to be some kind of an allusion to the Davidic dynasty, which is the former dominion. And it was a united monarchy.

That would be in their hopes and expectations. Of course, it's a backdrop for what we'll see in chapter five, verse two, which Perry will deal with shortly. However, we have but now.

We have a series of these little oracles, little vignettes, introduced by but now. I'm going to say something about the Hebrew of that in a moment, but let's unpack how each one unfolds. Each one, even as difficult as it is, is going to have a closure that at least has a positive tinge to it.

Verse nine, now, there's going to be an outcry, and there's going to be writhing. Verse 10, now you will go out. Well, if they've been secure in some, or thinking themselves secure in some kind of city, going out is not necessarily a positive thing at that moment.

Now, in verse 11, there's going to be hostility between gathered nations. And by the way, these nations, unlike the ones that were coming in verse one, are not nice, and they're not coming with good intent. And then now, in chapter five, verse one, Perry will pick that up.

Now, there's going to be a marshalling of troops. But now, something is happening now that is going to be a little hard to deal with. These are oracles of crisis and there's going to be different resolutions to them, different resolutions.

As I mentioned a moment ago, we want to talk a little bit about what this sounds like in relationship to another sound that's familiar. We've mentioned earlier that these prophets, and Micah among them, wordplay. They do interesting things with phonological similarities and sound connections.

Now, Atah reverberates through this segment, but you, a direct address, you, this, that, or the other thing is Atah. And that's going to show up here too, interspersed within this, because after chapter four, verse eight is you, and then nine, 10, 11 are going to be, but now, however, we get to the end of it, and it's you again, and it's got a positive sense to it. Well, that brings us to verses nine and 10 with our first now or but now.

Why are you crying out a cry? Is there no king in you? Has your counsel perished that writhing has gripped you as one giving birth? And this, by the way, might be some sarcasm. Do you think you've got a king? Who's your counselor? I'll come back to that. Let's read verse 10.

Writhe, continuing that writhing and crying and so forth. Writhe and thrust forth, O daughter of Zion, as one giving birth, because now you will come forth from the city. You will dwell in the field.

You will come to Babylon. There you will be delivered. There, the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemy.

And you're saying, what a temporal mouthful. And just pause for a moment. Micah lives through and during, I should say, the Assyrian crisis.

They are enemy number one. What's he doing talking about Babylon here? Now, through some scholarly lenses, this means this is a much later addition to Micah. I'm not going there.

I think he is inspired by the Spirit, looking ahead to what's happening. And indeed, it's a compressed vision of what's happening here, to the point of having to go into exile eventually. And that exile is going to be not to Assyria, as the northern kingdom did, but to Babylon, and even pointing beyond that to a deliverance.

You have the same thing, by the way, in a much larger form in Isaiah, in those latter chapters of Isaiah, starting with chapter 40 and beyond. Well, let's see what we can do with this. They're crying out.

And by this, crying out a cry is a standard way of saying this is a superlatively loud cry. And it's one of terror and anguish. And in addition to that, they are writhing.

And the image is clear; it's mentioned twice, childbirth. And that is, generally speaking, a process that involves a lot of crying out, pained crying out. So, then the question is, well, what's prompting this figure that Micah is using to depict what Jerusalem, daughter of Zion, is going to go through? And so, one suggestion, I've given several here, perhaps there's going to be a sense that their whole government is failing, right? Terrible anguish because the human governmental system has failed utterly.

Pause there. I know I've only got a comma, but remember what we've been saying all along. We've got a royalty that has been spiraling downward, especially during the time of Ahaz.

Just awful in so many ways. The king is, as God's covenant king, not existent. He's not there.

Counselors, advisors, no king, no counselor, they're just gone. And the people are feeling the consequences of this and will continue to feel the consequences of this. Having said that, it may be that Micah is also additionally pointing out to the sad fact that they're not submitting to God's rule.

He's no longer their king, uppercase K. They are not acknowledging him as king. They are certainly not acknowledging his counselor. By the way, you'll remember Isaiah chapter 9, verses 6 and 7, where one of the titles of the Lord God, as manifested in this child, is going to be wonderful counselor, mighty God, and everlasting father.

So, there are all kinds of things that might be embedded in this particular. You have no king. You have no counselor.

Are you not acknowledging God as king and counsel? Now, having said that, there are other things to think about in terms of writhing and pain and crying out. So let me just read the second bullet here. Perhaps this writhing is because they are about to be thrust forth from the city.

The image being used of being thrust forth from the city is giving birth, thrusting out. Now, they might have thought of the city, even though it was undergoing difficulties and would terribly a century later, as still being some kind of a safe haven. Reading the book of Ezekiel gives you a sense that they may have thought that way, but they needed to be forced out, just like giving birth would, because it wasn't safe anymore.

And that's a deliverance. It may not feel like one. We're going to look at that in a moment, but it's a deliverance.

It's through going into exile, through the darkness of that experience, and then being redeemed while in exile. One additional way that we need to look at this is because, as we have that verse that I read, they are going out of the city, but now you will go out. You're going to camp, basically.

You're going to dwell outside the city. I'm going to say more about that in a moment. Then they're going to be in Babylon, then they're going to be delivered, then they're going to be redeemed.

And so, I'm suggesting that in those three or four clauses that are strung together, very compressed, but it's a long lens that looks forward. As I mentioned a moment ago, it says, you're going out of the city, writhing to deliver out of the city. In contrast to living in houses and homes and stable dwellings, it's going to be a tenuous experience.

Camping, if you will. Which is stripping down all the things that might be comfortable. And it's not long before they get to Babylon, and that's considered exile.

That's considered punishment. But even at the end of this short vignette, they're delivered from there. They go to Babylon, but then it says, there twice.

From there, you will be delivered. There are, even in this small little thing, some echoes of redemption that we find much more expanded in those verses that I mentioned in Isaiah 48 and elsewhere. One more segment we have to do in terms of Micah chapter four.

Let's see how we can deal with it. Reading it first. But now, many nations have gathered against you.

And that really should better say that many nations are gathered against you. And I'll explain why in a moment. They're the ones who are saying, quote, let her be profane, may our eyes gaze.

And that's not meant in a nice way at all on Zion. End of that quote. But they don't know the thoughts of the Lord.

They haven't understood his counsel, that he has gathered them as fallen grain to the threshing floor. Rise up and thresh, oh daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron. And your hoof, I will make bronze, and you will crush many peoples.

And I will devote for destruction to the Lord, their unjust prophet, and their might or their wealth to the Lord of all the earth. Now, before I go on and talk a little bit about this, I just want us to pause. Are you catching why this chapter is so abrupt and so quick? It's compressing all kinds of things, dealing with these different time frames that we've been trying to talk about.

And this is another little vignette about things being exceedingly difficult, but there is hope even on the other side of that. So, the hostile nations are gathered. They are gathered.

And you're trying to think, okay, who is this? What is this? How does it fit juxtaposed right after our reference to Babylon that we just looked at? The suggestion is, especially in light of what's going to follow in chapter five, that now Micah is returning to his own historical context, i.e., the Assyrians being present and laying siege and attacking a number of the cities that he is so familiar with. So, even though we've had that long lens chronologically, this one might return closer to home, as it were. I've mentioned this already, but I'm just going to repeat it.

The many nations at the beginning of the chapter who are streaming with joy and encourage one another to go up to Zion—this is a much different picture—they streamed to Zion for instruction. These nations have come to defile and destroy, and they're saying it out loud. They're gazing with contempt and greed, probably on Zion.

And just to unpack a little more what I've just said, they're declaring their intent to profane Zion. That's what they want to see happening. They want to make it a public spectacle.

And gazing in this context is not just looking. It's looking with a proud, arrogant, and rapacious sense because they're anticipating the demise of this city and what they're going to get out of it. We don't have time to read through the same kinds of sentiments that show up in Lamentations, but Obadiah verses 12 and beyond, condemns that very same thing.

And even though Obadiah condemns Edom and initially says, you're kind of standing by, it's not long before the Edomites seem to get very much involved, not just in looking, but also in being involved in taking as well. Well, so these hostile nations are gathered. Let's talk about that gathering a little bit.

It says they are gathered against you. And it's fascinating that the verb is passive here. That's why I corrected myself on that translation because they haven't gathered; I mean, they have, but somebody, and I would suggest it's the Lord himself, has gathered them.

Oftentimes in the prophetic material, when there's a passive verb, we're supposed to pause and say, ah, this is intimating that the master of the universe is working behind the scenes, and he is doing this. The passive will kind of point in that direction. So, the nations think they've planned it.

God has gathered them there and he's got purposes for it. There are parallels in this with chapter two. You'll remember that the people in chapter two, mean, nasty, devising plans on their beds, whereas God is devising plans against this family.

So, there's that balance again in terms of the Lord overturning their plans. And this one concludes, or actually draws forward, that they don't know the plans of the Lord. He has indeed gathered them, and he's gathered them to the threshing floor.

And if we think carefully about what we know about the wider connotations of the threshing floor, it's not long before we make a connection with this name, the threshing floor of Araunah. Because, of course, that's the place where the temple was eventually built. I mentioned that earlier on in our lecture today.

We have the whole incident in terms of that selection and what happened there in 2 Samuel 24. But the point now is that they're gathering, they're gathering to try and do in that temple and to profane it, but the Lord has gathered them to that threshing floor. This then makes us pause for a moment before we go on in terms of what happens there and how the daughter of Zion turns.

Well, she turns pretty powerful and mighty. But before we do that, I have something for us to look at. It's probably not fair to just pop this on the screen because when I used to show it to my students, they would look at it, and when I said, what is this? They'd say, a cheese grater? And so, no, it's a little bigger than that.

So, think of it as being at least four, four and a half, five feet high. And let's see how it works. Well, it's a threshing sledge.

I know sledge is not a word that's in common parlance. But once we explain what's involved and how it works, that's just the really best word for it. In an agricultural context, you'd have this thing, but it didn't just stand like that.

Instead, your sheaves of grain would be spread on a threshing floor, usually a higher elevation out in the countryside where the wind would be able to hit it. And so once the grain was threshed, and the chaff was blown away, or sorry, it was off, then the wind would blow it away. So, you've got grain spread on the threshing floor.

You lay this instrument, if you will, down on that grain. You put significant weight on top of it. You have an animal to draw it across the grain.

And, of course, it breaks those husks away. And then we have the winnowing as well. Now, why am I showing this? Because the daughter of Zion is going to thresh.

She's going to do other things too, but she is going to thresh. Let me just bring in another passage of Scripture. It's figurative.

Obviously, there are places in Scripture where this is used to probably figure punishment or cruelty. The condemnations of the nations in Amos chapter 1 include a group of people, the Ammonites, who do this to Gilead. No, that's not right.

It's the people from Aram. At any rate, you can check me on that. They run threshing sledges across people.

But I particularly want to unpack for you the second reference that I have there, which is Isaiah chapter 41. And I'm taking this from the NIV because it fleshes out a little bit of what I was just saying in terms of what this thing was made of and how it worked. Again, this is a figure of speech because it's the Lord talking to his people.

I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp with many teeth. Sometimes those were pieces of rock in there, but sometimes iron. You will thresh the mountains and crush them and reduce the hills to chaff.

Notice the expansive nature of what's going on here figuratively. You will winnow them. The wind will pick them up.

A gale will blow them away. And then verse 16b goes on to talk about how the people will rejoice in the Lord.

Well, let's draw this to closure with God's responses. He's gathered them now. They are gathered there. He's made some preparations for his people to do something.

And here it is. There are three images in terms of what the daughter of Zion is going to do. And they're compressed, as I note for you.

First, there's going to be threshing. I've just described it. Then horns are going to gore.

And then hooves are going to trample. All three of those are squashed together. This is put in this way to make sure that Micah's audience hears the power of God manifested in ways that he has prepared his people to do.

In terms of their goring with horns, obviously, those are on animals that have horns to gore with, which are pretty dangerous kinds of things. But symbolically, they show up as well in 1 Kings 22, a very interesting passage where I think Perry mentioned it the other day. You have Ahab and Jehoshaphat trying to decide whether they're going to go to war at remote Gilead against Syria.

And somebody shows up in their presence wearing a set of horns and saying, with these horns, you will do all this sort of damage. Obviously, it didn't turn out that way. I've also noted for you Deuteronomy 33, verse 17, which, in the midst of the blessing of the tribe of Joseph, says he will have horns to accomplish powerful things that need to be done.

So, the daughter of Zion will thresh, as we've described already. The nations will be broken and trampled. With her horns of iron, they'll break, and the hooves of bronze will trample.

And then I note the irony here for you. They are marching up to Zion, and they have no idea they are marching to their own annihilation. No idea.

This segment closes down with the Lord saying that all the wealth that they've gathered 's been gained through violence; it's been gained through injustice. That's

going to be not just cast away, but it's going to be devoted to the Lord of all the earth for destruction. The term there is a term, haram.

It's actually the verbal form of that term, which shows up an awful lot in the book of Deuteronomy and then in Joshua as the people are going in to conquer the land that the Lord is giving to them. The point of both the noun and verb forms of this is that these things will be devoted to the Lord, devoted to the Lord of all the earth, and they're devoted to destruction. You see, these folks had come to defile God's sacred space.

And so, all those things that are vile are going to be brought into that space, and that's where they're going to be destroyed. Just a couple of reflections at this point as we close down chapter four. I mentioned Psalm 86 11 earlier, and I'm just going to revisit it as I note for you because it so embodies the kinds of things that are positive in terms of the first part of chapter four.

Teach me your ways that I may walk in your truth. This is a passage to memorize if you haven't done that yet. Teach me your ways that I may walk in your truth.

Unite my heart to fear your name. Now drawing off that and also our earlier contemplations, learning God's ways will be transformative because it will change who we are and how we act. Remember, walking has to do with conduct.

Therefore, let's join that mighty stream of folks heading towards Zion in order to learn of God and then head out to walk in God's truth so that we will embody Torah and go out to live as we should live. And then in a wider chapter four closure, even though some of those but now segments are difficult, we always live in hope because we are in the latter days and there's an end point coming that is a positive endpoint. And with that, we'll stop chapter four.

This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 5, Micah 4.