

Dr. Perry Phillips, Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway, Session 8, Micah 7

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This is Dr. Perry Phillips in his teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 8, Micah 7.

Hello again. We are continuing with our discussion of Micah, and we are finally reaching the last chapter, which is chapter 7. Let's do a slight review.

This is going to be a very brief review, because basically I am asking people to look at what has been done in previous presentations with reviews and I will spare you that for this particular one. Let's go on to an introduction of chapter 7. We are going to break it up into various parts. The first four verses talk about the miserable situation in the land, the lack of godliness.

It is a restatement of previous sins that we have seen in other chapters. Verses 5 and 6 speak of dishonesty, especially lack of trust, societal breakdown that reaches into the family structure itself. Verse 7, by itself, we are going to find help and salvation will come from the Lord.

Verses 8 to 10, Israel will eventually be victorious over its enemies. It picks up the theme that we had in chapter 5. Then verses 11 to 13, Zion will be rebuilt and the exiles will return to what is known as the promised land. Verse 14, by itself, is a prayer of restoration.

15 through 17 really parallels verses 11 to 13. God will shepherd his people back to their land to the dismay of their enemies. And then, finally, verses 18 to 20 praise God, who pardons sin and maintains this everlasting covenant love known as hesed that Elaine discussed.

Well, let's go on to our exposition. But first, a disclaimer. This is kind of a long chapter, so we will have this disclaimer.

We move on. Verses 1 to 4, the miserable situation in the land, the lack of godliness and restatement of previous sins. Verse 1, I switched between versions and at this particular time I'm going to use the Holman Christian Standard Bible for the translation.

How sad for me, literally, woe is me. As Elaine mentioned previously, it's more than just alas. Woe is me.

It means woe be upon me. Woe is upon me. It's very sad for me.

It's not just alas. It's more than that. For I'm like one who when the summer fruit has been gathered after the gleaning of the grape harvest finds no grape cluster to eat, no early fig which I crave.

Well, let's take a look at what is being discussed. Is Micah or Zion speaking? Is it the personification of Zion or is Micah himself speaking? If it's Micah, he's taking the part of the people. Again, my people.

The Lord calls the Israelites my people, but Micah also calls them my people, showing his affinity with them, his camaraderie with them. Grape and fig harvests come in the late summer and early fall and they're celebrated in the Feast of Ingathering and in the Feast of Sukkot. This is later in the year.

This is around September or October when these harvests take place. But it's not only the harvest that Micah is speaking of. It's also gleaning, which is discussed as well.

And when asked what is gleaning, we find a description in Leviticus chapter 19 and also in Ruth chapter 2, an example of it. And basically, what it amounted to is picking up whatever was left after the harvest. Those things were particularly left for the poor of the land to be able to come to pick food for themselves.

This is what gleaning was about. It was, for example, for the grapes. The grapes would be harvested.

Whatever was left was supposed to be left for the poor. The same for the fig harvest and also for the grain harvest, but that came earlier in the year. And in fact, for the grain, what the farmer was supposed to do was spread his seed throughout his field, even to the corners.

But then, when he harvested, he was not supposed to harvest all the way to the corners. He was supposed to leave that for the poor of the land to come in order to make a living. And that's exactly what we find in Ruth.

But in this particular case, we are talking about the grape and the fig harvest. And Micah or Zion is experiencing what God experienced in his vineyard described in Isaiah chapter 5. In Isaiah chapter 5, the Lord talks about having a vineyard that is hedged in, that has towers, that has the best grapes. The Lord comes to find the grapes, but he doesn't find them.

What he finds is sour grapes. What he finds is that the vineyard does not produce what the Lord wants, what the farmer wants. And eventually, the farmer is going to come and he's going to trample down the vineyard.

It's the same kind of image that we have here. Also, we know Jesus' words about the vineyard when he says that the vineyard is pruned, but the branches that do not produce are taken away and eventually burned. So, the idea of a vineyard and how it's used metaphorically in Scripture is well known.

Here's what vineyards look like in Israel today. The vines are up on trellises. And the reason for that is that they get a little bit more sun.

But that wasn't the way that the grapes were grown in the time of Micah. At that particular time, they were grown on the ground. And these are different vines that are down along the ground.

Now, why might they do that? One reason is because they can pick up dew then, which settles on the land. And the dew then becomes important for the crops. Here's a close-up of one of the vines growing right near a rock wall.

And the advantage there is the rock wall, when it cools down at night, would also pick up dew and it would be helpful to the plant. But at any rate, the idea is to pick up what remains from the harvest. This is a fig tree.

In this particular case, a person standing by this fig tree would come to about where the pointer is. These are huge trees that can be climbed. But also, what you find sometimes is that they just grow like little bushes along walls and maybe also take advantage of the dew.

But these are the grape vines, and the fig trees are the ones that are harvested. This is what figs, undried figs, look like. You rarely find them fresh because they don't last long.

You'd have to pick them from the tree and eat them at the time. But we are, I'm sure, familiar with dried figs. And here it is open.

It tastes kind of seedy, but it's very sweet. And these are the materials that are left after the harvest. I also want to bring in the olive harvest at this particular time, which is done at this particular time.

This is an olive tree. The way olives are harvested is to take long sticks and beat on the branches. The olives then fall to the ground and the people harvest the olives that way.

But you were only supposed to do this once. Anything that was left was supposed to be left for the poor of the land to come and to glean. So, you have the gleaning of

the grapes, the gleaning of the figs, the gleaning of the olives, although that's not mentioned here.

And Isaiah uses this image, but here Micah uses the image as well. By the way, the circle there represents somebody who's in the tree, that is hiding in the tree, that is part of the gleaning of the tree. So, you have two people down below, then you have somebody who has actually climbed the tree, shaking the branches.

This is what we're referring to. So basically, what Micah is saying, yes, the harvest has taken place, but there isn't even anything to glean. The people have taken everything.

There are no olives on the ground left; there are no grapes left, and there are no figs left. It is gone completely. Okay, what does this mean that there isn't even anything to glean? Well, here I'm following the NASV.

The godly person has perished from the land, and there is no upright person among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed. Each of them hunts the other with a net.

Now, quite a bit of material here. Let's parse it out. There's not one upright person among them.

This refers to the image that there's not one fig left after the harvest. There is not one grape left after gleaning. There is not one righteous person left of all the people that are in the land.

They have perished from the land. Now, some translators say they have perished from the earth. Again, we remind ourselves that the word for land and the word for earth is the same.

I've given some of the translations that say earth, but basically the idea is the same. Godly person, in Hebrew, *hasid*, is the same root as covenant love, meaning *hesed*, and that is the word for mercy that is used in chapter 6, verse 8. The *hasid*, the godly person, has disappeared from the land. By the way, just in the modern context in Israel, what you will find is the term *hasid* used.

The people who are really religious are *hasids*, or in Hebrew, the plural *hasidim*. So that term is still used today, but it really comes from the word *hesed*, this covenant love, this unending covenant love that the Lord has for his people. But the point is, not one of them, not one *hasid* has remained in the land.

Why? Anybody who is religious has been destroyed. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed. As we've seen in previous chapters, the rich, the landowners, the rulers,

the priests, and the prophets have all been oppressors of those who are righteous and those who are poor.

All of them lie in wait for bloodshed. This is a common theme throughout the book. Look at chapter 3. They catch these people in a net.

They catch the hasid in a net. What is the net? It's a net of bribes, false prophecy, and idolatry. Again, we'll see in verse 3 below how the political, religious, and sacerdotal system and the prophetic office have all been tied together, forming a net to trap anybody who does not agree with them.

And this is the anti-safety net. People talk about a safety net to protect the poor. This is the anti-safety net.

It is doing just the opposite. It is oppressing the poor instead, as we have this tapestry, if I may use that term, as a net, this tapestry of evil that is woven together concerning evil. Both hands do it well.

They're not doing it with one hand behind their back. Both hands do it well. The prince also asks the judge for a bribe, and a great man speaks the desire of his soul, so they weave it together.

Let's take a look at this. Again, we get back to the net. This shows from what we had previously in verse 2. In verse 3, the net, the tapestry, is corruption between the prince, the leader, the judge, and the great man.

The great men are the elites, maybe the landowners, the people of power, the people with social status. These are the people, and they're all working together to oppress the others who do not agree with them, to cheat with false scales; as Elaine had mentioned, that particular evil is brought up in chapter 6. The word for desire here is always in the bad sense, not desiring God, but desiring just the opposite. Weave together fits in with the net, of course, and corruption, and we might say tapestry, which I had mentioned before.

Again, all these institutions work together, one scratching the other's back, as we may use modern terminology. Here, the terminology is both hands together, almost as though they're in glee. They're clapping their hands together because they're all in agreement, but also, the idea is you're working.

This is not, as I mentioned before, one hand limp or the other hand down behind someone's back. Both hands are working together. It's almost like perhaps a handshake between conspirators.

Both hands work together. Hey, hey, we're working together here. We shake hands, and we continue in the evil together.

Put differently, and to this I am indebted to Leslie Allen, he puts it differently, and he would put it this way. The men of renown, prophets, priests, kings, princes, whatever, the men of renown wrangle the system to get their way. If this isn't contemporary, I don't know what is.

In verse four, we don't even have one righteous man left. What is left? The best of them is like a briar, the most upright like a thorn hedge. This isn't very flattering.

The day when you post your watchmen, your punishment will come. Then their confusion will occur. Let's unpack this.

This is a play on word between thorn hedge, mesuka, and confusion, mevuka. In other words, the thorn hedge somehow, which is supposed to keep things in, and keep, for example, animals in, and keep the predators out, is turning into confusion. The mesuka is turning into a mevuka.

We'll see how that works out. Their upright are thorn bushes, and that can be translated also, their upright are worse than thorn bushes. In other words, a thorn bush is not something that is very helpful.

You come near it, and the next thing you know, you've got thorns, you're bleeding. It's not a very good thing to work with. It has a purpose as a mesuka, which we will see, but in this case, it is also working against the people.

So, here's a relationship. Thorn hedges were used to define boundaries, but here it leads to confusion. The mesuka leads to mevuka because of the confusion in the boundaries.

Remember what we said before, one of the evils is moving boundary stones. Isaiah mentions that, but the land barons really don't seem to have any concept of where their boundary ends and where the other person's boundary is. So, the aggrandizement of the land works against the boundaries, and whereas thorn hedges were supposed to be boundaries, now it's turned into confusion.

Where's the boundary? Where does it exist? Well, let's take a look a little bit at how the hedge is used as a boundary. Here the boundary is used to keep animals in. As you can see, it's kind of a rough wooden fence, but then on top, you have thorn bushes.

And here's what a thorn bush looks like in Israel. It's not the acantho thorns that we think of, the crown of thorns that we see in pictures and paintings, not pictures, but

paintings, that surrounded Jesus' head. But these are little bushes, but their thorns are very large.

And if you were barefoot to step on one of these, or if you happen to lean on one of these, believe me, you will know it. Here's a close-up of the thorns. In fact, it has been suggested that maybe the crown of thorns that was on Jesus' head is not this woven acantho thorns that we see, but what a Roman soldier could do with a bush like this is take his sword, reach down, cut off the root, punch the thorn bush like a toothpick in an olive, turn it over, grab it by the roots, and then take it and plunk it on somebody's head, and maybe that is the crown of thorns that Jesus suffered from.

At any rate, the word confusion here is used twice. It is here and in Isaiah 22:5, that word confusion, and it's used as a day of judgment. It not only means confusion, it means panic, it means subjugation, as well as confusion.

So, what we have is that the thorns have become a source of panic and subjugation, which, of course, relates to the enemy coming in. He says the confusion is going to start the day that you post your watchman, and this can be translated following the Greek edition, the Septuagint edition, as woe to your watchman if you do some different pointing or your appointed punishment is on the way, or the day when you post your watchman, your punishment will come. So, there is a connection between the watchman and the punishment.

So, does the watchman watch the punishment come? Does the watchman somehow initiate the punishment? We don't know for sure, but here's the idea. The idea is that there will be no preparation for the catastrophe that is to come upon the nation in spite of how watchful they may be. Remember, if you go back to chapter 5, it says muster your troops in anticipation of the coming war, and the watchman may say, hey, the Assyrians are coming, or whatever enemy it is, later on, the Babylonians, you're not going to escape.

There is no way that the watchman is going to be able to give a signal for the people to prepare themselves to the point where they are going to be able to defeat the enemy. And, of course, we think back to Psalm 127, which it says, unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. But what about a city? What about the defense of a city? Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchmen keep awake in vain.

And the point that Micah is making is that the watchmen are not going to help you here because the Lord's not guarding the city. You're not depending on the one who really guards the city. In verses 5 and 6, we get back to some of the societal difficulties that we find, but we find that it is even more insidious than remaining in the society at large.

Do not trust in a neighbor. Do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom, guard your lips.

Neighbor, friend, wife. Very interesting. So here we find the corruption that has been described in verse 3 of this chapter brings the societal problems that we find in this particular verse.

Notice the ascending scale of distrust. Society is bad. You can't trust your neighbor.

Oh, but I can trust my friends. No, things have gotten to the point I no longer have any friends. I can't even trust them anymore.

Oh, well, at least I have my wife. At least I have my family. No, I can't even trust my family members anymore.

This is how bad things have gotten. It's very interesting in Jeremiah chapter 9, verse 4, where he says, and we quote Jeremiah here, everyone has to be on guard against his friend. Don't trust any brother, for every brother will certainly deceive, and every friend spread slander.

What a society to live in. But this is what happens when the social structure breaks down. You can't trust anybody.

It's every man for himself. Guard your lips. Literally, it says guard the gates of your mouth.

The lips are very interesting. The lips are the gates of the mouth. In verse 6, what are some of the family breakdowns that we're going to find as a result now of society transforming the family into this situation where the son treats the father contemptuously, the daughter rises up against her mother, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law?

A man's enemies are the men of his own household. Sound familiar? We find in the New Testament that this also applies to Jesus. This comes from Psalm 69 as well.

First of all, son rising against the father, this was a crime. This was a capital offense in the Old Testament economy when you look back in the Torah. As I mentioned, Jesus himself talks about his own enemies being of his house, his own household.

As we find in chapter 7 of John, even his brothers did not believe in him, at least at that time. However, we do have an example of a good mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, and that is the whole book of Ruth. The love that you find

between the two is an amazing example of what real love and real hesed between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law can be.

Verse 7, in and of itself, we take this individually, in spite of all that is happening, the societal background, the societal breakdown, the family breakdown, etc. What am I going to do in those situations? What can I do? He says, but as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation.

My God will hear me because he is keeping his law. Sounds very much like Habakkuk chapter 3, doesn't it? But as for me, contra the leaders and the false prophets who aren't listening to the Lord, I am going to listen to the Lord. Israel is no longer waiting for judgment.

It's here. The Lord is going to judge Israel, and in the state of confusion, there's really no alternative for the righteous person, for the hesed to do if he is still in the land, but to rely on the Lord. So, when all this stuff happens, turn to the Lord, turn to him.

The same root that's used for watch here is the same word for watchman that is used in verse 4. Remember there, it says that even though you have a watchman that's watching, the disaster is going to come. But here's the difference. In verse 4, the watchman is awaiting evil, but here, the prophet or the community, if Micah is speaking on behalf of the community, is watching for God's intervention.

And it's very interesting to Habakkuk chapter 1, where he is seeing the Babylonian advance, and he is saying to the Lord, what's happening? I'm asking what's going on and you know what? I am going to wait, and I'm going to wait for your answer. Well in that particular case, the Lord comes and says, yeah, the evil is coming, but here's why it's coming. And then as a result of all these things that are going on, the judgment is coming on the nation, but what is Habakkuk to do? Well, Habakkuk really does what Micah does here.

He says, I will wait for the Lord, and then you have this marvelous prayer in Habakkuk chapter 3. So, if you want to tie the two pieces of scripture together, it's verse 7 here with chapter 3 of Habakkuk. As we move on to the next section, in spite of all that's going on, in spite of the destruction, in spite of the evil on the part of the people, in spite of the disappearance of all the Hasidim, eventually, Israel is going to be victorious over its enemies. So here we go from judgment to hope.

It's very interesting to see what a hinge verse 7 is because here you have what's going on, which is bad. Verse 7 is the prayer, and now, in a sense, you have the answer to that prayer in verses 8 to 10. Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; though I fall, I will rise, though I dwell in darkness. The Lord is a light for me.

This is what we call in inclusio verses 8 and 10. And that's just again a fancy word that just says the verses here are bracketed by the same theme. You have 8, 9, and 10, these verses, and verse 8 and verse 10 deal with the same thing, and then you have a little more discussion in the center.

As I said, carrying out the advice of a good friend of mine, if you don't throw in some Latin here and there, people are not going to think you're intelligent. So, this is in inclusio. Micah realizes he will personally experience the consequences of judgment, but his faith is still in the Lord.

And this is the same as I've mentioned before, ad nauseam back in chapter 3. Let's see an expansion on the word light. The Lord is the light. This, by the way, as we will see when we get to verse 9, this part of verse 8 ties in with verse 9. Both verses talk about the light.

And though I dwell in darkness, we see in verse 8 of Micah, the Lord is a light for me. And here is verse 8, the third part of verse 8, and in verse 9, he will bring me out to the light. So I just want to connect those phrases together between verse 8 and verse 9 before we get to verse 9. But the idea is light.

Darkness and light bring to mind a prison. Israel is a prisoner of war, but Israel will escape. It will go into the light.

And this is shades of Micah 2, when we bring into the light the ones that are in prison, and we know the leader in chapter 2 is going to bring people out of prison. They are going to break out the light. We saw light being used in verse 8, and we think of darkness and light.

What comes to mind is somebody perhaps breaking out of a dungeon into the sunlight. And this has shades of Micah 2, again there, where the leader is going to break the people, the Israelites who are captive, he is going to break them out of their prison and he is going to bring them into the light. This also is a theme that we see in Psalm 37, Isaiah 42, etc.

Bring into the light is like a Christian who sees the light of the world. This is the theme that we find in the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus in chapter 5, when he says, Be the light to the world. In other words, speak the truth to the world.

And then in John 8, where Jesus says, I am the light of the world, also picks up the idea of light, truth. It's interesting that Wesley's hymn, And Can It Be, that I should gain, in verse 4, maybe this was inspired by Micah 7, verse 8. This is what that hymn says. Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night.

Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I awoke the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed thee. I like to think that this has some bearing, this chapter of Micah, this verse has some bearing on Wesley's hymn.

But of course, it may also be the reference to Peter breaking out of prison, being broken out of prison by the angel in Acts chapter 12. But you get the idea. Prison, darkness, light.

Faith is under difficulties, but the certainty of final vindication is there. And this was characteristic of all the exilic and the post-exilic prophets. Verse 9, well, until that happens, I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him.

This is probably Micah speaking for Zion now. Until he pleads, he pleads my case and executes judgment for me. Remember, he was the prosecutor at one time, earlier in Micah.

Now he's the one who is actually the defense attorney and pleading the case for Zion. He will bring me out to the light, there's that idea again, and I will see his righteousness. You see the parallelism here.

You come out into the light, and there's light. Now you can see you're no longer in the dungeon. What are we going to see? We will see his righteousness. So Zion confesses that its sin has brought on the judgment.

There are no excuses here. I confess I did this. Until he pleads my case, the Lord, the prosecutor who has become the defense attorney and bring out into the light, I've already mentioned how we might be able to interpret that.

It is the same as in verse 8, here in verse 9. So, we move on to verse 10, which is now the end bracket of the inclusio. Then my enemy will see. Interesting, the idea of seeing the light that we have here.

Now my enemy is going to see, but what's the enemy going to see? And shame will cover her who said to me, where is the Lord your God? We'll discuss what her may be. My eyes will look on her, referring back now to Zion. The enemy is looking at Zion and they are going to say, where is your God? But now my eyes will look on her who's saying this.

At that time, she will be trampled down like mire of the streets. Well, who's the me? Who's the her? This ends the inclusio related to the enemy. As I mentioned, the redemption of Israel includes shaming of enemies.

Notice it doesn't say the destruction of the enemies. That will come, shaming the enemies. And in the Middle East culture, being shamed is almost worse than dying.

In fact, there are people who are killed because they have shamed the family. And the only way that you can break that shame, that shackle of shame off, is to kill the person who has produced the shame. So, shame can be worse than death in some Middle Eastern countries.

And note the shame in verse 16 and of the false prophets in chapter 3, verse 7. In other words, the false prophets will be shamed as well. It doesn't ask for their destruction. It asks that they might live to be shamed over what they have done.

Oh, and by the way, there are a number of Psalms where the psalmist, many times David, is not asking for the destruction of his enemies. What he's asking for is that they would be shamed. And so, in some ways that's an even worse punishment than death.

The point here is that shame is recognized. This is going to be a public shame. It's going to be obvious how shamed these people are.

And who are these people? Well, let's look. It's the enemy that taunts. Where is the Lord your God? And by the way, this isn't generic, where is your God? Generic basically is where is your Yahweh? Where is your Lord? L-O-R-D with capital letters.

Where is your Jehovah? In other words, the name of the God of Israel is actually given here. And the idea, the taunt, is against him personally. Can you think of any other place where that happened? Remember Sennacherib? He not only taunted Hezekiah, he also taunted the Lord.

And the Lord did not take kindly to this. A mocking of God as well as of the nation that depends on him is what we find here. We also see that in Psalm 79.

In Psalm 115, and I mentioned earlier, you also find this in Isaiah chapters 36 and 37 that discuss the attack of Sennacherib upon Jerusalem. That is, the weakness of Israel is seen as a weakness on the part of Yahweh, on the part of their God. Mire in the streets.

Those who mock, however, are going to be like mire in the streets. They're going to be like mud that is in the street that is trampled on as people walk the streets. This is also a thought that you find in Zechariah chapter 10.

The idea of mire in the streets is a very, very low estate. It's a reversal of Micah chapter 4. Notice what that verse said. And now many nations have been assembled against you who say, let her be polluted and let her eyes gloat over Zion.

Again, gazing on Zion. We've seen that before. The enemies are gloating over what has happened to Zion, but now Zion's turn to gloat and to see their destruction.

We go on with verses 11 through 13. Not only will there be a reversal of fortunes, but now, instead of the destruction of Zion, what we see is the rebuilding of Zion and exiles returning to what we call the promised land. To Canaan, if you like.

That day will be a day for building, for building your walls. On that day, your boundary will be extended. Just the opposite now.

What's going on? Again, great hope. Note the shift in speaker. Now, it's the Lord.

It's no longer Zion. It's no longer the enemy. Now, the Lord himself is speaking and telling Zion what is going to happen.

It will be a day, or on that day, sometime in the future. We don't know exactly when, but for sure it is going to come. The building is some unspecified time in the future.

It started with Nehemiah with the return from exile, which is around 450 B.C. It might have, as a prophecy, it may be referring to the starting of the building of the temple in Jerusalem under Nehemiah after the return, after Cyrus' allowance for the people to return. Nehemiah, Ezra, we read about the reconstruction of Jerusalem, which is around 450 or so B.C. The building will go from the walls of Zion outward to the boundaries because it says you will be building out to the boundaries. And about 168 to about 63 or so B.C., you had the ruling of the Maccabees.

You actually had an independent state of Israel, and the boundaries actually did expand over quite an area in Israel. But this appears really to be a little bit of an enunciation of what eschatologically is going to happen. Perhaps even we can look forward to Revelation chapter 3 and then chapter 21, when it talks about the new Jerusalem coming out of heaven with very, very extended boundaries.

And what is interesting also is to see the extended boundaries that are mentioned by Ezekiel in chapters 40 through 48. So that everything ties together very nicely as well. It will be a day when they, he literally, will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, from Egypt even to the river, even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.

This is where the exiles are being brought into the extended Jerusalem. And the exiles and I have some things in brackets here, and I will discuss those in a moment. This is somewhat complicated Hebrew, but the import is the following.

They will come, and literally, it's he. And the singular is used, but it's a singular that is used collectively. The he refers to Jacob, just like Jacob is used collectively for the people.

He will come from the boundaries of Israel's enemies, from Assyria, the northern enemies, and from Egypt, which is the southern enemy. And this, again, is probably a metonymy that just means they will come from north and south. In other words, they're going to come from all over.

Who's the he that is coming? Well, Jacob. The exiles, again, the he being used collectively. The goyim, which is the nations coming to God.

Could it be? Most likely, the exiles, rather than all the nations coming to God in some kind of eschatological fashion, because Egypt and Syria, two nations of exile, are mentioned. And so this appears to be referring to Israel itself and not, shall we say, to the church age, where the goyim, where the nations are coming to God, from sea to sea.

From sea to shining sea. We're talking here about the Dead Sea or the Salt Sea to the Mediterranean. In other words, the boundaries are going to be from basically the Rift Valley to the Mediterranean and from mountain to mountain, north and south.

Mount Hor is mentioned, interestingly enough, as the northern boundary of Canaan. There's also a Mount Hor that is on the southern boundary of Canaan near Edom, where Aaron died. And I will show you a map in a moment as to how that goes.

So again, sea to sea and mountain to mountain is a merism. It implies everything. It applies everywhere.

The Israelites are coming from all the places of exile. I keep using the term merism, which means a small quantity represents the whole. Interestingly enough, the very first place that we meet a merism is in the very first chapter of the Bible.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Heavens and earth. That's a merism.

It means everything. God created everything, and it's used in that way. The river.

This is the river Euphrates. So now we're going a little bit beyond just the Rift Valley. The boundaries are going to extend all the way to the river Euphrates.

Solomon's kingdom extended from the river Euphrates to the river of Egypt, the so-called El-arish wadi. And it's kind of hard to picture all this so let's have a map and try to sort this out. This is the original land of Canaan.

This is the land that was promised to Abraham that he would give to his descendants. And the darker area is the land of Canaan. And you can see a sizable extent to the northeast, including the land of Canaan.

Here's the sea to sea from the Mediterranean in the west to the Dead Sea or the Salt Sea to the southeast. There is Mount Hor in the north, and there is Mount Hor in the south. And so, you see from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain that the land is going to be restored.

Now, it might be interesting, just as a side note here, the size of Canaan that was promised to Abraham compared to modern Israel. Here's modern Israel. Now let me just kind of do a flash comparison here.

You can see that Israel, modern Israel, does not include the area in the northeast. On the other hand it's including area down to the south that goes all the way to the Gulf of Bilat that this map doesn't show. So, there you go.

Is there an addition that's going to be made to the boundaries of the present? I'll leave that as an exercise to the viewer. Verse 13, and the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants on account of the fruit of their deeds. Well, here again, earth, does it mean the land? Does it mean the earth as a whole, the globe as a whole? And the earth, in my humble opinion, is best translated as the land or yet the land.

In other words, before the gathering, the land of Israel will become desolate, just as predicted, and that's exactly what happened. You had the great empire under David and Solomon, and then you had the exile. Then they came back, and you had an independent nation again, and then you had the exile, and then the only other time they became an independent nation was in 1948 with the establishment of Israel, and really before that time, a good part of that land was desolate and a desert, just a desert area.

Some Bibles use the term earth will become desolate in the sense of somehow the whole globe. I tend to think that that is not correct, and really, what we're talking about is the land. That area is going to become desolate.

In other words, you're going to have a really, really dry period before all this happens. On the other hand, Micah may be referring to all the nations as per the end of chapter 3 but I'm skeptical. Verse 14, we have a prayer again.

We have another hinge point. Shepherd your people with your scepter, the flock of your possession which dwells by itself in the woodland, in the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old.

This is the prayer. In other words, the desert we know it is going to no longer be a desert, and at that time, the people are going to be living in the land with all the food that they need in order to exist. It's going to return as it was before.

Well, here we have a shift in the speaker. Again, it's Micah who's offering the prayer, maybe on behalf of the congregation. And as I mentioned, contrary to the desolation of verse 13, Israel will be fruitful.

And let me just say for people who want to think of this eschatologically, that is certainly the case today. The desert is blooming literally. Bashan and Gilead or Bashan and Gilead were fruitful trans-Jordan regions in the time of the Israeli economy and even today because they get a lot of rain.

It's up higher. They get a lot of rain and a great deal of agriculture that can go on there. And again, let me refer to the map.

Again, the land of Canaan that we have seen before. And there's the land of Gilead in Jordan, and there's the land of Bashan, part of it in Syria, part of it in Israel, and there's actually the border of Israel and Syria and Jordan sort of meet around that place that we call Bashan. But it was fruitful in the past.

It's pretty fruitful today. We ain't seen nothing yet about how fruitful it's going to be as time goes on. It talks about dwelling by itself in the forest or in the woodlands.

And if this is a reference, this may be a reference back to Micah 5, where Israel is a lion. In other words, Zion is dwelling by itself in the forest or the woodland. It's Zion that it's referring to.

And back in Micah 5, recall that when we talked about Israel being scattered as do among the nations, we also said the other image that is used is a lion in the forest. So maybe this is referring back to chapter 5. Or maybe it's a reference to Israel in the location surrounded by wild animals that will be brought to a better land. In other words, Israel brought to a better land.

We were talking about the desert, and I mentioned before that in the desert, what did you have? You have jackals, you have lions, you have foxes, you have snakes, you have a lot of critters that are definitely not conducive to settlement there. And perhaps this is what it is referring to. But whatever the case, it's very interesting to see the shift from the woodlands to the meadows.

In other words, the woodlands are places where you chop wood, but you can't do a whole lot of farming there. But that's going to change the meadows or Carmel in Hebrew, where it's going to change to a Carmel, which is a vineyard or a pleasant

land. So, whatever is there, again, a wilderness there that is going to be conquered and now what we're going to have is a pleasant land where the people can farm and make their settlements there.

And this is from where the verse in Fairest Lord Jesus comes from? You know the hymn, Fairest Lord Jesus. I will not afflict you with any more of my singing, but it's interesting that in that particular verse, verse 2 of the hymn, we find the following: fair are the meadows, fair still the woodlands. And it's very interesting to see the reversal of what Micah says, robed in the blooming garb of spring.

At any rate, this may be where this particular hymn comes from: Anonymous Crusader hymn. Well, let's move on to the penultimate part of the book as opposed to the last part of the book, verses 15 to 17. God will shepherd his people back to their ancestral land to the dismay of its enemies.

Again, the shame factor that we read about earlier is that the enemies will be shamed. As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles. Whoa, Elaine had mentioned the miracles that the Lord did, parting of the sea, parting of the Jordan River, protection from enemies, etc.

And now he is promising that he is going to show miracles again. The shift in speaker now is to the Lord. But remember something that we said earlier, and that is whether Micah is speaking or the Lord is speaking, it's got the same force because Micah is speaking through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is God himself.

Remember, and now I'm saying, remember what Elaine was mentioning about remembering in chapter 6 and how absolutely important that is. I refer to her material in chapter 6, which mentions the need to remember, especially the Exodus, because this is the main event in Israel's national history, and it's something that is remembered and declared from generation to generation to generation. This is the key, magnificent, mighty act of God that the prophets continually refer to in order to bring the people back and say, and this is the God that helped you, here's how he helped you. This is how bad your offense is, because you are not remembering what he has done for you.

And in verse 16, nations will see and be ashamed of all their might. Again, the shame factor. They will put their hand on their mouth, their ears will be deaf.

Well, again, some questions. Who are the nations? What's their might? Who's might? Who's there? They will put their hand over their mouth. What could that mean? Why would their ears be deaf? Let's parse this out.

Nations will be ashamed, and I've already mentioned the degradation of shame that occurs, the degradation to the person as a result of being shamed back when we

were discussing verse 10. They will be ashamed of all their might. Again, who is there? Well, interestingly enough, the antecedent of there is nations.

Not Israel, not the Lord. The antecedent is nations. So how can the nations be ashamed of their might? Let's make the following suggestion.

If so, the nations will see the mighty acts of God that are referred to earlier, and they will be ashamed of their own puny power. They think they're powerful. Wait till you see the Lord's might.

You think you've got power with atomic bombs and cruise missiles and Aegis ships and destroyers and aircraft carriers. Wait till you see what the Lord does, and you're going to say, holy cow, we've got nothing here. I'm just going to put my hand over my mouth because I can't even say anything.

I had no idea. If there refers to Israel, however, then I ask, has there been a time in modern history when the nations have been astounded at Israel's power? Remember, Israel scattered among the nations can also mean Israel in the midst of nations. We brought that up in chapter 5. I would refer to 1967 and what happened with Israel and how she showed her power at that particular time.

But again, I'm speaking eschatologically and left as an exercise, again, for the viewer to see whether they accept that or not. At any rate, they're going to put their hand over their mouth. In their astonishment, they're not going to have anything to say when they see what the Lord does.

It's very interesting to see putting a hand over the mouth applied to an individual in Proverbs 30, verse 32. If you have been a fool by being proud or plotting evil, cover your mouth in shame. This is a New Living Translation.

It refers to individuals, but as I say, Micah proposes that this is going to happen to nations when he restores Israel. They are going to have nothing to say. What about their ears will be deaf? This is used in Scripture as a metaphor for the lack of understanding.

It's not just that they can't hear. They can't perceive. Remember what Jesus said, perceiving they will not perceive, seeing they will not see. And here, they will see what's going on, they will hear what's going on, but they're just not going to get it.

They're just not going to understand what's happening. It's interesting that in Isaiah chapter 40 and in chapter 42, the Lord accuses Israel of being blind and deaf. They're just not getting it.

Now, it's the nations, not Israel. Again, how the roles have been reversed, and the nations still will not get it, and that is the Lord that is acting on behalf of Israel, and they will see again how the Lord is working with Israel, just as he did in the past, bringing them out of Egypt.

Remember, just a couple of verses ago, this is going to be mightier acts than God bringing them out of Egypt. Can't wait to see it. Verse 17, they will lick the dust like a serpent, like reptiles of the earth.

They will come trembling out of their fortresses to the Lord our God. They will come in dread, and they will be afraid of you. So not everybody is wiped out.

There are still people there that eventually begin to get it. And they say we've got to straighten ourselves out here. So they begin to get it.

So, they come out trembling from their fortresses where they're hiding. And remember what Hosea says when the day comes that people are going to say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the earth, swallow us up because we just cannot stand being under the Lord's judgment like this. They would rather just be totally covered than face God, who is coming in judgment.

Kind of that idea. So, the enemies will prostrate before the Lord like a serpent licking dust. Remember the earlier illusion was that they would be like mud on the streets, that they would be trampled down.

This is going to be total humiliation and total shame on the part of the nations that were gloating over what was happening to Israel. The enemies, as we say, will come out from under the rocks, perhaps out of caves and refuges to avoid the wrath of the Lord. And I refer again to Hosea chapter 10.

Is this eschatological? It's interesting that the idea of mountains falling on people and the plea for the earth to swallow people to avoid the judgment of God is also seen in Revelation chapter 6. And I think what we're understanding here is that Micah is very interesting. He's talking about the immediate context. He's talking about an intermediate context, referring to the Babylonians who haven't come on the scene yet.

But I think a number of these things, especially the coming of the ruler and what his work is going to be, we also see eschatological elements to Micah as well. And that could be a discussion in and of itself, but we will avoid that here. We finally get to the final two chapters.

Praise to God who pardons sin and maintains this covenant love, hesed. Who is like you who pardons iniquity and passes over the disobedience of the remnant of his

heritage? He doesn't retain his anger forever because he delights in hesed, loving kindness, also is another way in which that hesed is translated. Who is like God? Micah, who is like God? Here's where the name Micah comes in.

He's like God in the context of the verse above. It's a common theme in the Psalms, and it's based really on Exodus. In these contexts, it is power.

In the context of the verse above in Exodus, for example, in all the passages that I have there in Psalms, etc., who is like God, meaning God of power, who is like him? No one, of course. But in this context, it's who is like God in his hesed, in his mercy, and there's no one like him in that context as well. I mentioned hesed can also be steadfast love.

It is the covenant love, it's characteristic of God. We see that goes all the way back into the Torah where God describes himself as a God of mercy who forgives sin because of his hesed, and this leads to his forgiving and to his pardoning in spite of the sins of Israel. But of course, we go back to chapter 5, a lot of this is based on the ruler who comes to rule over Israel and to take Israel's sins as well.

To pardon, the word means to forgive, to lift up, to bear, to carry, to support, to sustain, to endure, to take, to bear. It's an all-encompassing word that means just to take everything away, to get rid of all the punishment that is due because of hesed, to get rid of the guilt. Of course, we know that the only way the Lord takes away, our guilt is because Jesus himself took our guilt upon himself, and the wrath of God, the uplifted hand that we discussed previously, was uplifted against his own son, Jesus Christ, who took our sins upon himself so that God then may have hesed towards us.

Forgiving iniquity and passing by or over transgression, this is a common theme also in the Psalter. God who forgives, passes by, is transgression, no longer keeps the punishment against us. He will again have compassion on us.

He will tread our iniquities underfoot, like the enemies, and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Tread evil deeds, sins, and iniquities underfoot. This is just as God will do to the enemy, as I mentioned before.

Cast our sins into the sea, just as God will do to the Egyptians, that were never heard of again. This is what will happen to our sins. He casts them into the sea, and they are there.

They are not to rise again. As one of my friends said, he places a sign there for everybody that says, no fishing, meaning we don't go back and contemplate the sins because they have been forgiven. They have been cast into the sea.

In the hymn, Before a Mighty Tongue to Sing, My Great Redeemer's Praise, one of the verses is that He breaks the power of canceled sin he sets the prisoner free. Unfortunately, that has been changed in many hymn books to, he breaks the power of reigning sin, he sets the captive free. Well, first of all, theologically, that doesn't make sense because if we are really free, sin has no reign over us.

This is what Paul discusses in Romans, but the original said he breaks the power of canceled sin. This is the no-fishing sign. The sin has been canceled.

There's no reason to dwell on it. We are free. And then finally, in verse 20, you will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, and Jacob and Abraham now being the singular for the collective of all of Israel, and as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of gold.

And here again, we go to Meolam, you give truth to Jacob. The word truth can mean firmness, faithfulness, sureness, reliability, stability, etc. That all of this is what God is going to give, as opposed to the false gods, the truth of God's hesed is going to remain.

God's oath to the nation's forefathers will remain, for the oath has been from days of old, which we read about back in Micah 5. Micah 5 is reminiscent of the activities of the rulers of ancient times. I just want to say a couple of things about what we may learn from this. We're back to God's sovereignty.

He brings judgment and justice via nations that even oppose him, but then he executes judgment upon them for their horrendous deeds. Even for God's people, there will be suffering and deprivation simply by being part of society, but in the midst of it all, we must be faithful. Let us be Hasid's among the society.

Rely upon God's ultimate hesed; he will bring judgment upon sin and establish everlasting justice upon the earth through the ruler in Micah 5, verse 2, which we have mentioned. In other words, this is going to come about because of the work of Jesus Christ. And God fulfills his promises.

Here are some interesting parallels that we find between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The coming of the ruler was predicted in chapter 5, verse 2. It was fulfilled in Matthew chapter 2, the coming of Jesus. The shepherd who will redeem Israel is discussed in chapter 5 and in chapter 7 in so many words, also in chapter 2, and this is fulfilled by Jesus being the good shepherd that we read about in John chapter 10, and also about the lamb who is seen in Revelation chapter 7. The conquest of the ruler, predicted in chapter 4, chapter 5, and chapter 7, is fulfilled as we see in Matthew 25 when Jesus says, the ruler of this world has been cast out.

Jesus, on the cross, thwarted all the works of Satan and defeated him. Satan is a destroyed enemy. He is an enemy that has lost the battle.

He is a defeated enemy. Oh yeah, he has some rearguard actions that continue, just like the Battle of the Bulge, even though Hitler had pretty much lost the war, we have the Battle of the Bulge, which was significant, but ultimately the Nazis lost. Ultimately, Satan will lose, as we read in Revelation.

He is a defeated enemy. And then the ultimate peace on the earth that the prophets look forward to, especially that we see in Micah chapter 2, Micah chapter 4, Isaiah chapter 2, is discussed in chapter 4, and the fulfillment will be in the future that we read in Revelation 21. So, Micah had a lot to say, not only about his own time but also for the time that we can look forward to because we too can look forward to the peace that he discusses on the earth.

But at this point, what we have is the peace that Jesus gives us in our own lives through his sacrifice and through the gift of the Holy Spirit. May that be the lesson that we learn. Thank you, Elaine and I, for giving us the opportunity to present Micah to you.

May the Lord take our words and bless them through his Holy Spirit. Thank you.

This is Dr. Perry Phillips in his teaching on the book of Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway. This is session 8, Micah 7.