

Dr. Perry Phillips, Micah, Prophet Outside the Beltway

Session 4, Micah 3

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Phillips, Micah, Session 4, Micah 3, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from a course on the Book of Micah analyzes Micah chapter 3, focusing on its **chiastic structure** and its **condemnation of corrupt rulers and false prophets**. The lecture **explains the accusations** leveled against these figures—**oppression of the poor, perversion of justice, and profiteering from prophecy**. The analysis uses Hebrew terms like *mishpat* (justice) and *gadal* (oppression) to show how the societal structures were corrupted. Finally, the lecture **connects Micah's message to later prophets** and the New Testament, emphasizing the timeless relevance of his warnings against hypocrisy and injustice.

2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Phillips, Micah, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Minor Prophets → Micah).



**Phillips, Micah
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3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Phillips_Micah_EN_Session04.pdf," which is a lecture on Micah Chapter 3.

Briefing Document: Micah Chapter 3 - A Study of Corruption and Judgment

Introduction This document summarizes a lecture by Drs. Elaine and Perry Phillips focusing on Micah chapter 3. The session analyzes the chapter's structure, content, and its implications regarding social and religious corruption in ancient Israel. The central theme revolves around the covenant broken, the abuse of power, and the divine judgment that will follow. The chapter is presented with a chiastic structure, focusing on the leaders and prophets of the time.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Chiastic Structure and Overall Argument:

- Micah Chapter 3 exhibits a chiastic structure, organized as follows:
- Verses 1-4: Condemnation of Rulers (Micah speaking)
- Verses 5-8: Condemnation of Prophets (The Lord Speaking)
- Verses 9-12: Condemnation of Rulers (Micah speaking)
- This structure emphasizes the material discussed, in this case, the corruption of leadership and prophecy and how both are complicit in the breakdown of the covenant.
- The chapter is essentially a "dispute" or "judgment oracle" where the Lord, acting as prosecutor, judge, and witness, brings charges against Israel. The structure starts with a summons, moves to the indictment, a link to the judgement, then the ultimate sentence.

1. Condemnation of Rulers (Verses 1-4 & 9-12):

- **Ignorance of Justice:** Micah begins by rhetorically asking the leaders if they should not know justice (Mishpat). The clear answer is that they should, but they are deliberately ignoring it.
- **Hating Good, Loving Evil:** They are accused of hating good and loving evil, turning truth upside down, a concept also found in Isaiah 5:20. They are not doing the

very thing they are supposed to be doing in the community which is upholding justice and equity.

- **Brutality and Oppression (Gazal):** The rulers are depicted as savage carnivores, tearing the flesh and bones of their people, taking their land and their inheritance. This is a vivid metaphor for their oppression and theft, described as "gazal".
 - **Cannibalism Metaphor:** The graphic language of eating flesh and breaking bones could refer to the extreme lengths of their oppression, or to the possibility of actual cannibalism during the coming siege. The metaphor serves to demonstrate how they are "cannibalizing" the justice that belongs to the people.
 - **Ignoring the Cries of the People:** They do not listen to the cries of the oppressed, therefore God will not hear their cries when they face hardship. This is explained as measure for measure, or *lex talionis*.
 - **God Hides His Face:** The Lord will hide his face from them as a result of their covenant disobedience, forsaking them in their time of need as punishment. This theme draws on language found in Deuteronomy, tying the prophet's message directly to the covenant.
 - **Rejection of Justice:** In the final section focusing on the rulers, Micah states that they "abhor justice and twist everything that is straight." This further demonstrates the extent of their corruption and rebellion.
 - **Building Zion with Bloodshed:** The leaders build Zion and Jerusalem with bloodshed and violence, indicating that their prosperity is built on unjust practices. This alludes to an urban renewal program during Hezekiah's reign that included tearing down people's homes in order to build walls and defensive structures.
 - **Urban Renewal and Injustice:** The lecture uses the example of the "Broad Wall" in Jerusalem and how its construction involved the destruction of people's homes through what appears to be eminent domain, a modern comparison to this injustice.
1. **Condemnation of False Prophets (Verses 5-8):**
 - **Prophets for Profit:** These prophets are portrayed as soothsayers who prophesy peace for those who pay them, and evil for those who don't. They "bite with their

teeth" like a deadly serpent (nashak), or lend money with interest, demonstrating their greed.

- **"Peace When There is No Peace":** They tell the people what they want to hear instead of the truth, which is "peace when there is no peace", similar to Jeremiah's criticisms of false prophets during his time. They prioritize their own desires and profits.
- **Loss of Divine Vision:** The Lord says that they will experience "night without vision," indicating that they will no longer have true insight from God. The sun will go down for them and the day will become dark, further indicating their loss of divine guidance.
- **Embarrassment and Silence:** The seers (prophets) will be ashamed and cover their mouths (a gesture of shame and mourning) because no answer will come from God. They are also depicted as magicians and witches.
- **Contrast with Micah:** In contrast, Micah is filled with the Spirit of the Lord, allowing him to speak with justice and courage. He is driven by his love for the people, not by the desire for personal gain.

1. The Unholy Trinity of Corruption (Verse 11):

- **Leaders, Priests, and Prophets:** A disturbing picture of systemic corruption arises, in which all three groups are exploiting their positions of power for personal gain. The leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe; the priests teach for a price; and the prophets divine for money.
- **False Security:** Despite their corruption, they feel secure because they believe God is in their midst, at the temple. The lecture points out that the temple without God's presence is simply a building on a hill, using Jeremiah's criticisms of the temple for comparison.
- **Den of Thieves:** Like Jeremiah, they have turned the temple into a "den of thieves", and will not be spared because of it.

1. The Sentence: Destruction of Zion (Verse 12):

- **Zion Will Be Plowed:** As a direct consequence of their collective corruption, Zion (Jerusalem) will be plowed like a field and become a heap of ruins. The mountain of the temple will become a high place for a forest.

- **Plowed Like a Field:** This prophecy was fulfilled in Jeremiah's time, and serves as a warning that God's word will be fulfilled.
- **Symbolism of the Forest:** The metaphor of the temple becoming a forest is open to interpretation:
 - It could represent nature worshiping the true God in the absence of the corrupt institutions.
 - Or it could represent the total devastation and a place of wild animals, ruin, and death.

1. **Lessons for Today:**

- **Don't Hide Behind Religion:** The lecture calls on people to remember the message of Micah, that serving God should not be a cloak for one's own glory and profit.
- **Consistency of Creed and Conduct:** There should be a consistency between creed and conduct. There must be an active display of doing justice in how one lives. The behavior of those in leadership must align with what is preached, which was the opposite in the time of Micah.

Quotes from the Source:

- "You who hate good and love evil" (Micah 3:2) - This summarizes the leaders' perversion of justice.
- "You who eat the flesh of my people, strip off their skin from them, break their bones, and chop them up as for the pot and as meat in a kettle" (Micah 3:3) - Illustrates the graphic nature of oppression.
- "Then they will cry out to the Lord, but he will not answer them. Instead, he will hide his face from them at that time because they have practiced evil deeds." (Micah 3:4) - Highlights God's judgment and rejection of the corrupt leaders.
- "Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray. When they have something to eat, they cry, peace, but against him who puts nothing in their mouths, they declare war." (Micah 3:5) - Exposes the false prophets' motivations.
- "I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin." (Micah 3:8) - Showcases Micah's divine calling and faithfulness.

- "Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight." (Micah 3:9) - Direct accusation of the leadership.
- "Therefore, on account of you, ...Zion will be plowed as a field." (Micah 3:12) - States the final judgment.
- "God's people should not miss you; service to God is a cloak for one's own glory and profit" (Summary) - The key takeaway lesson.

Conclusion: Micah Chapter 3 paints a grim picture of a society rife with corruption and injustice. It serves as a potent reminder of the importance of integrity, justice, and genuine faith, and the consequences of straying from God's ways. The detailed analysis of this chapter by the Phillips highlights the enduring relevance of Micah's message for all generations.

4. Phillips, Micah, Session 4, Micah 3

Micah, Chapter 3: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the chiasmic structure of Micah chapter 3, and what purpose does it serve?
2. According to the lecture, what is the threefold role of the Lord in chapter 1 of Micah?
3. In Micah 3:1, what rhetorical question does Micah pose to the leaders of Israel?
4. What does the term *mishpat* mean, according to the lecture, and why is it significant in Micah's message?
5. How does Micah describe the actions of the leaders in verses 2-3 of chapter 3?
6. What does the phrase "hiding his face" signify in verse 4, and where else is this image found in the Old Testament?
7. According to verse 5, how do the false prophets behave, and what is their motivation?
8. In verses 6-7, what is the consequence for the false prophets, and what actions do they take as a result?
9. How does Micah contrast himself with the false prophets in verse 8?
10. What is the final judgment pronounced in verse 12, and who is held responsible for it?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The chapter follows a chiasmic structure: Micah speaks to the rulers (1-4), the Lord speaks about the prophets (5-8), and Micah speaks again to the rulers (9-12). This structure is a poetic tool that emphasizes the material being discussed and highlights the interrelation of the issues.
2. The Lord is presented as the prosecutor, judge, and witness in chapter 1. This role highlights the Lord's authority and the seriousness of Israel's covenant violations.

3. Micah asks the leaders, "Is it not for you to know justice?" This rhetorical question emphasizes that the leaders, who should be the guardians of justice, are failing in their duty.
4. *Mishpat* refers to justice, but it includes the sense of fairness, equity in government, administration, and the courts. It's significant because it encompasses the whole social and theological structure and how it should function under the covenant.
5. Micah uses vivid and violent imagery, comparing the leaders to wild carnivores who tear and eat their people. They are described as hating good, loving evil, and exploiting the vulnerable, a serious charge against those in power.
6. "Hiding his face" signifies that God will not be helpful to them and will forsake them because they have broken the covenant. This image is found in Deuteronomy, where it is associated with covenant disobedience and forsaking the people.
7. The false prophets preach peace for those who feed them and declare war on those who don't, showing that their prophecies are motivated by personal gain. They are depicted as being like soothsayers.
8. The false prophets will experience a lack of divine guidance and be shamed by the failure of their visions. They will cover their mouths in shame, which also has connotations of mourning.
9. Unlike the false prophets, Micah declares that he is filled with the Spirit of the Lord. He has courage to speak boldly, and he is committed to telling the truth about the people's sins.
10. The final judgment is that Zion (Jerusalem) will be plowed as a field, becoming a heap of ruins, and the temple mount will become a forest. This destruction is a consequence of the combined corruption of the leaders, prophets, and priests.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Write an essay addressing one of the following prompts.

1. Analyze the ways in which Micah uses imagery and metaphors in chapter 3 to convey his message about injustice and corruption. How do these literary devices enhance the impact of his prophecy?
2. Discuss the interconnectedness of leadership, prophecy, and priesthood in Micah 3. How do the failings of each group contribute to the overall corruption of society, and what does this suggest about their roles?
3. Explore the theme of divine judgment in Micah chapter 3. What triggers God's judgment, and how is the nature of this judgment described? What does this tell us about the nature of God's justice?
4. Compare and contrast the roles and characteristics of the true prophet Micah with those of the false prophets described in chapter 3. How does Micah's character and message stand apart, and what does this suggest about authentic prophecy?
5. Discuss the relevance of Micah's message in the modern context. What parallels can be drawn between the societal issues addressed in Micah 3 and contemporary challenges, and what lessons can be learned from Micah's critique?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Chiastic Structure:** A poetic structure where elements are arranged in a pattern such as A-B-C-B-A, with the middle element often being the central idea. This structure emphasizes the material being discussed.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or contract, particularly between God and the people of Israel in the Old Testament. It outlines mutual responsibilities, promises, and consequences.
- **Gazal:** A Hebrew word meaning to tear away or rob. It often refers to the unjust taking of land, possessions, or rights, especially from the vulnerable. It also means violence.
- **Mishpat:** A Hebrew word meaning justice. It is not simply legal or judicial, but encompasses fairness, righteousness, and equity in all aspects of life, according to the covenant.
- **Lex Talionis:** A Latin phrase referring to the principle of "an eye for an eye," or reciprocal justice. This concept is related to the idea of "measure for measure," in which a punishment or reward is equal to the action performed.
- **Baksheesh:** A Middle Eastern term for a bribe or tip, often given to facilitate a service or favor.
- **Bama/Bamot:** Hebrew terms referring to high places or cultic sites where pagan worship was conducted. In Micah, it is used to refer to the transformed site of the temple.
- **Soothsayer:** A person who claims to foresee the future, often for personal gain. In Micah, it is a term associated with the false prophets who prophesied according to those who paid them.

5. FAQs on Phillips, Micah, Session 4, Micah 3, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Micah Chapter 3

1. **What is the structural significance of the chiastic pattern in Micah 3?** Micah 3 employs a chiastic structure to emphasize its core message. The chapter is divided into three sections: verses 1-4 focus on the condemnation of the rulers by Micah, verses 5-8 present the Lord's words regarding the false prophets, and verses 9-12 return to Micah's condemnation of the rulers. This A-B-A pattern (rulers, prophets, rulers) highlights the interconnected corruption within the leadership and the resulting divine judgment. The parallel structure underscores the interwoven failures of both political and religious figures.
2. **What specific sins are the rulers of Jacob and Israel accused of in Micah 3?** The rulers are condemned for their profound injustice and corruption. They are accused of "hating good and loving evil" (v.2), engaging in violent oppression of the people (v.2-3) as if they were wild carnivores or cannibals devouring their own (v. 2,3), and neglecting their responsibility to administer justice (v.1). Instead of protecting the vulnerable, they exploit them for their own gain, siding with land barons and perverting the legal system. They prioritize personal enrichment over the well-being of their people, turning justice (mishpat) into its opposite, gazal (violent oppression and theft).
3. **How does Micah depict the false prophets, and what are their motivations?** Micah portrays the false prophets as self-serving individuals who prioritize financial gain over truth and integrity. They "cry peace" when they are well-fed and declare "war" when they are not (v.5), making their prophecies conditional upon being paid (v.11). They are depicted as soothsayers who tailor their messages to suit the desires of those who pay them, abandoning their divine duty. Their motivation is self-interest, not a genuine desire to convey God's word.
4. **How does Micah contrast himself with the false prophets in this chapter?** Micah contrasts himself with the false prophets by highlighting that he is filled with the Spirit of the Lord and is committed to speaking the truth regardless of personal cost or popularity. Unlike the false prophets who speak for personal gain, Micah is driven by justice and courage to expose the sins of Jacob and Israel. While the false prophets prophesy to please, Micah's message, filled with God's Spirit, is bold and truthful, even when unwelcome.

5. **What does the "hiding of God's face" signify in the context of Micah 3?** The "hiding of God's face" (v.4) signifies the withdrawal of God's favor and protection due to the people's covenant disobedience. It's a consequence of the leaders' and prophets' failure to uphold justice and truth. The Lord's refusal to listen to their cries for help stems from their refusal to listen to the cries of those whom they have oppressed. It highlights that their actions have severed their relationship with God, leading to judgment rather than divine intervention on their behalf. This idea is rooted in covenantal principles outlined in Deuteronomy.
6. **What does Micah mean by saying "Zion will be plowed as a field" and "Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins"?** These vivid images represent the utter destruction of Jerusalem as a direct consequence of the injustice and corruption of its leaders and false prophets. "Zion being plowed as a field" (v.12) signifies its devastation and undoing, while "Jerusalem becoming a heap of ruins" represents the city's transformation from a center of power and holiness to a desolate wasteland. These pronouncements indicate that because they built the city with injustice, God will reduce it to ruins as a deserved punishment.
7. **How does the text emphasize the perversion of justice within the religious and political systems of Micah's time?** The text explicitly points out that leaders, priests, and prophets alike have all corrupted their roles for personal gain. Leaders issue judgments for bribes, priests instruct for a price, and prophets divine for money. The text describes how instead of upholding justice (*mishpat*), they actively engage in oppression (*gazel*) for their own benefit, and the leaders engage in urban renewal via eminent domain, unjustly displacing others for profit. These examples showcase a systemic moral breakdown, where all who have power within the society exploit the vulnerable.
8. **What is the enduring message of Micah 3, and how should it apply to contemporary audiences?** The enduring message of Micah 3 is a warning against corruption, hypocrisy, and the abuse of power. It emphasizes that true service to God is characterized by a commitment to justice, compassion, and integrity. The chapter warns against using religion as a cloak for personal gain and challenges individuals to ensure their actions reflect their faith. The core lesson is that a genuine relationship with God is evidenced by the love and justice one displays in their community, highlighting the need for both religious and civil leaders to be ethical, fair, and compassionate in their dealings with others. Micah's message calls for action, not just words, and demands consistency between one's creed and one's conduct.