

Micah

walk-thru the Bible

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Micah

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Explanations (Micah 1)

"The Word of Jehovah that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem:" (vs1)

If you check out the timeline [link #1] we can see that Micah's prophecy was about 200 years after wicked Ahab (6:16) and his wife Jezebel, and concurrent with the exiles of Israel (the northern kingdom) into Assyria; and about 100 years before Judah is carried away to Babylon. Micah would have been contemporary with Isaiah, and may have been influential in the momentary revival that Hezekiah brought to Judah. (2Ki18)

This being a "walk-thru" series, not a detailed "book study", we are going to pick-n-choose through the over-all major topics of the book. We will not touch everything in the book. It is quite possible that some of the details, like city names, only had meaning to Micah's immediate hearers, as they would have been contemporary and familiar with detailed events of their day. Just as a stranger, when reading about Bismarck, ND might not be familiar with Menoken or Sweetbriar; or in reading about Spokane, WA might not know about Hillyard, Browne's Edition or Mead.

On other occasions we have noted how Revelation ch12 is a complete history of Israel. If the "woman" is also seen as Eve, and the "rest of her seed" as the Church; it might also be said that ch12 is a synopsis of human history, satan's warfare against mankind and God, and God's preservation of Israel, the birth and prophesied rule of Messiah through Israel, and satan's persecution of the saints. All within the nutshell of one chapter. As all the judgments are prophesied in the context of the rest of the book, an explanation of where the struggle began, and who the players are, and ultimately 'why' the judgments are happening. It's God's "payback" time. (Rev16:6)

In a sense, Micah is another such book. Much of it is contemporary to Micah's day; but much is also prophetic, both to Messiah's two comings as well as God's promised final judgments. It addresses Israel's historic unfaithfulness, but also God's restoration. And also, there is much that, although covering history and prophecy, is also applicable to today. Micah is another example of how prophetic writings cannot be laid out as a timeline, grammatically, by chapter (i.e. this chapter -- then: the following chapter). It is more, as we speak often, of a jigsaw puzzle: When we open the book, it is like flipping the box over to pour out the pieces on the table and turning them all face-up. We see all the pieces which, if they were all put together, would reveal the complete picture. But they have been all mixed together. A piece from the upper-left corner of the picture might have poured out directly adjacent to a piece that will end up in the lower-right corner. But as they fell out of the box, they are sitting right next to each other. Micah is another such book as that.

Or we might look at the book like a family gathering. The children are now adults, the siblings all gathered together with the parents. There is some current family 'situation', perhaps the reading of a will after a death, that needs to be addressed, as plans for the future are being made. But over the years there have been disagreements and arguments of this nature or that. There have been some fallings-away. Some are not on speaking terms with others. And so, as future plans are discussed, in light of current animosities, somebody harks back to the past to 'remind' everybody of some incidents that happened in the past, when the siblings were all little children, which 'caused' or 'led to' the current state of affairs. So now, with all these various time-frames pulled together in everybody's minds, now what do we do for the future? This is what the will says. Micah is sort of like that.

If we expand our understanding from Micah, and outward, the way the book is written, we can also understand how NO POINT in this earth's 7000 history is totally isolated from ANOTHER POINT in history, but what they are inter-related. As Peter speaks of the scoffers in the "last days", he points the reader back to Noah's flood. (2Pt3:3-6) In the last days they proclaim "evolution", rejecting God's opening salvo, "In the beginning God created..." (Gen1:1) For every effect there is a cause. In historical terms it is 7000 years worth of cause-and-effect. Micah addresses history and prophecy in this way specifically with Israel.

THE DECLARATION:

To whom is the opening proclamation?

"Hear, all you people. Take heed, O earth, and all the fullness of it. And let the Lord Jehovah be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple" (vs2)

When somebody is a "witness -against-" somebody or situation, it is usually -not- 'good news!' And who is the witness here? The Lord Jehovah. God Himself. His witness is true and just. He is not only the witness, He is also coming to mete out judgment. Wherever God is, He is "coming out of His place" (vs3), and it is not for a picnic; but He is coming "down" to "tread" the earth.

What is it to "tread" something? It is not merely to 'walk' and go from point A to point B. As this is being written 'recently' I did some work on my driveway, re-sealing the asphalt. There were also some dips (depressions) that got filled with this 'stuff' from these buckets I got at the store. But the stuff didn't want to set up very fast, for some reason. So I was out there repeatedly to 'push' with my hands, and then later I would 'tread' them with my feet, to see if it was still soft or not. In that case it was a 'test'.

This summer they rebuilt one of the arterials next to my work. Part of the process was to 'press' the newly poured and spread gravel, prior to re-paving. They had their big heavy rollers that also had a shaking mechanism. Sometimes the shaking was so great, in our buildings it was like an earthquake, and objects would slide around on shelves. Pressed down and shaken so it won't sink later and create early potholes. If there are any "high places" they get squished down level with the rest.

When a farmer builds a fence with wood posts, the dirt is poured in, and 'tamped'. In other words, the dirt gets 'pounded' to compress it, to make the post stand firmly.

This is what God is coming down to do. He's coming to do some 'pounding' and 'stomping'. There's a lot of pride rebelling away from God, and they worship at the "high places"; they need to come down. Micah's contemporary Isaiah says,

"Thus I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall move out of its place, in the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger." (Is13:13)

"For thus says Jehovah of Hosts: Yet once more (it is a little while), and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all the nations; and the desire of all nations shall come. And I will fill this house with glory, says Jehovah of Hosts." (Hag2:6-7)

"And the mountains shall melt under Him, and the valleys shall burst open, as wax before the fire, as waters poured out on a steep place" (vs4)

THE VERDICT:

Why? Why this -global- judgment?

"All this is against the transgression of Jacob, and against the sins of the house of Israel" (vs5a)

If you recall the series "Covenants & Dispensations" to the section "Wrath" [link #2] the comment is made: "This period of "wrath" is designed specifically around Israel" It is also called, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer30:7a)

Yes, God's judgments are against the whole world for their sins. But most specifically due to the "transgression of Jacob". When God uses the name "Jacob" prophetically, it usually is addressed to 'rebellious' Israel. Jacob was the one who lied and supplanted his brother Esau and stole his blessing, made deals with God, and spent a good deal of his life whining about how rough things were...which, in many cases, were of his own making.

The two kingdoms are indicated by their capitols, Samaria and Jerusalem. What did Samaria do under its first king, Jeroboam? In order to keep his subjects from worshipping God (at Jerusalem where God had commanded), with the potential that he would lose his kingdom fearing they would revert their allegiance back to Jerusalem, he set up some golden calves. Baal worship. And throughout the northern kingdom's history, the judgment of their kings was (continually) that they followed in the idolatry of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat". (1Ki16:26, 22:52, 2Ki3:3, etc)

And as we look at Judah, its downfall was the same. Not only did Jeroboam lead Israel astray; but their idolatry seeped into Judah, as well. Judah, at least, had a few good kings, like Hezekiah, Josiah, etc.

But the blame is not solely Jeroboam's. Paul tells us that even though God brought -all- of Israel out of Egypt, most of them died in the wilderness (1Co10:5); due to unbelief. (Heb3:19) Joshua exhorts Israel to "put away the gods which your fathers have served" (Josh24:14); even as they are having military victories and taking conquest of the land. This idolatry even went back to Jacob's wife, Rachel. (Gen31) The book of Judges is all about Israel continually falling away to idolatry, God sending enemies to discipline them, and then raising up judges to deliver them; over and over. And even Solomon, the one whom God "loved" (2Sa12:24), married many pagan wives who turned away his heart from God. (1Ki11:1-2) David was of a perfect heart before God, but due to all his bloodshed of battle (2Sa7) it was Solomon who built the temple. But even in that, Israel's heyday was marred, even in the building of the temple, with the pagan pillars Solomon erected in front of the temple (1Ki7:21); something God had commanded Israel NOT to do:

"You shall not set up a sacred pillar, which Jehovah your God hates."
(De16:22)

For Solomon to erect those two pillars was every bit the same as when today's churches build buildings and erect the pagan cross in front or on top. Both those pillars and the cross were/are pagan symbols. Solomon did it to the first temple, and today's leaders do it to the church buildings. The "high places". Jerusalem the -ultimate- "high place" before God. The "church" did not yet exist when Micah was writing. If it had, do you suppose God might have included the [c]hurch in this prophecy? Well, this prophecy is to Israel (Samaria and Jerusalem vs1); but does not the church bear a distinct burden of culpability today? Thus, as God is "coming out of His place" for judgment, is not some of the cause also laid at the feet of today's so-called [c]hurch?

You see, like we introduced: We've got the past explanations from Jacob and Rachel, but then Solomon and Jeroboam. There is that 'current' generation as Micah is proclaiming as "they have gone...into exile" (vs16b) But seeing as how God's "treading" is yet future (as we can read from

Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, Revelation, etc), do we see the Past-Present-Future aspects of this passage?

Israel, the northern tribes (Samaria vs6), were taken captive because,

"..her wounds are incurable..." (vs9a)

But judgment was also extending to the southern kingdom,

"..for it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem" (vs9b)

And a hundred years later Judah will also go into exile to Babylon. After so many times of backsliding then revival, over and over, and finally apostasy with refusal to repent ("we will prepare and do" to worship the queen of heaven Jer44:17), it finally comes to a point where God says: That's it! Enough of that! This is more than I'm going to put up with. (as we will see in the next chapter/s) This is an 'incurable' sore; it needs to be cut out!

FUTURE HOPE:

But like those pieces of the puzzle on the table, here's a little piece wedged in-amongst the rest:

"Yet I will bring an heir to you, O inhabitant of Mareshah. The glory of Israel shall come unto Adullam" (vs15)

If you have read throughout the OT prophets, you will see this repeated at every turn. Due to Israel's idolatry [worshiping other than the Most High, breaking the very first Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (ex20:3); which they began nationally, immediately with Aaron and the golden calf even -while- God was giving the Law to Moses (Ex32)] God promises retribution and wrath. But in-amongst all the words of wrath and condemnation, the little glimmer of 'promise' of Redemption. When Adam and Eve sinned it was the "Seed" of the woman. (Gen3:15) As Paul speaks of how Israel has been temporarily cut away until the "fullness of the gentiles" has been collected, he also includes:

"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;" (Rom11:26)

Before Jesus came, the promises were always about the as-yet unborn "Seed" (Gen22:18, Is9:7, Jn7:42): the "Son of David" (Mt1:1,9:27,etc)

God's judgment will be against the whole world. Perhaps in reading this some would be tempted to "blame Israel" yet again? It's -always- Israel's 'fault'! But let's never forget that "all the world" is "guilty before God"

(Rom3:19); that there is "none righteous" (Rom3:10), and "there is no one who does good" (Ps14:3)

True, the world's judgment might be tailored around Israel, but each one is judged for their own sin. (De24:16)

And the "wages of sin is death (promised judgment), but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord (hope of Salvation)" (Rom6:23)

So, even though God's wrath will be poured out such that there is no other time in history like it: "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it...Jacob's trouble" even so the promise is tucked in there, next to all those other puzzle pieces:

"...but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer30:7)

Link #1: www.a-voice.org/library/timeline.htm

Link #2: www.a-voice.org/library/covenant.htm#wrath

Ahab's Legacy (Micah 2)

"Woe to those who devise wickedness and do evil on their beds! In the morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet and seize fields and houses, and carry them away. And they oppress a man and his household, even a man and his inheritance." (vs1-2)

What does it mean to "devise" something? First definition in the dictionary: "To form, plan, or arrange in the mind; design or contrive" Further, the word "contrive" includes: Cleverness, ingenuity, fabricate, scheme, plot. This last bit includes the flavor of 'dishonesty' and subterfuge.

In reading these two verses did you recognize the story of Ahab, Naboth and Jezebel? (1Ki21) If you're not familiar, please take a moment to read it.

But let's back up a minute, first. Ahab was known as a wicked king. In the OT people were called by their own name -and- the name of their father. David is often referred to as the "son of Jesse". Ahab was the son of Omri, and followed in his father's footsteps. Apparently his father was wicked enough that Micah speaks of the "statutes of Omri" (6:16)

Omri started out as a military leader, the king was deposed, and after some political struggles, eventually became sole king of (northern) Israel. And it says of him, "And Omri did evil in the eyes of Jehovah, and did worse than all who were before him;" (1Ki16:25) He also continued in the "ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (vs26); remember? The golden calves.

So, with such an evil king, his son Ahab comes along, and is even more evil, still. It says...

"And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the eyes of Jehovah, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and bowed down to him. And he set up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove. Ahab did more to provoke Jehovah the God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." (1Ki16:30-33)

Ahab and Jezebel. Likely the time of the epitomy of evil in (northern) Israel. When people get married, they tend to -become- 'like' each other. Solomon's many pagan wives (it says) 'thrust' away his heart from God. (1Ki11:3-4) If a Believer willfully marries an unequal yoke, even if unwittingly, the unbeliever drags the Believer away from God. (Ask me how I know!!) The unbeliever's sin and wickedness rubs off onto the

Believer. (Again: said from experience!!) In my case the Lord's mercy eventually removed the evil out of my life; even though I had failed, He knew my heart.

But Ahab (an evil person, carrying on his father's traditions), married Jezebel (a pagan princess/goddess). According to Baal worship, much having to do with worship included fertility rituals. Temple prostitution and whoredom was the norm. Remember the incident where it says Jezebel put "paint" on her eyes. (2Ki9:30) She was the "Tammi Faye" of the day! But unlike Tammi Faye, in today's vernacular, Jezebel was likely "one hot babe". According to Baal worship, who knows how many other men she was with, besides her husband! She is so much the epitome of evil, that she is also referenced generically/prophetically:

"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and lead astray My servants to prostitute themselves to sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual perversion, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction, unless they repent of their deeds." (Rev2:20-22)

Thus, do we understand the opening "woe"? They devise to do wickedness "on their beds...in the morning light". They don't even bother to hide the debauchery. They do it out in the light-of-day. It is "in the power of their hand". Being king and queen, who was going to drag them before the priests to condemn them to stoning? Even when Elijah presided over the victory over the prophets of Baal, God sent His fire down to consume the altar, and Elijah had the prophets of Baal killed; ultimately it was Jezebel's "power of her hand" that issued the warrant to have Elijah killed, whereupon he flees for his life and God preserves him.

And then we get to the Naboth story. Naboth has this piece of land next to Abah's, and Ahab wants it. But in obedience to God's law about the right of property ownership and inheritances, he refuses to sell it to Ahab; whereupon Ahab goes into a pout. Jezebel, being the "you go girl" sort of female she was, "devises and contrives" with evil plotting and scheming, to have Naboth falsely accused of some trumped up charges of treachery, has him off'd, and then promenades in to Ahab: Stop your whining! The property is now 'yours'! I got it for you!

Possibly the first recorded case of "eminent domain". And from what I read of many cases, today's circumstances are often not a whole lot better than what Naboth was offered.

So as Ahab goes to inspect what Jezebel has connived to get for him, Elijah has been sent by God to confront his evil.

"Thus says Jehovah: Have you murdered and also taken possession? And you shall speak to him, saying, Thus says Jehovah: In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours. So Ahab said to Elijah, Have you found me, O my enemy? And he answered, I have found you, because you have -SOLD- YOURSELF to do evil in the eyes of Jehovah:" (1Ki21:19-20)

The verdict upon Israel was the same:

"And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced divination of witchcraft and fortunetelling, and -SOLD-THEMSELVES TO DO EVIL in the eyes of Jehovah, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them away from before His face; there was no one left but only the tribe of Judah." (2Ki17:17-18)

Not only did they 'sell' themselves to evil; they did not go, dragging their heels, unwillingly; having sold themselves because they had no other choice. No!

They "-REJOICE- TO DO EVIL, and -DELIGHT- IN THE PERVERSITIES OF THE WICKED, whose paths are crooked, who are devious in their tracks;" (Pr2:14-15)

Well... God responds in kind.

"..with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the crooked You will show Yourself twisted. For You will save the lowly people, but will bring down lofty looks." (Ps18:26-27, 2Sa22:27-28)

Ahab, through Jezebel, "devised" evil? God promises...

"Therefore thus says Jehovah: Behold, I am -DEVISING- evil against this family, from which you shall not remove your necks; nor shall you walk haughtily, for this is an evil time." (vs3)

So, it eventually becomes 'time' to have Ahab "off'd". It is going to happen in battle. But how to persuade Ahab to go into battle? One of the evil spirits before God's throne suggests "lying" to Ahab through the mouth of his prophets. What a concept! A -lying- prophet? Naw, couldn't be! But the king from Judah who is foolishly joining forces with Ahab knows they are lying, and asks if there isn't a prophet of God. So Micaiah is summoned...

"And the messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah spoke to him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets with one mouth are agreeable to the king. Please, LET YOUR WORD BE LIKE THE WORD OF ONE OF THEM, and SPEAK PLEASANT THINGS. And Micaiah said, As Jehovah lives, whatever Jehovah says to me, that I will speak." (1Ki22:13-14)

The verdict to the rest of Israel is the same.

"Do not prophesy as you prophesy, you say. So they shall not prophesy to you; they shall not take away reproaches" (vs6)

Is that not the same verdict today?

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own lusts, desiring to hear pleasant things, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to myths." (2Ti4:3-4)

And notice Micah's wording on the next point:

"You WHO ARE NAMED House of Jacob, is the Spirit of Jehovah limited? Are these His doings? Do not My Words do good to the one who walks uprightly?" (vs7)

Do we not regularly speak of the "so-called" church! We often speak of how not all [c]hurches are part of the [C]hurch of Jesus Christ. Not all [c]hristians are [C]hristians. And Paul said it of Israel, "For not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b)

In other words, just because they live in Israel, adhere to Judaism, follow the great rabbis, carry around their Simchat Torah; that doesn't mean they are Israel of the "faith of Abraham" (Rom4:16)

Paul also speaks of the wickedness of, and separation from the one "NAMED a brother" (1Co5:11)

Jeremiah chides Israel who was going into the -building-, after committing all sorts of wickedness, and then "come and stand before Me in this -house- which is CALLED BY MY NAME"... It's "OK" for us to do all these abominable things. (Jer7:10)

You see...what we do here from these pages is no different from what God's prophets did before Israel.

Today's so-called 'church' is EVERY BIT LIKE ISRAEL was during Ahab and Jezebel's day! In fact, Ahab was so wicked, and his evil so historic, that 200 years later -as- Israel was being carried away to Assyria, Micah was -still- using his example. Israel of Micah's days was the same as during Ahab's day. That's why God was judging them.

And the so-called 'church' today is just like Jezebel. The ones calling to the pastors and prophets are chiding God's servants like Micaiah: Go easy. Don't give us any "hate speech". Speak "pleasant things" to us. Don't tell us we are sinning and deserving of judgment; and need to repent. We like the sensuous slitherings of our impudent "hot babes" who fulfill our lustful

desires. Don't be so judgmental. Join us in our gray areas. Agree to disagree...agreeably. Let's agree on the essentials; and tear down the doctrinal walls of the rest of all those 'nonessentials'.

And so today's prophets do like they did in Micah's day...

"If a man walks with a spirit of deception and lies saying, I will prophesy to you for wine and for strong drink, he shall even be a prophet for his people" (vs11)

(Northern) Israel did not have the tribe of Levi. Levi stayed in Judah, at Jerusalem, with the temple service. So Jeroboam made priests out of the common folk. (1Ki12:31)

All a person has to do is to "prophesy lies in My name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (Jer23:25); and then they get on TV and proclaim a message of "planting seeds" (to this ministry); or "bring your tithe into the storehouse" (ours) and I'll pray some "blessings" for you. Now, watch me scrunch up my face, squint my eyes real hard, make some hand gestures... Perhaps I'll slap somebody upside the head, kick them in the stomach (because God 'told' me to), grab the frail leg of an old lady and pound it on the platform. See? I'm a prophet! And today's false prophets fly around in private jets, have a multitude of mansions, fame and notoriety.

But of Jesus: "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Mt8:20)

And Jesus said: "Remember the Word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master." (Jn15:20a)

Last chapter we learned that "her wounds are incurable" (1:9), which was why God sent Israel into exile. To the church of Thyatira, for as much as we proclaim "repentance" but today's so-called "church" refuses, it says of Jezebel, "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual perversion, and SHE DID NOT REPENT" (Rev2:21) So if they are not repenting, THAT's IT!

When Micaiah gave his "hate speech", Ahab commanded him to be locked away in prison. (1Ki22:26-28) Ahab went to battle and was killed (vs34-35), according to God's Word through faithful Micaiah.

As Elijah was on the run from Jezebel, he bemoans, "I alone am left, and they seek my soul, to take it away" (1Ki19:10,14) God assures him that there are yet 7000 who have not bowed to Baal. (vs18) But among Israel's millions, what is 7000 amongst all them? Now during Micah's time, the nation is being carried into exile. There's nobody left. It's like a 'bald' head with no hair. (1:16)

But what did we see last chapter? The same promise here. When a rancher has gathered together all his cattle or sheep, and they are milling

about in the stockades and corrals, there are SO MANY of them together that they roam around, bleating, jostling against one another.

This is the promise to Israel, even though (now) in exile, with no hair on that bald head...

"I will collect and gather all of you, O Jacob; I will collect and gather the remnant of Israel. I will set them together like the sheep of the fold, like a flock in the middle of their pasture. They shall be in commotion because of the multitude of people." (vs12)

Rulers & Prophets_(Micah 3)

"And I said, Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel; is it not for you to know justice. You who hate good and love evil, who tear their skin off them, and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of My people, and flay their skin off from them; and they break their bones and chop them in pieces as for the pot, and as flesh in the kettle." (vs1-3)

Jeremiah in ch23 pronounces "woe" to the shepherds who "destroy and scatter" and "drive away" the sheep. Here, Micah is even going a step further. It's like we say frequently from these pages: Instead of 'feeding' the flock, pastors and preachers are 'fleecing' the flock. Instead of "giving them food in due season" (Mt24:45), today's so-called prophets have raise-a-thons: plant your seed (send us money), bring your increase into the storehouse (send us money). Micah pictures it even more graphically: Just come over here... Whack! Got your arm. C'mon, lie down... Slice! Just sliced off your flesh. Can you smell that? M'mmmm Good! My meal (just freshly butchered) is cooking in the pot! See all these sheep -I'VE- got? See -MY- big church? Look at -MY- grand ministry? I've got them trained well. I'm set for life. Not only is this a 'cushy' job, they also provide -ME- a great retirement program.

All I have to do is make everybody feel good, pump them up, charge them up and "call out, PEACE!" (vs5)

God accepts you "just as you are". God wants you to be wealthy and prosperous. (so you can give me a big chunk of your 'blessings'; your "seed" money)

God's blessings are upon us (me: because of your donations)! There's a sweet sweet spirit in this place! Tribulation? Shmibulation! Repentance? Shmepentance! P'shaw! Such vengeful doctrines of hate! We are not judgmental here. You don't have to worry about any sort of standards for getting into Heaven! Don't you know, we are building God's "kingdom" - here-... and when we have got things all setup, Jesus will come a join us in our muck! (oh... don't forget to send in your monthly contributions to further "the kingdom". The one -I'M- building... for myself) (vs11)

What's that? Do I hear a lone voice of dissent? WHAT??? Someone dares to challenge -MY- authority? Who said that? Come here! I have convened a council against you. I hear you are going around my back in subterfuge, trying to depose me from the pulpit? That you are not obeying the "chain of command". That you are criticizing God's "anointed"? (1Ti5:19) Don't you know that I have God's authority to "rule" over you? (1Ti5:17, Heb13:7,17,24 kjv)

Oh my, PB! You've just left off preachin' and gone to meddlin'! You better be careful, or God will "smite you down"!

Well... this is what Micah says.

"...they even prepare war against him" (vs5b)

And Micah does this because...

"But by the Spirit of Jehovah I am full of power and justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (vs8)

"Cry aloud, do not spare; lift up your voice like a shofar, and declare to My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins." (Is58:1)

MOMENT OF TRUTH:

These false prophets are NOT righteous! They are NOT good! They do NOT love you! They do NOT care about your eternal well-being!

They:

"hate good and love evil" (vs2)

"abhor justice and pervert all equity" (vs9)

Their works are "with iniquity" (vs10)

They take "bribes" (vs11)

Whereas, in the previous two chapters we saw how God will restore Israel "together like sheep of the fold" (2:12); there is no such promise here for the false prophets.

"Then they shall cry out to Jehovah, but He will not answer them. He will even hide His face from them at that time, because they have done evil in their doings" (vs4)

They will be:

--without vision (vs6)

--without divining (vs6)

--it will be dark for them (vs6)

--ashamed (vs7)

--confounded (vs7)

God will not answer them (vs7)

And because of the evil of the "heads" (leaders) (vs9)...

"Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house like the high places of the forest" (vs12)

All their evil, prideful, self-promoting works... DESTROYED!

Mountain of Jehovah (Micah 4)

"But it shall be in the latter days, that the mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established on the top of the mountains; and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For the Law shall go forth out of Zion, and the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." (vs1-2)

This word "but". What a wonderful word! A word of contrast. A word of distinction. Distinguishing what?

What have we been seeing? Those claiming to belong to God, rebelling against Him. Those in leadership condemned for feeding themselves, and not the sheep. Israel going into exile. And the shepherds and their works: destroyed. Israel's existence like the strands of hair on a bald head. (Don't you just love word pictures! 1:16)

But as we see the overall totality of human history (remember how we explained it in ch1?), at the very end things will be glorious. Micah is somewhat in the 'middle' of human history. But at the 'end'... That's what "latter" means. KJV says "last" days. Either one is correct. It's like the caboose. The engines are at the front, the train cars are in the middle, and at the end; the latter part of the train, the last car; that's what this chapter is about.

Jeremiah pronounces "woe" to the "shepherds who scatter and destroy the sheep of [God's] pasture" (Jer23:1) But even as that chapter denounces the false prophets, the promise is given:

"And I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them. And they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed; nor shall they be lacking, says Jehovah. Behold, the days are coming, says Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King who shall reign and act prudently, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth." (Jer23:4-5)

While the promises regarding Israel are that Israel will be restored and regathered, the same is not said of the false prophets. The "sons of Levi" need to be purified. (Mal3:3) But notice who is now in charge. Who is doing the teaching. "He" (Jehovah) "will teach us" (vs2) The "righteous Branch" the Son of David.

Jerusalem will once again be a place of glory. Notice that it says people will "flow" to Jerusalem. They will be streaming there to learn of God. And it doesn't sound like something God -forces- upon them. The "many nations" will decide amongst themselves, "Come, let us go..."

Jerusalem will finally be everything God had intended. We won't look up all the references now: But God had intended for Israel to be a light to the nations. Jerusalem was to represent God's glory to the peoples. But even as Solomon built that first glorious temple, its design began in compromise with his pagan pillars. When his wives thrust his heart away from God, the temple service became compromised. When the world saw Jerusalem they saw glory. But that glory was tarnished. Evil kings and false prophets did not present God's Holiness to the world. Why should they come to Jerusalem? It was compromised to be like their own pagan religions!

But in the coming kingdom things will be different. Even the horse bells will be labeled "Holy to Jehovah" (Zec14:20); the same thing that used to be on the high priest's crown (Ex28:36); but was desecrated.

The difference? Instead of some symbolic -man- being in charge, it will be Messiah, Himself. Notice that it is He (Jehovah) who is teaching; not the scribes. Rather than merely some great king, the people will...

"take hold and grasp the sleeve of a man who is a Jew, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that -GOD- is with you." (Zec8:23)

And He will "judge between many peoples, and will decide for strong nations afar off" (vs3)

"Of the increase of His government and peace upon the throne of David there will be no end; and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from now on, even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of Hosts will accomplish this." (Is9:7)

And so this, then, is where the swords are made into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks. There will not again be warfare. Nations will not again go against each other in combat.

While there are many today saying "peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jer6:14,8:11); and while such desires are certainly noble amongst the naive; those who today use such slogans use it to "devise" other agendas of global dominion. They seek to usurp for their own glory that which is not yet -the- time. Those presently in global power know that the naive will willingly accept what is presented as "peace". They think that by merely laying down one's own arms, and stopping making weapons, in and of itself will -cause- peace to flood the earth. Trouble is, those with evil intentions love to take advantage of the naive, take over their freedoms and subjugate them into servitude. There will not be peace as long as man is in charge. Peace will not happen until the final devastations have taken place: Armageddon in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. (Re16:16, Joel3) and Messiah comes as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev19)

But when Messiah is ruling, then there will be peace. Land owners will not need to worry about Ahab (Jezebel) coming along and exercising eminent domain.

"But they shall each one sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and there shall be no cause for trembling. For the mouth of Jehovah of Hosts (Heaven's armies) has spoken" (vs4)

"And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets." (Zec8:5)

The whole world is streaming to Jerusalem to learn God's Law. There is global peace; war has been eliminated. People live in their homes in peace and comfort. Everything is perfect. Right?

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be set loose out of his prison and will go out to lead astray the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." (Rev20:7-9)

If everybody is going to Jerusalem and fawning all over the Jews and their Messiah, how come satan will have anybody to follow him when he is loosed from the pit?

Remember that verse?

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer17:9)

Today's so-called "christian" psychology, based on the rantings of John Bradshaw and others, suggests that the only reason there is "sin", is because baby didn't get his desires fulfilled, and squawled to get his way. (Well, that's not quite the way they say it, but is this not truth!) If only, at the moment of birth, babies could be whisked away into an idyllic "Eden" with no adult supervision, and just allowed to grow up ON THEIR OWN, discover their own way, things would be perfect.

HELLO!!! Isn't that what God did in Eden with Adam and Eve?

Well, man now has thousands of years of getting it wrong. So now, if only Jesus Himself would be in charge. After all those years of failure, humanity has "learned its lesson", and will "be good from now on", if only Jesus Himself is guiding us, and satan is locked away.

Precisely! That's what Micah ch4 is about. Answering that as-yet unasked question. War has been eliminated. According to Isaiah, etc, aging is a

thing of the past, people are living to ripe old ages again. Diseases are being cured. (Re22:2, Ezk47:12)

So, where does satan come up with his followers again?

"For all the peoples walk, EACH ONE IN THE NAME OF HIS GOD; but we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God forever and ever" (vs5)

For -ALL- that history has taught mankind, and now the King of kings, Himself, is ruling...people will -STILL- be worshipping their idols! Incredible!

That excuse is just that, an excuse: "The devil made me do it". Satan will be nowhere to be seen or felt, mankind sees God's goodness transforming the face of the earth back into beneficence, and -YET- will reject the Most High, and chase after their vanities.

WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO OUR PRESENT (Micah's time) REALITY:

This is what Israel has been doing, chasing vain idols, and is going into exile. So for now...

"Writhe in pain and bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like one giving birth. For now you shall go out from the city, and you shall live in the field. And you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be delivered. There Jehovah shall redeem you from the hand of your enemies" (vs10)

Notice again: both the pains of the present reality, mixed with the promise of future deliverance.

But God's global purpose is also manifest. The time of "Wrath" is designed around Israel, but it is for the whole world. The nations think they are surrounding Israel, to push her "into the sea". Let's sit around and make Israel suffer, watch it, and enjoy it (sending candies to each other).

"But they do not know the purposes of Jehovah, nor do they understand His counsel. For He will gather them like the sheaves to the threshing floor" (vs12)

Remember how we observed that God is coming out of His place to "tread" (1:3) In olden times, before harvesting machines, they would put the sheaves of grain on the threshing floor and tread it, stomp it, have oxen walk over it, flail it with threshing instruments.

Israel may have been in disobedience. But as God redeems them, He is also going to use them as His threshing machine.

"Rise up and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hooves bronze, and you shall crush many peoples" (vs13a)

Not only will there be 'threshing'. But once the threshing is finished, they often burn the stubble that remains:

"And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble. And they shall burn among them and consume them. And there shall be no survivor to the house of Esau, for Jehovah has spoken." (Ob1:18)

"And I will consecrate their gain to Jehovah, and their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth" (vs13b)

Messiah (Micah 5)

"Now gather yourself together in troops, O daughter of troops; he has laid siege against us. They shall strike the Judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek. And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are insignificant among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." (vs1-2)

This passage is likely one of -the- most famous and well-known in terms of the coming of Messiah. It is the passage the priests and scribes gave to Herod when the wise men came looking for the recently born Jesus. (Mt2:6) And as we get into the rest of the chapter we understand how the Jews of Jesus' day were looking for a Messiah to 'deliver' them from Roman occupation. Today, I suspect, there are likely Jews who dream of total deliverance from the occupation of the Arab and other Islamic terrorists who continue bombing, stoning, shooting, vandalizing Israelis and their property. And for that matter, as long as Rome has its 'churches' in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and the US is busy sticking its nose into their affairs, in truth they are still under "Roman occupation". And the Temple Mount is under occupation of Islam. And even as Jesus was ascending back to the Father, the disciples ask Jesus about "restoring the kingdom" (Ac1:6) This is what is in the heart of every Jew, the total restoration of the kingdom of David, to the glory of the days of Solomon.

But, what's this bit about "strike the Judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek"?

"And when they had woven a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spat on Him, and took the reed (rod) and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him." (Mt27:29-31)

Just as they also did not understand that other prophecy:

"He is despised and rejected by men; a Man of pain, and knowing infirmity; a hiding of faces; being despised, we have esteemed Him not. Truly He has borne our sicknesses, and carried our pain; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Is53:3-5)

The way the Jews ignore "this man" today is by, simply, not reading that chapter from Isaiah. In their minds it is like a "banned" chapter. When Jesus came to "take away the sin of the world" (Jn1:29), they rejected

Him. Back then they seemed to be blind to the prophecies of Messiah's work of Salvation, and as Paul says...

"But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart." (2Co3:15)

But just as Isaiah ch61 is in 'parts', so is this chapter. Messiah would come once for the Salvation of the "acceptable year of Jehovah" (Is61:2a), and then later for the "vengeance of our God" (Is61:2b), and then to "comfort all who mourn" (Is61:2c)

Israel looked for a Messiah who would give them a once-for-all victory over their enemies. Someone like Saul and David to go and "fight our battles" (1Sa8:20) But, as we have seen in the previous chapters, they were so steeped in idolatry, they did not see the need, nor recognize the passages indicating Messiah's suffering. I wonder -what- they thought it meant, that He would be struck "with a rod on the cheek"? It's such a short little statement. Did they ignore it?

But they fulfilled it by doing' it to Him. And so, perhaps that's why this passage goes on worded as it is...?

"-THEREFORE- He will give them up until the time the one giving birth has given birth. Then the remnant of His brothers shall return to the sons of Israel" (vs3)

As Christians we see vs2 as a wonderful verse -about- 'christ'mass, as we see the little -baby- in the manger, sing little cooing songs about "Sweet little Jesus Boy...lying in a manger" as people (those who still do it) decorate up their environs with pagan winter solstice fertility symbols with green (fir tree) and red (fertility). And if, amongst the celebrations, this verse happens to come to mind, the hearts go all aflutter... Isn't it so preee-sshuss!

But folks, this passage is about judgment and restoration.

"Therefore He will give them up..." God's wrath is "revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness" and as a result God "gives them up to..." all their sin and debauchery. (Rom1:18,24,26, etc)

And this is what He has done with Israel. He has "given them up" to their idolatry, and scattered them throughout the earth. They are...

"...among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples as dew from Jehovah..." (vs7-8)

They are given up -UNTIL- "the time" (vs3) the one "giving birth" (4:10) has given birth. Israel going into exile was a painful process, and the yet-future

redemption will also be "troublesome" (Jer30:7) like giving birth. But the ultimate outcome is then to fulfill God's "purposes" (4:12)

"Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion had gone into labor, she had brought forth her children." (Is66:8)

And what is God's purpose?

It will be the "sound of Jehovah repaying His enemies" (Is66:6) (Recommended for the reader to read the entire chapter of Isaiah 66)

Messiah was not -born- in Bethlehem. Well, certainly His incarnation was born there. But that was not His origins. Jesus explains, "Before Abraham came to be, I AM" (Jn8:58) His "goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity" (vs2)

Many passages (and we won't look them up now, you can do so if you wish) speak of old things as being 'ancient', from the days of "antiquity". But Messiah doesn't even 'originate' from antiquity.

"From everlasting to everlating You are the Mighty God" (Ps90:2)

The very definition of "eternity". Everlasting, history past; to Everlasting, prophecy future. No beginning, no end; after the "order of Melchizedek" (Heb6:20,7:3) That is the nature of Messiah.

Another example of how the NIV robs Messiah of His deity, by saying "from ancient times" Even the NASB gets this one right. No, Messiah is not the "old man" (upstairs)! He is ETERNAL. He is not "old"; He is timeless. (whatever that means in our finite minds! Perhaps we should be saying ALL-time? He encompasses it all!)

Messiah will "stand and feed His flock" (vs4) Unlike the false prophets who "chop" up the sheep for their evening stew (3:3), Messiah has "given" His life for the sheep (Jn10:15), and now when the birth has been accomplished, Israel having been re-born...

THIS SHALL BE PEACE: (vs5)

Assyria is going to again come into the land, as prophesied, for 42 months. (Re11:2) But then "seven shepherds and eight anointed men" will be raised up. Who are these? I don't know. But under the leadership of these 15 Assyria and the "gates of Nimrod" will be laid waste.

Remember the "explanations" from ch1, how nothing in history is totally disjunct from the rest of history. We haven't heard the name "Nimrod" since Genesis. Revelation speaks of Babylon the Great. Well, Nimrod was at the very beginning of that legacy. God is not merely judging the 'present'

(in that day), but He is judging the WHOLE WORKS; that which began it, that which continued and perpetuated it, and that which ends it. It's all one historic 'whole'. (Recommended: to re-read "Wrath" from the Covenants/Dispensations series [link #2])

And: God is also using Israel as part of the instrument of that judgment. I don't know quite, in practical terms, what it means, that Israel is throughout the world "like a lion among the flocks" (vs8) The way this is written, it would almost seem like a pre-ordained, pre-planned 'strategy', much as one force might 'embed' its special-ops in-amongst the enemy, so that at the time of battle, they rise up out from the middle of the enemy, to effect their decimation from 'behind the lines'. After all: what is the totality of the "purposes of Jehovah" as Israel is commanded to "rise up and thresh"? (4:12-13) Israel's exile was in judgment. But in the way that God causes "all things to work together for good...to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom8:28) was their exile -also- God's pre-planning to "embed" His people amongst the enemy for That Day? Hiding them "in plain sight"? Like in battle, the pre-arranged signal is given, and those embedded inside the enemy, "rise up and thresh"! Wherever you are, start 'stomping' and crush the enemy! ??

And so naturally, it is time to leave off preachin', and do some meddlin' here a moment. It is a wonderful thing, that God has brought Israel back to their land as a nation, as we see today. God has blessed them, even though they are still in unbelief; they worship Judaism and Kabala, not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They observe their Simchat Torah celebrations, but do not obey God's Word written therein.

For as many Jews as live in Israel, there are yet more still living throughout the rest of the world, who have not participated in Aliyah (return to the land). There are some (I suspect: well-intentioned) who have 'ministries' to persuade and help world Jewry return to the land. In some of those cases (that I know about) they also have some very messed up doctrines about various things. When I would read their writings, my spirit never quite set right with their emphatic -push- to get -ALL- JEWS to return to the land "NOW". Almost as though, God's blessing and restoration of Israel would not happen until all Jews are in the land. With the same fervor that others believe restoration won't happen until in obedience they build the (physical) temple. As though God is waiting for -them- to build the temple, or return all the people home, and -then- God will step in and work.

As I have read the vehemence with which they want to bring ALL JEWS HOME, -NOW-...for "preservation"...my mind always goes to Zec13:8-9. In seeking to bring ALL JEWS HOME, they are actually setting up so that more Jews might be killed during Jacob's Trouble. The more that are in the land, the more get killed. But Isaiah ch66 is an account of God bringing Israel back to the land -after- the Trouble (vs19-21, 49:22-23)

So... is God 'protecting' Israel by hiding them amongst the nations, as well as the aforementioned 'strategy' for that final conflict?

Thus... to suggest that, in some cases, it could be 'wrong' for Jews to be encouraged to make Aliyah...AT THIS TIME? Perhaps?

TWO THINGS ARE SURE when Messiah comes:

Idolatry will be removed from Israel (that was the whole point initially)...

"And I will cut off sorceries out of your hand, and there shall not be any more conjurers. And I will also cut off your graven images and your pillars from your midst. And you shall no more bow down to the work of your hands. And I will pluck your groves from your midst..." (vs12-14)

"And it shall be in that day, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no longer be remembered, says Jehovah of Hosts. And I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." (Zec13:2)

The nations will be thoroughly judged...

"And I will execute vengeance in anger and in fury on the nations, such as they have not heard." (vs15)

"And I am exceedingly angry at the nations at ease; for I was but a little angry (with Israel), and they helped further the evil" (Zec1:15)

the Argument (Micah 6)

"Hear now what Jehovah says: Rise up, contend with the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Mountains, and you enduring foundations of the earth, hear the contention of Jehovah, for Jehovah has a quarrel with His people, and He will argue with Israel. O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I made you weary? Testify against Me." (vs1-3)

Again, like from Isaiah:

"Present your case, says Jehovah; approach to argue your defense, says the King of Jacob. Let them approach, and confess to us what shall happen; let them disclose the former things, what they are, that we may determine a finding and know the final outcome; or proclaim to us things to come. Make known the things to come after this, so that we may know that you are gods. Yes, do good, or do evil, so that we may anxiously watch it together." (Is41:21-23)

In today's vernacular when friends become estranged, or become enemies: What did I ever do to you??? ...that you are treating me this way?

Since Israel isn't bringing their case, here God lays out His case:

--I delivered you out of Egypt, from cruel bondage where you had been crying out to Me because of the oppression of the taskmasters, and gave you freedom. (vs4) Was that wrong?

--Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam to curse you. I turned the curse into blessing, and destroyed them. (vs5) Through that whole episode, God's righteousness was manifest, when God judged the whoredom of Baal Peor (Num25)

--Is it all the laws regarding animal sacrifices that is the issue? (vs6-7) Is it the killing of animals that is at stake? If we do enough killing, will that please God? To show how much we 'mean' it, shall we kill our babies on the altars, after the manner of the pagans?

What is it that God wants from man? What is pleasing to the Most High? Ritual? Go to church, read my Bible, pray, witness to so-many people, deprive myself of some pleasure in order to make my life austere?

"What does Jehovah require of you, but to DO JUSTICE, and to LOVE MERCY, and to WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD" (vs8)

It is not the circumcision of the flesh, but...

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom2:28-29)

As God's children He says to us...

"My son, give Me your heart, and let your eyes take pleasure in observing My ways." (Pr23:26)

God continues His arguments:

--Did God establish the short ephah? Did God establish assorted weights and measures? (vs10-11) Should God declare to be "good" the means by which people cheat each other? When God commanded...

"You shall have just scales, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt;" (Le19:36)

"You shall have perfect and just weight stones, a perfect and just ephah; that your days may be prolonged in the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you." (De25:15)

...is He now supposed to go back on His Just Law and declare their theft to be "OK"? Depriving and oppressing the poor is now permitted?

"Shall I declare to be pure the wicked balances, or the bag of deceitful weight stones?" (vs11)

And God enumerates the various ways in which He will now allow the rich of Israel to be oppressed. He is going to bring on sickness (vs13), lack of sufficient to eat (vs14), and failed crops. (vs15) The conditions they brought upon the poor will now be upon them.

A man who does wickedly, his works are characterized by:

Being a "...robber or who sheds blood, who does any of these things, and does none of those duties, but has eaten on the mountains or defiled his neighbor's wife; if he has oppressed the poor and needy, plundered by robbery, not restored the pledge, has lifted his eyes to the idols, or committed abomination; if he has exacted usury or taken increase; shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, he shall die the death; his blood shall be upon him." (Ezk18:10-13)

Recommended: to read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 18. If you will, a continuation of this 'argument' from God to Israel.

Remember Ahab's legacy? Ahab and Naboth's land which he stole. Israel's leaders were corrupt; the people followed in kind; so now they receive "reproach". Period. (vs16)

Prophet's Perspective (Micah 7)

"Woe is me! For I am like the gatherings of summer fruit, like the gleanings of the vintage. There is no cluster to eat; my soul desires the first-ripe fruit." (vs1)

When God's prophet is faithful to God's hard-hitting message, it is not without trauma and sorrow for the prophet. Jeremiah was put in a pit and prison, and bewailed that his mother had even given birth to him. (Jer15:10) Ezekiel was not allowed to publicly mourn the death of his wife. (Ezk24:16-18) Elijah was on the run from Jezebel. If we continued, this list could be a lengthy one.

When the man of God ministers God's Word, it is 'draining' to the prophet. It used to be said that a preacher, preaching God's Word on a typical Sunday morning from the pulpit, the energy drain of that half-hour sermon was equivalent to any other normal 8-hour job. From personal experience I think it might really be more like a 10-12 hour shift. An evangelist speaking before thousands of people, with the energy and force that is done, is even more. And then consider somebody like Elijah before those 400 prophets of Baal and all that happened that day, and then he is suddenly on the run for-his-life! Gets to the cave after several days of travel. His 'pantings' are to be understood: I alone am left, and they seek to kill me, too.

Not only is there a physical drain, there is also emotional energy. The spiritual intensity, working upon a person of flesh and blood, takes 'it' out of the prophet. In a very real sense, as Jesus spoke of the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep (Jn10:11), there is an aspect where God's faithful prophet, when fully giving of self to the ministry of God's Word, a bit of that prophet's soul is given. In a very real sense, bit-by-bit, the prophet gives his life for the proclamation of God's Word. It is very much as Jesus said, about "taking up the cross" to follow Him. Paul said, "I die throughout the day" (1Co15:31)

If you are blessed to have a congregation where you fellowship, and your group has a truly Godly man as pastor who faithfully proclaims the Word... do not begrudge him his Monday "day-off". He -needs- it!

In addition, the prophet does not give his soul just in preaching, but also in preparing. For preachers today we have the written Scriptures to study, as the Holy Spirit puts together outlines and the words of written narratives.

In addition, when proclaiming against evil, the Lord often 'shows' the prophet the evil about which he is proclaiming. Ezekiel was given visions of what Israel's leaders were doing with their idolatry:

"Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again and you will see greater abominations than these" (Ezk8:15) (Recommended: to read that entire chapter)

Thus, Micah observes "the good man has perished from the earth...both hands are on evil, TO DO IT WELL" And the various ones doing evil work in harmony with each other, the ruler bribing the judge, to look the other way, as "they weave it together" (vs2-3) In other words, it is not that people don't know any better, or that they "Oops!" slipped and made a 'mistake'. They -know- what they are doing, they -purpose- it, and put everything they have into it. It's like the person I've mentioned on another occasion who didn't -want- to "do the right thing", also has this bumper sticker on her car, "Life is Short -- Break some rules"

How does a prophet speak with full conviction against wickedness, unless he -knows- the wickedness about which he proclaims, and loathes it just as much as God does? But as the (righteous) prophet is exposed to all that wickedness, his own heart being tuned to seeking after God's holiness and righteousness, it becomes a -burden-. It's like a policeman I chatted with one time, who used to be in the child-abuse department; after awhile it was more than he could take...ALL THAT EVIL...that is done to kids! So he now works a different department. God's prophet does not have the luxury to 'switch' assignments. And so the evil drags him down. And Micah wails, "Woe is me!" I'm all drained out! I...just...CAN'T...go anymore! As Paul also was, "burdened exceedingly, beyond strength, so that [they] despaired even of life" (2Co1:8)

The 'best' of the evil ones are like a thorn bush. And put them all together, it's like the whole world is like a "hedge of thorns". But they will receive their punishment. (vs4)

FAMILY ISSUES:

The prophet will also often have family issues. Remember how Jesus said,

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Mt10:34-37)

You see, Jesus might have been quoting vs6 here. Many are the jokes about "in-laws". There are the Ramone's where Marie is always interfering into Ray and Deb's life, and acting as if she is doing them continual 'favors'; driving them to insanity.

But Micah also speaks to the prophet about his wife:

"Put no faith in a companion; put no trust in a friend; keep the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom" (vs5)

The companion and friend? That's easy to see. Like that old saying: How can you be sure two people will keep a secret? If one of them is dead.

But one's own spouse? There was a time years ago I would have use a big "?" question mark. Now, my agreement with Micah is with an "!" exclamation point.

Just because you marry somebody in the church, doesn't mean they know the Lord. Even if they are the daughter of one of the church elders, her claims to being a "Christian" might be false. And if you eventually figure it out, that she does not know the Lord, you do not divorce her; although she might divorce you. (1Co7) In Micah's day most marriages were arranged by the parents, so there was always the probability that Believers were regularly unequally yoked to unbelievers. Joseph and Moses were given pagan wives. Hosea was even commanded by God to marry a hussy.

For a minister to -be- married to an unbeliever might not be sin. Although, he might have sinned when he married her, if it was his choice. If it was, he will "bear the indignation of Jehovah...until He pleads my case and executes justice for me". And I understand when Micah says, "He will bring me forth to the light; I shall see His righteousness" (vs9)

But this passage is a case-in-point for the comment I have made on several other occasions. MAN-OF-GOD: if God called 'you' to service, He called 'you'... not your wife. God's call upon your ministry is not predicated, nor do you make plans, based on "pillow talk" (the passage says "lies in your bosom"; same thing). Your topics for pillow talk may cover many vast array of topics... BUT NOT your message from God. NOTE THIS WELL! That is between you and God. It is God's message -to- 'you'. You do not "run-it-by" your wife, for her 'approval', or whatever else.

In today's climate where it seems everybody is a ministry "team", and where the world at large promotes the militance of the feminist agenda, this may be a tough pill to swallow. Churches usually call pastors (and their wives).

Besides: LOVE IS BLIND! As this is being written (recently) there was one of these prime time news hour "who-done-it" stories. To make a long story short, the law, after several years, finally caught up with a couple who had murdered a fellow in Alaska. The female was now married to a doctor in the Seattle area. The doctor totally baffled by the murder conviction of his wife; who was now living an upstanding life, and involved in all sorts of charities, etc.etc. After the verdict was handed down, the doctor was militant about how his wife "just couldn't be guilty"; and he was going to raise up a defense case to appeal. He was BLIND to his wife's true nature. Previously she had been a stripper, with everything that goes with that life.

And for anybody who is an observer of people, it was obvious that she was SOME PIECE OF WORK. But her present husband is blind. 'Can't really blame him; he -loves- her!

Now...just supposing, for the sake of argument, that such a female managed to get married to a man whom God called to prophesy His Word? Does the man confide God's Word to -such- a woman during pillow talk? Does he place her up on the platform as part of his "team"? The man might think he married a "sweet thing", but what was her past, that she is cleverly concealing from him? And let me tell you: you can be married to somebody for many years and not know certain things.

And yes, and you may also have quite -the- 'clan' when it comes to in-laws. Some of them may be quite the "piece-of-work". Their ugliest comes out -BECAUSE- you are God's servant, and they do not know Him. They will accuse you of all sorts of things, including not treating their daughter/sister right. They will accuse you of being "judgmental" towards them, when perhaps you do not even utter a peep regarding their lifestyles. Remember, there is "enmity" between the world and the Believer. (Rom8:7, Ja4:4) And that wife with whom you share pillow talk, even though claiming to be 'with' you, may actually engage in subterfuge with them.

So, in reality, even though you have that person with whom to engage in pillow talk, you may actually be totally 'alone'. Thus:

"But I will look to Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me" (vs7)

And here's a word for those inlaws (who said, "See? We told you so!"), and that conniving wife (who said, "Your God and mine are different (vs10); everything you stand for is loathsome to me!" 2Sam6:20):

"Do not rejoice against me, O my enemy; for if I fall, I shall arise. For if I sit in darkness, Jehovah is a light to me" (vs8)

And you can finish reading to vs13, the further judgments given; both to the prophet's family, wife and Israel.

GOD's MERCY:

"Shepherd Your people with Your rod, the flock of Your possession, who dwell alone in the woodland, in the midst of Carmel...as in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show them marvelous things" (vs14-15)

First of all, the nations of the world will be brought low as they see God work on Israel's behalf. They will learn what the fear of God is. (vs16-17)

"And Jehovah shall go forth and fight against those nations, like the day He fought in the day of battle." (Zec14:3)

And then, God's Mercy:

"Who is a Mighty God like You, forgiving iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His possession? His anger does not remain strong forever, for He delights in mercy" (vs18)

The world, when they hear God's standards, view talk of His holiness as "hate speech". Like whining in the hippy days, "O maaaaan!" You can't do ANYthing! They would see the 'lists' the pharisees lived by, and rebel.

Actually, God -does- have lists...which don't always quite agree with the ones the pharisees would judge everybody else by. But the only reason God has His lists is because of sin. Originally, other than that one tree Adam and Eve were not to eat of, there were no rules. Life for man was the same as the birds that flutter "to and fro" (Ge1:20) Is it right or wrong for the birds to flutter over here, over there, over somewhere else? That's the way God made them. And as I watch the birds around my house, I 'understand' why God made them that way. It is a 'delightful' thing to watch. And I truly believe God intended the same for man originally.

But man sinned. He overstepped certain bounds. He disobeyed. So there were consequences. Death. For Israel there were consequences, captivity into exile.

But God's original intent was to delight in His creation, and to have fellowship with man. Reading through the OT we see God using terminology like Husband and Wife, the relationship between Himself and Israel. Thus, He was always also pleading with Israel...

"Say to them: As I live, declares the Lord Jehovah, I take no delight in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! For why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezk33:11)

"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abounding in mercy unto all those who call upon You." (Ps86:5)

And so, after the turmoil of knowing wickedness to the extreme, Israel's captivity, distress from family, and being assured of "Jehovah is a light to me"; the prophet's calm and peace in understanding God's ultimate promise to Israel: it is not so much a deliverance from their enemies who occupy the land, but...

"He will return and have compassion on us; He will subdue our iniquities. And You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. You will give faithfulness to Jacob, goodness to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from the days of old." (vs19-20)