



Micah - Chapter Two

II Micah 1:2-2:13 - The Announcement of Judgement on Israel and Judah (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Two

The warning goes out to the leaders and influential people who are devising evil deeds for the Lord is devising a plan to come against them. The plan is to take away the land of Canaan that he had graciously given to his people and hand it over to invading armies. There are those who blame this outcome on the Lord but he had sent his prophets to warn them and they had not listened. Thus they will go into exile. However, the chapter ends with a promise to gather back a remnant who will be led by their Shepherd-King.

II.b Micah 2:1-11 - Social Evils Denounced

Attention shifts from cities and populations to accusations levelled against powerful leaders who exploit the vulnerable (vv.1-5) and reject God's message (vv.6-11).

II.b.i Micah 2:1-5 - Indictment and Future Punishment

The powerful are accused (vv.1-2), and their sentence is issued (vv.3-4). Ultimately, they lose all hope for inheritance among the Lord's people (v.5).

- ¹ Alas for those who devise wickedness
and evil deeds on their beds!
When the morning dawns, they perform it,
because it is in their power.

Micah 2:1

Alas for those who devise wickedness. All sin is bad before God, but premeditated sin is worse. Here, Micah speaks plainly to those who devise iniquity; in this case, those who oppress others through their greed and covetousness.

When the morning dawns is ironic. Typically thieves practice their work at night, under the cover of darkness: <<*And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed*>> (John 3:19-20). In the ancient world, law courts opened for business at first light because the rising sun demonstrated light dispelling darkness. Micah sees the corruption of Israel's law courts and shows that they practice their theft and evil at dawn, when the courts open: <<*When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council*>> (Luke 22:66).

Because it is in their power. Those who devise wickedness do evil because they have the authority and ability to carry out their schemes. Some sins are never committed because the opportunity never arises. The true test comes when the individual is empowered to do as they wish yet they choose to remain faithful to the Lord. Laban uses the same expression when he catches up with Jacob: <<*It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, "Take heed that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad"*>> (Genesis 31:29).

- ² They covet fields, and seize them;
houses, and take them away;
they oppress householder and house,
people and their inheritance.

Micah 2:2

Covet, seize, take, oppress. The tearing away of land and property, i.e. their inheritance, from the weak was a flagrant violation of the covenant: <<*You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour*>> (Exodus 20:17), and a primary reason for judgement against Ahab's house; refer to 1 Kings 21, 2 Kings 9:24-26 and Micah 6:16.

- ³ Therefore, thus says the Lord:
Now, I am devising against this family an evil

from which you cannot remove your necks;
and you shall not walk haughtily,
for it will be an evil time.

Micah 2:3

Against this family. The people devised iniquity; God devised disaster upon them. In his justice, he gave them what they gave others. The entire community is accountable for the sins of its leaders.

I am devising evil or disaster reveals the principle of correspondence: <<*As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head*>> (Obadiah 15b). The evil they devised for others (v.1) will now be visited on them; refer also to the comment made on Micah 1:12.

You shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. Micah rebukes the pride among God's people and announces that in the evil time to come, the time of judgement coming on God's people, they will be brought low and will no longer walk haughtily: <<*Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time*>> (Amos 5:13), and: <<*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*>> (Micah 6:8).

⁴ On that day they shall take up a taunt-song against you,
and wail with bitter lamentation,
and say, 'We are utterly ruined;
the Lord alters the inheritance of my people;
how he removes it from me!
Among our captors he parcels out our fields.'

Micah 2:4

A taunt song. The losses sustained by the land barons will be mocked. These oppressors had seized property from the defenceless (vv.1-2), so now the apostate captors, i.e. the Assyrians, will seize the land of the oppressors.

We are utterly ruined. The Israelites had two things that made them stand out from the other nations: God and the land he had given them. They now stand to lose both, just as he had said he would if they were disobedient to his call on their lives: <<*I will lay your cities waste, will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing odours*>> (Leviticus 26:31).

In the phrase the Lord alters the inheritance of my people, the Hebrew translated the Lord is the pronoun 'he' and some interpreters understand it to refer to the invading conqueror rather than God as depicted in this translation.

⁵ Therefore you will have no one to cast the line by lot
in the assembly of the Lord.

Micah 2:5

Therefore you will have no one. The unscrupulous land-grabbers are excluded from the inheritance they denied to others (v.2).

To cast the line by lot. This is a reference to the way the land was allocated to the twelve tribes. The Israelites believed that God would influence the way the lots were drawn and this is seen at various times in their history: <<***But the land shall be apportioned by lot; according to the names of their ancestral tribes they shall inherit***>> (Numbers 26:55), and: <<***You shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the Lord our God***>> (Joshua 18:6). Israelites believed that God controlled the outcome: <<***The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord's alone***>> (Proverbs 16:33), as did the early church: <<***And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles***>> (Acts 1:26).

It would not have been a case of divine will when the Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus' garments for that was simply gambling. However, it was by divine inspiration and will: <<***When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.' And that is what the soldiers did***>> (John 19:23-25a).

The assembly of the Lord. There yet remains a people to whom land would be distributed after exile.

II.b.ii Micah 2:6-11 - Rejection of the Prophetic Word

This disputation addresses unprincipled prophets; refer to Micah 3:5-7. Those who reject Micah are exposed (v.6), and the Lord brings to light further abuses of the powerful (vv.8-9). Exile is the sentence for the 'uncleanness' of their injustice and their willingness to welcome deceptive preaching (vv.10-11).

- 6 'Do not preach' – thus they preach –
'one should not preach of such things;
disgrace will not overtake us.'

Micah 2:6

The verb to preach frames the unit (vv.6-11) and conveys the idea 'to drip,' a term used metaphorically for divulging a prophetic message: <<*Mortal, set your face towards the south, preach against the south, and prophesy against the forest land in the Negeb*>> (Ezekiel 20:46). As a result, God stopped sending prophets. Fortunately, God's people responded to Micah's warning before God stopped sending him, but it took a while. The attempt to silence the prophetic voice also appears elsewhere; refer to Amos 2:12 and 7:10-16.

Micah began his ministry in the reign of Jotham, but nobody listened. Then he prophesied during the reign of Ahaz, but nobody listened. Finally he prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah, and the leaders and the people finally repented. Micah did not give up, even though results were slow in coming and opposition remained. Micah preached for somewhere between 16 and 25 years before there was any response.

- 7 Should this be said, O house of Jacob?
Is the Lord's patience exhausted?
Are these his doings?
Do not my words do good
to one who walks uprightly?

Micah 2:7

Should this be said, O house of Jacob? The rhetorical questions expose the misunderstanding of the people, who thought that a God of grace could never devise the disaster of vv.3-5.

Is the Lord's patience exhausted? In their foolishness, the people of Israel thought that God was the problem. They needed to understand that there was no restriction on the Spirit of the Lord; instead they provided all the restrictions.

Do not my words do good to one who walks uprightly? The key to their preservation in the midst of judgement was to stick tightly to God's words. When they reject God's words, they are left poor and destitute, both materially and spiritually: : <<*For you say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing." You do not realise that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked*>> (Revelation 3:17).

- 8 But you rise up against my people as an enemy;
you strip the robe from the peaceful,
from those who pass by trustingly
with no thought of war.
- 9 The women of my people you drive out
from their pleasant houses;
from their young children you take away
my glory for ever.

Micah 2:8-9

But you rise up against my people as an enemy. The accusation of hostility is supported by three examples of enemy-like conduct in war. The acts catalogued are similar to the abuses detailed in vv.1-5.

The women of my people you drive out from their pleasant houses. For the women on that generation and culture and, indeed, of many others, is that their homes and family are the centre of their lives. To have these taken away, probably to pay off accrued debts, is one of the most devastating experiences in life. It also foreshadows how it will be for God once the people have been taken from the land: *<<My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken; my children have gone from me, and they are no more; there is no one to spread my tent again, and to set up my curtains>>* (Jeremiah 10:20).

- 10 Arise and go;
for this is no place to rest,
because of uncleanness that destroys
with a grievous destruction.

Micah 2:10

Arise and go; for this is no place to rest. Widespread injustice has denied rest to others, and so the Lord demands that the people leave their place of rest. Micah exposes the lies of false prophets showing that they can never really give rest: *<<See, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the Lord, and who tell them, and who lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or appoint them; so they do not profit this people at all, says the Lord>>* (Jeremiah 23:32). The words of false prophets are defiled, and bring grievous destruction instead of the peace, rest, and restoration of God's Word.

- 11 If someone were to go about uttering empty falsehoods, saying, ‘I will preach to you of wine and strong drink’, such a one would be the preacher for this people!

Micah 2:11

If someone were to go about uttering empty falsehoods, saying, ‘I will preach to you of wine and strong drink’. The people welcomed ‘preaching’ that emphasised overindulgence rather than God’s condemnation of unethical behaviour. With judgement looming on the horizon, especially for the northern kingdom of Israel, there were false prophets who spoke of days of wine and drink, giving false comfort and hope to a deceived people: <<*For they are a rebellious people, faithless children, children who will not hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see’; and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel’>> (Isaiah 30:9-11). These were the real ‘prattlers,’ not the true prophets of God, as they were falsely called by the ungodly in Micah’s day (v.6). The only prophet they wanted was one to tell them there would be plenty of alcohol.*

II.c Micah 2:12-13 - A Promise for the Remnant of Israel

The first main section ends with the Shepherd of Israel gathering his sheep into the protective fold (v.12) and leading them out as their triumphant King (v.13).

- 12 I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob,
I will gather the survivors of Israel;
I will set them together
like sheep in a fold,
like a flock in its pasture;
it will resound with people.

Micah 2:12

I will surely gather, I will set them together like sheep. The descriptive actions culminate in the image of Yahweh as a protective shepherd: <<*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*>> (John 10:11). Although judgement was promised because of the great sin of God’s people, they could not ‘out-sin’ the grace and goodness of God. He still promises restoration to the remnant of Israel.

The survivors or remnant of Israel is perhaps a reference to numerous refugees of the Assyrian invasion, gathered in Jerusalem.

It will resound with people. The survivors of God's people will not be few in number. This would be in line with Nehemiah's prayer: <<*Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name"*>> (Nehemiah 1:8-9), and John's vision of the future: <<*After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands*>> (Revelation 7:9).

- ¹³ The one who breaks out will go up before them;
they will break through and pass the gate,
going out by it.
Their king will pass on before them,
the Lord at their head.

Micah 2:13

The one who breaks out will go up before them. The metaphor shifts to a king leading his army out, i.e. they will break through, from an enclosed city.

Pass the gate probably refers to Jerusalem's gate (Micah 1:9 and 1:12).

Their king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head. The identity of the Shepherd-King who opened the breach and leads the people into battle is fully revealed: <<*Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses*>> (Revelation 19:11-14).