

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO MICAH 2

In this chapter complaint is made of the sins of the people of Israel, and they are threatened with punishment for them. The sins they are charged with are covetousness, oppression, and injustice, which were premeditated, and done deliberately, (^{<301>}Micah 2:1,2); therefore the Lord devised evil against them, they should not escape; and which would bring down their pride, and cause them to take up a lamentation, because they should not enjoy the portion of land that belonged to them, (^{<301>}Micah 2:3-5); they are further charged with opposing the prophets of the Lord, the folly and wickedness of which is exposed, (^{<301>}Micah 2:6,7); and with great inhumanity and barbarity, even to women and children, (^{<301>}Micah 2:8,9); and therefore are ordered to expect and prepare for a removal out of their land, (^{<301>}Micah 2:10); and the rather, since they gave encouragement and heed to false prophets, and delighted in them, (^{<301>}Micah 2:11); and the chapter is concluded with words of comfort to the remnant among them, and with precious promises of the Messiah, and the blessings of grace by him, (^{<302>}Micah 2:12,13).

Ver. 1. *Woe to them that devise iniquity*, etc.] Any kind of iniquity; idolatry, or worshipping of idols, for the word is used sometimes for an idol; or the sin of uncleanness, on which the thoughts too often dwell in the night season; or coveting of neighbours' goods, and oppressing the poor; sins which are instanced in (^{<301>}Micah 2:2); and every thing that is vain, foolish, and wicked, and in the issue brings trouble and distress: now a woe is denounced against such that think on such things, and please themselves with them in their imaginations, and contrive ways and means to commit them:

and work evil upon their beds; when, the senses being less engaged, the thoughts are more free; but should not be employed about evil; but either in meditating on the divine goodness, and praising the Lord for his mercies; or in examining a man's heart, state, and case, and mourning over his sins, and applying to God for the remission of them; but, instead of this, the persons here threatened are said to "work evil on their beds", when they

should be asleep and at rest, or engaged in the above things; that is, they plot and contrive how to accomplish the evil they meditate; they determine upon doing it, and are as sure of effecting it as if it was actually done; and do act it over in their own minds, as if it was real; (see ~~1980~~ Psalm 36:4);

when the morning is light, they practise it; they wish and wait for the morning light, and as soon as it appears they rise; and, instead of blessing God for the mercies of the night, and going about their lawful business, they endeavour to put in practice with all rigour and diligence, and as expeditiously as they can, what they have projected and schemed in the night season;

because it is in the power of their hand; to commit it; and they have no principle of goodness in them, nor fear of God before them, to restrain them from it: or, “because their hand is unto power”^{f98}; it is stretched out, and made use of in the commission of sin to the utmost of their power, without any regard to God or man. The Vulgate Latin version is, “because their hand is against God”; their hearts are enmity to God, and therefore they oppose him with both their hands, and care not what iniquity they commit; they are rebels against him, and will not be subject to him. The Septuagint and Arabic versions are, “because they lift not up their hands to God”; they do not pray to him, and therefore are bold and daring to perpetrate the grossest iniquity, which a praying man dared not do; but the Syriac version is the reverse, “they do lift up their hands to God”; make a show of religion and devotion, when their hearts and their hands are deeply engaged in, sinning; which shows their impudence and hypocrisy; but the passages in (~~1619~~ Genesis 31:29 ~~1628~~ Deuteronomy 32:28 ~~1027~~ Proverbs 3:27) favour and confirm our version, and the sense of it; so the Targum.

Ver. 2. *And they covet fields, and take [them] by violence*, etc.] The fields of their poor neighbours, which lie near them, and convenient for them; they wish they were theirs, and they contrive ways and means to get them into their possession; and if they cannot get them by fair means, if they cannot persuade them to sell them, or at their price, they will either use some crafty method to get them from them, or they will take them away by force and violence; as Ahab got Naboth’s vineyard from him:

and houses, and take [them] away; they covet the houses of their neighbours also, and take the same course to get them out of their hands, and add them to their own estates:

so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage; not only dispossess him of his house to dwell in, but of his paternal inheritance, what he received from his ancestors, and should have transmitted to his posterity, being unalienable; and so distressed a man and his family for the present, and his posterity after him. The Vulgate Latin version is, “they calumniate a man and his house”; which seems to be designed to make it agree with the story of Ahab, (^{<1213>}1 Kings 21:13).

Ver. 3. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, behold, against this family do I devise an evil*, etc.] Because of those evils of covetousness, oppression, and injustice, secretly devised, and deliberately committed, the Lord, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, declares, and would have it observed, that he had devised an evil of punishment against the whole nation of Israel, the ten tribes particularly, among whom these sins greatly prevailed; even an invasion of their land by the Assyrians, and the carrying of them captive from it into foreign parts:

from which ye shall not remove your necks; that is, they should not be able to deliver themselves from it; they would not be able to stop the enemy in his progress, having entered their land; nor oblige him to break up the siege of their city, before which he would sit, and there continue till he had taken it; and being carried captive by him, they would never be able to free themselves from the yoke of bondage put upon them, and under which they remain unto this day. The allusion is to beasts slipping their necks out of the collar or yoke put upon them: these sons of Belial had broke off the yoke of God’s commandments, and now he will, put another yoke upon them, they shall never be able to cast off until the time of the restitution of all things, when all Israel shall be saved:

neither shall ye go haughtily; as they now did, in an erect posture, with necks stretched out, and heads lifted up high, and looking upon others with scorn and contempt; but hereafter it should be otherwise, their heads would hang down, their countenances be dejected, and their backs bowed with the burdens upon them:

for this time [is] evil; very calamitous, afflictive, and distressing; and so not a time for pride and haughtiness, but for dejection and humiliation; (see ^{<4516>}Ephesians 5:16).

Ver. 4. *In that day shall [one] take up a parable against you*, etc.] Making use of your name, as a byword, a proverb, a taunt, and a jeer;

mocking at your calamities and miseries: or, “concerning you”^{f99}; take up and deliver out a narrative of your troubles, in figurative and parabolical expressions; which Kimchi thinks is to be understood of a false prophet, finding his prophecies and promises come to nothing; or rather a stranger, a bystander, a spectator of their miseries, an insulting enemy, mimicking and representing them; or one of themselves, in the name of the rest:

and lament with a doleful lamentation; or, “lament a lamentation of lamentation”^{f100}: a very grievous one; or, “a lamentation that is”, or “shall be”, or “is done”^{f101}; a real one, and which will continue:

[and] say, we be utterly spoiled; our persons, families, and friends; our estates, fields, and vineyards; our towns and cities, and even our whole land, all laid waste, spoiled, and plundered:

he hath changed the portion of my people; the land of Israel, which was the portion of the people of it, given unto them as their portion by the Lord; but now he, or the enemy the Assyrian, or God by him, had changed the possessors of it; had taken it away from Israel, and given it to others:

how hath he removed [it] from me! the land that was my portion, and the portion of my people; how comes it to pass that he hath taken away that which was my property, and given it to another! how strange is this! how suddenly was it done! and by what means!

turning away, he hath divided our fields; either God, turning away from his people, because of their sins, divided their fields among their enemies; “instead of restoring”^{f102}, as some read it, he did so; or the enemy the Assyrian, turning away after he had conquered the land, and about to return to his own country, divided it among his soldiers: or, “to the perverse”, or “rebellious one”^{f103}, he divideth our fields”; that is, the Lord divides them to the wicked, perverse, and blaspheming king of Assyria; so the word is used of one that goes on frowardly, and backslides, (²⁵⁷¹⁷Isaiah 57:17 ³⁴⁸⁴Jeremiah 3:14,22).

Ver. 5. *Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot*, etc.] This confirms what was before delivered in a parabolical way, and as a lamentation; and is spoken either to the false prophet, as Kimchi; who should not be, nor have any posterity to inherit by lot the land of Israel; or to those oppressors that took away houses and fields from others, these should have no part nor lot in the land any more; or rather to the whole, people of Israel, who should no more inherit their land after their captivity,

as they have not to this day. The allusion is to the distribution of the land by lot, and the dividing of it by a cord or line, as in Joshua's time; but now there should be no land in the possession of Israelites to be divided among them; nor any people to divide it to, being scattered up and down in the world, and so no need of any person to be employed in such service; nor any sanhedrim or court of judicature to apply unto for a just and equal division and distribution, who perhaps may be meant in the next clause:

in the congregation of the Lord; unless this is to be understood of the body of the people, who were formerly called the congregation of the Lord, (⁽⁴²⁰⁾Deuteronomy 23:1,2); though now they had forfeited this character, and are only called so ironically, as some think. Aben Ezra interprets it, when the Lord returns the captivity of his people; and so Kimchi, who applies it to the false prophet, as before observed, who at this time should have no part nor lot in the land.

Ver. 6. *Prophesy ye not, [say they to them that] prophesy*, etc.] Or “drop not”^{f104}; such terrible words, such menacing things; let them not flow from your lips with such profusion and abundance; cease from speaking in the name of the Lord, if we can hear nothing else but sharp reproofs, and severe judgments: or the first word respects the true prophets of the Lord, and forbids their prophesying; and, according to others, the next should be rendered, “let them prophesy”, or “drop”^{f105}; that is, the false prophets, that prophesy smooth things; and so the sense is, let the one prophesy, but not the other:

they shall not prophesy to them; these are the words of the Lord, in answer to the other, that since they did not like his prophets, their should no more be sent to, them, nor should drop or distil the rain of doctrine upon them; but, as a judgment upon them, should be deprived of them: or, “they shall not prophesy according to these”^{f106}; as the false prophets do, not such things as they; or the whole may be rendered thus, “prophesy not”, or, “if they prophesy, let them not prophesy as these”^{f107}; such things as these; namely,

[that] shame shall not overtake them; that is, as the false prophets, who said that shame and confusion should not come upon the people of Israel, or the wrath denounced against them, but they should enjoy great peace and prosperity: but the first sense seems best, and the meaning of this clause to be, that the true prophets of the Lord should not prophesy any more to this people, since they did not choose they should: “that shame

might not come upon them”; that the prophets might not be treated by them in a shameful and ignominious manner: or, as others, “shame shall not depart from them”^{f108}; though they think to escape it by forbidding the prophets prophesying terrible things to come, yet confusion will be their portion at last.

Ver. 7. *O [thou that art] named the house of Jacob*, etc.] Called after that great and good man, and reckoned the people of God, and have the character of being religious persons; but, alas! have but a name, and not the thing, and are the degenerate offspring of that famous patriarch:

is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? or “shortened”^{f109}; the Spirit of the Lord in his prophets, is it to be limited and restrained according to the will of men? or, if these prophets are forbid to prophesy, and they are silenced, is not the residue of the Spirit with the Lord? cannot he raise up others to prophesy in his name? or is the Spirit of the Lord confined, as a spirit of prophesy, only to foretell good things, and not evil? may it not threaten with, punishment for sin, as well as promise peace and prosperity?, and is it to be reckoned narrow and strait, because it now does not? the fault is not in that, but in you, who make it necessary, by your conduct, that not good, but evil things, should be predicted of you:

[are] these his doings? either Jacob’s doings, such things as Jacob did? did he ever forbid the prophets of the Lord from prophesying? or did he do such things as required such menaces and threatenings as now delivered by the prophets? or are these becoming such persons as go by his name? or are such works as are done by you pleasing to God? were they, no such terrible messages would be sent by his prophets: or are these the Lord’s doings? are judgments the works he is continually doing and taking delight in? are they not his acts, his strange acts? did you behave otherwise than you do, you would hear nothing of this kind:

do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? that walks in a right way, and according to the rule of the divine word, in the uprightness and integrity of his heart, aiming at the honour and glory of God in all his ways? to such a man the words of the Lord by his prophets speak good things, promise him good things here and hereafter, and do him good, exhilarate his spirits, cheer, refresh, and comfort his soul.

Ver. 8. *Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy*, etc.] Or “yesterday”^{f110}; meaning a very little while before this prophecy, the people

of Israel, those of the ten tribes, who were the people of God by profession, rose up as an enemy, not only to God and true religion, worshipping idols; but rather to their brethren, those of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin; as they did in the times of Pekah king of Israel, who slew a hundred and twenty thousand of them in one day, (⁴⁸¹⁶2 Chronicles 28:6); and which is here mentioned as a reason why the Spirit of the Lord in his prophets threatened them with evil, and did not promise them good things:

ye pull off the robe with the garment; the upper and nether garment, and so stripped them naked: or, “they stripped the robe from off the garment”, as some^{f111}; they took the upper garment or cloak from them, and left them only the under garment:

for them that pass by securely, as men averse from war: who were travelling from place to place about their proper business, and thought themselves very safe; were peaceable men themselves, and suspected no harm from others: or, “returning from war”^{f112}; such who escaped in the battle, and fled for their lives; and when they imagined they, were safe, and out of danger, fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped them of their garments. Gussetius^{f113} interprets it of such who were returning to the battle, and yet so used.

Ver. 9. *The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses*, etc.] Not content to slay their husbands, they took their wives or widows captive, dispossessed them of their habitations, where they had lived delightfully with their husbands and children; so we find that, at the time before referred to, the people of Israel carried captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, and brought them to Samaria, (⁴⁸¹⁸2 Chronicles 28:8). Some understand this of divorce, which those men were the cause of, either by committing adultery with them, which was a just reason for their husband’s divorcing them; or by frequenting their houses, which caused suspicion and jealousy:

from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever; that which God would have had glory from, and they would have given it to him on account of; as their being brought up in a religious way; their liberties, both civil and religious; their paternal estates and inheritances, and the enjoyment of their own land; and especially the worship of God in the temple, of which they were deprived by being carried away from their own country: or it may be understood of the glory that accrues to God by

honourable marriage, and the bed undefiled; and the dishonour cast upon him by the contrary, as well as upon children, who may be suspected to be illegitimate.

Ver. 10. *Arise ye, and depart*, etc.] That is, out the land; do not think of a continuance in it, but expect a removal from it; prepare for captivity and exile; look for it every moment, to hear it said to you, arise, and be gone from hence; for, since you have drove others out of their inheritances and possessions, this shall be your case:

for this [is] not [your] rest; the land in which the ten tribes then dwelt, and which was given to their fathers for an inheritance, and for a resting place, and had been so for ages past, now would be no more so, because of their sins and transgressions; they must not expect to abide here long, and enjoy rest and ease; but to be turned out, and deprived of all the blessings of it, and be carried into a foreign country, where, instead of rest and ease, they should be in slavery and bondage:

because it is polluted, it shall destroy [you], even with a sore destruction; because the land that was given them to dwell in was defiled by their manifold iniquities, particularly adulteries, before hinted at: all sin is of a defiling nature; it defiled the bodies and souls of these men; defiled the estates they were possessed of, and the land on which they dwelt, and their fellow inhabitants of it; therefore utter destruction, even a sore and grievous one, should come upon them, by which their land should be laid waste, and they consumed off of it: or, “it shall corrupt [you], even with a grievous corruption”^{f114}; or you being corrupt upon it, it shall spew you out as a corrupt thing, as it did the Canaanites, the ancient inhabitants of it; when you will appear to be as you are, extremely corrupt: or, “it shall be in pain, [even] with sore pains”^{f115}; such as those of a woman in travail, not being able to bear them any longer, but ease itself of them, through the judgments of God upon them. This may be applied to the present state and condition of the people of God in this world, which is not their rest; there remains one for them in another world, but they are not yet come to it; for while here they are in trouble, through indwelling sin, the temptations of Satan, divine desertions, and various fears that attend them, so that they have little rest; besides, this is a warfare state, and they are engaged with many enemies; and at best are but travellers passing through this world to their Father’s house: this is also their working time, and they are attended with a variety of afflictions within and without; and since there are so many

corruptions and pollutions in the world, through lust, which make it that it can be no resting place for a good man; it becomes them not to take up their rest here, but seek after it elsewhere; and to live in an expectation of being called out of it, and to be in a readiness to depart when the Lord shall call for them.

Ver. 11. *If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie*, etc.] Who pretends to be a prophet, and a spiritual man, and to be under the inspiration and influence of the Spirit of God, but utters nothing but lies and falsehoods; or who is actuated by a spirit of falsehood and lying; or, as in the margin, “walks with the wind, and lies falsely”^{f116}; is full of wind and vanity; “after the wind”^{f117}; and follows the dictates of his vain mind, and coins lies, and speaks false things:

[saying], I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; or “drop [a word] unto thee”^{f118}; that there will be good times, and nothing but good eating and drinking; and that men need not fear such dismal things befalling them as the prophets of the Lord spoke of; but may be cheerful and merry, and drink wine and strong drink, and not be afraid of their evil tidings: or, for wine and strong drink^{f119}, so Kimchi; and the meaning is, that if they would give him a cup of wine, or a draught of strong drink, he would prophesy good things to them; the reverse of what is before said, as that they should continue in their land, and not depart from it; that this should be their rest, and they should remain therein, and not be destroyed in it, or cast out of it:

he shall even be the prophet of this people; a “dropper”^{f120} to them; (see ^{<386}Micah 2:6); such an one shall be acceptable to them; they will caress him, and prefer him to the true prophets of the Lord; which is mentioned to show the temper of the people, and how easily they were imposed upon, and their disrespect to the prophets of the Lord, as in (^{<386}Micah 2:6,7); to which subject the prophet here returns, as Kimchi observes.

Ver. 12. *I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee*, etc.] These words are either the words of the false prophet continued, that prophesied of wine and strong drink, as Aben Ezra; promising great plenty and prosperity, and that the remnant of the ten tribes carried captive by Tiglathpileser should be returned, and they should all live together in safety and plenty, and rejoice because of their numbers: or else they are a denunciation of threatenings and judgments, as Kimchi; that the Israelites should be gathered indeed together, but as sheep for the slaughter, even those that

remained, not as yet carried captive; these should be shut up, and closely besieged in their cities, and make a noise, and cry for fear of their enemies, and because of the great number of them: or rather they are a comfortable promise of the gathering of the people of Israel in the times of the Messiah, in the last days the Gospel dispensation, even all of Jacob, all the then posterity of Israel; for then “all Israel shall be saved”, (⁴⁶¹²⁶Romans 11:26); and this is introduced, though abruptly, as often such promises are, for the comfort of the Lord’s people, amidst sorrowful and sad tidings brought to the people in general: I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; the remnant according to the election of grace, whom the Lord will reserve for himself, those that are left of them in the latter day; these shall be gathered effectually by the grace of God unto Jesus, the true Messiah, they shall now seek after; and into his church, to join themselves to his people, embracing his Gospel, and submitting to his ordinances; when there shall be “one fold” for Jews and Gentiles, and “one Shepherd” over them, the Lord Jesus Christ, (⁴⁹⁰¹⁶John 10:16);

I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah; a place famous for flocks and pastures; signifying that they should be took care of by the great and good Shepherd, have a good fold, and good pastures provided for them, where they should feed comfortably together, in great unity and affection:

as the flock in the midst of their fold; lying down safely, and resting quietly; (see ⁴³⁴¹³Ezekiel 34:13,14);

they shall make great noise by reason [of the multitude] of men: a joyful noise, because of their own numbers being increased with men like a flock, and so numerous, that the place will be too strait for them; and because of the number of good and faithful shepherds under Christ, to feed and protect them, even pastors after God’s own heart, given them to feed them with knowledge and understanding, (⁴²⁴¹⁵Jeremiah 3:15).

Ver. 13. *The breaker up is come up before them*, etc.] Not the enemy, either the Assyrian or Chaldean army, or any part thereof, going up before the rest, breaking down the walls of the city, either of Samaria or Jerusalem, so making way for entrance therein; nor Zedekiah, as Joseph Kimchi, who made his escape through the wall broken down; nor the Maccabees, who were instruments of great salvation and deliverance to the Jews after the captivity, and before the coming of Christ. Kimchi makes mention of an exposition, which interprets “the breaker” of Elijah, that was to come before the Messiah; “and their king”, in the latter part of the text,

of the branch the son of David; that is, the Messiah; which sense Mr. Pocock thinks may be admitted of, provided by Elijah we understand John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, who is the true Elijah that was to come; who broke, prepared, and cleared the way for Christ by his doctrine and baptism (see ^{<Q116>}Luke 1:16,17 ^{<Q117>}3:4,5); but it is best to interpret “the breaker” of Christ himself; and so I find it explained^{f121} by the Jews also, to whom this and all the rest of the characters in the text agree; and who may be so called with respect to his incarnation, being the firstborn that opened the womb, and broke forth into the world in a very extraordinary manner; his birth being of a virgin, who was so both before and after the birth; thus Pharez had his name, which is from the same root, and is of a similar sound with Phorez here, from his breaking forth before his brother, unawares, and contrary to expectation, (^{<Q118>}Genesis 38:29); this agrees with Christ, with respect to his death, when he broke through and vanquished all enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and death; broke through all the troops of hell, and spoiled principalities and powers; and through all difficulties that lay in the way of the salvation of his people; he broke down the middle wall of partition, the ceremonial law which was between Jew and Gentile; and broke off the yoke of sin, Satan, and the law, under which they were, and set them at liberty; and at his resurrection he broke asunder the cords of death, as Samson did his withs as a thread of tow; and at his ascension he broke his way through the regions of the air, and legions of devils there, leading captivity captive, and entered into heaven; and was “pandens iter”, as the Vulgate Latin version here renders it, “opening the way” for his people into it; by the ministry of the word, he broke his way into the Gentile world, conquering and to conquer, which was mighty, through God, for the pulling down of strong holds, and reducing multitudes to his obedience; at the conversion of every sinner he breaks open the everlasting doors of their hearts, and enters in; he breaks their rocky hearts in pieces, and then binds up what he has broken; and in the latter day he will break in pieces all his enemies as a potter’s vessel; yea, he will break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms of the earth, which will become like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors: and now he is ascended, or “gone up” to heaven to his Father there, and “before them” his sheep, his people, said to be assembled, gathered and put together; he is ascended as the forerunner of them, to receive gifts for them, and bestow them on them, and to prepare heaven for them, and to make intercession on their behalf; and, as sure as he is gone up, so sure shall they also follow:

they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it; not either the Assyrians or Chaldeans; nor the people that fled with Zedekiah; but the sheep of Christ following him their Shepherd; who, in the strength of Christ, and the power of his grace, break out of their prison houses; and break off the yokes and fetters in which they have been detained, and all allegiance to former lords; and break through their enemies, and become more than conquerors through him that has loved them; and “pass through [him] the gate”; the strait gate, and narrow way, that leads to the Father, and to the enjoyment of all the blessings of grace; and into the sheepfold, the church, and the privileges of it; and even into heaven itself, eternal life and happiness: and by which also they “go out”, for he is a door of escape unto them out of the hands of all their enemies, and from wrath to come; and he is a door of hope of all good things unto them, and which leads to green pastures, and by which they go in and out, and find pasture:

and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them; not the king of Assyria or Babylon, before their respective armies, the Lord God himself being in a providential way at the head of them, and succeeding them; nor Hoshea or Zedekiah, going before their people into captivity, the Lord having forsaken them; but the King Messiah, who is King of Zion, King of saints, that goes before his people as a king before his subjects, and as a shepherd before his flock; and who is the true Jehovah, the Lord our righteousness, who is at the head, and is the Head of his church; the Captain of their salvation, that is at the head of his armies, his chosen and faithful ones, they following and marching after him, (~~6174~~ Revelation 17:14 ~~6694~~ 19:14).