

Jeff Mezera - Micah

This transcript was generated automatically. Its accuracy may vary.

The theme of the convention seems to be a lot of talks about the minor prophets, and so I've chosen to talk about the book of Micah, and I call this the poetic prophet. When we think of a poetic prophet, we normally think of the Psalms, and like King David before him, Micah wrote some of the most beautiful poetry in all of the Old Testament.

Of the prophets, the poetic verse found in his prophecy is considered the most poetic of all, even rivaling that of the Psalms. The subject matter, though, is not always beautiful because he's depicting that Israel would be brought to an idolatrous low and that it would be carried away. There's three kings mentioned in the first verse of the prophecy, and that helps put our timing here into perspective. Together they reigned about 30 years. Marking the time of this prophet is about 40 years in length.

The first verse says the word of Jehovah that came to Micah the Moorishite, in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Now the first king is Jotham, and he took over the kingdom from his father Azariah, or Uzziah. Uzziah couldn't rule any longer because of his leprosy. Although Jotham was a righteous king, he didn't remove the high places of idolatry, and that's mentioned here in 2nd Kings 15:35.

The high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places. The next king was Ahaz, and he was Jotham's son, and he introduced idolatry into the northern kingdom of Israel. Under Ahaz, both the government and religious leadership descended to a new low.

He replaced the bronze altar of Solomon's with one similar to that of the Assyrians, and he also changed other parts of the temple and sacrificed his son in the fire. According to 2nd Kings 16, verse 3. We know that God hated that, and this is one of the things that Micah the prophet is condemning. Eventually, Assyria was responsible for the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel and Aram, which Assyria assimilated.

Ahaz son Hezekiah was different. He turned the nation back to the worship of the Lord and removed the high places of idolatry, and that's Second Kings chapter 18.

He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he clave to Jehovah. He departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Jehovah commanded Moses. Second Kings 18 verses 5 and 6.

Now, during Hezekiah's reign, God delivered Judah from Sennacherib, who was shut up like who shut up the king like a caged bird. This is Sennacherib's prism, and it's in the British Library, but there's also a copy here in Chicago at the Oriental Institute, and basically it's Sennacherib's version of what happened in Second Kings, chapter 19.

We know that in the later part of the story, Hezekiah's son reversed everything that had been restored, and it was about a century later that Babylon conquered Judah and destroyed the temple. Micah's name means who is like Yah or who is like God, and the name Michael is very similar, who is like El. There's three main ideas in Micah's prophecy here.

The first one is trial, the next is judgment, and the third is restoration.

Jeff Mezera - Micah

Nearly the entire book of Micah is written in poetry, and sometimes there's different forms of poetry that's used. We're going to look at the first chapter and get an idea of the poetic parallel, the poetic parallelism that's used there, and this poetic parallelism, sometimes you lose the beauty of the poetry in the translation. So we're going to give an example of that.

This time you see the same thing said in two lines, but using different words. If you recognize the pattern, you'll see that concept throughout many of the prophets and even Revelation. They tell you, then they tell you what they told you, and then sometimes they'll tell you again. So if you didn't catch the idea the first time, you might catch it when the idea is repeated many a times that it's repeated. It helps interpret the passage for us or give a better understanding.

The poetic parallelism is evident starting with the second and third verses where the trial sanction begins, and this is like a trial. Here the Lord is putting Israel on trial, and we'll see the verdict of what's happening very soon. But the passage here says, hear you peoples, all of you, hearken, O earth and all that's in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

For behold, the Lord is coming forth out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. See, in the second and third verses the word peoples are used. Are these people only those in Israel that the prophet might be addressing, or the entire earth? Micah's use of poetic parallelism helps interpret this for us. While the first line says peoples, the second poetic line reads earth so it tells us exactly what he's talking about.

Micah's poetry portrays here a vivid picture of a gripping courtroom drama, as if the second verse of the first chapter should contain the words, hear ye, hear ye, Court is in session. So there's a legal case here against the earth, Judah and Israel, and it begins with God himself as the chief witness. Here in Micah 1, verse 4 is another example of that poetic parallelism. The verse says, and the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will be cleft like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep, plain place. Poetically, the mountains are described as melting.

The poetic parallel describes this as water being poured down a steep place. This shows how quickly the judgment's going to come upon them. Verse 5 tells us what the high places are. It says, for the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel, what is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria?

And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?

Habakkuk was a prophet about the same time as Micah, but he came shortly after, during the Babylonian invasion. Micah, chapter three, verse six uses similar language and helps us interpret the meaning of the mountains and hills for us in the Context Micah or Habakkuk 3.6 says, he stood and measured the earth he beheld, and drove us under the nations and the eternal mountains were scattered, the everlasting hills did bow, his goings were as of old, and so again you can see this kind of idea of this parallelism helping interpret for us what it means by mountains and that there's nations involved here. The passage in Amos, chapter six, verse one is also similar. It says, he stood and measured the earth he beheld, and drove us under the nations and the eternal mountains were scattered.

The everlasting hills did bow, his goings were as as of old. In this verse, verses 6 and 7, Micah narrows the wide sweep of God's judgment from the nations. Now he's narrowing it down to his chosen people because of their idolatry. The passage reads, therefore I will make Samaria heap in

Jeff Mezera - Micah

the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. All of her idols will be smashed, all of her earnings will be burned with fire, and all of her images I will make desolate, for she collected them from a harlot's earnings, and to the earnings of a harlot they will return.

Verse 6 says that he will pour her stones down into the valley. This valley is symbolic of destruction, and that's also what Samaria was to experience. The poetic description of uncovering her foundations illustrates that she wasn't to be rebuilt.

The 10 tribes were never restored after this, and the phrase that it will become a vineyard shows that no one with a name or that name will ever live there again or be a part of that nation.

As with much of prophecy, there's always an immediate fulfillment in the prophet's day and a much more complete fulfillment, which is many times outlined for us in the New Testament. In this case, it's the same thing with the great harlot, the great Babylon that will be completely destroyed and never built again. Revelation 18 speaks of the smoke of Babylon's burning going up forever. The judgment against unfaithful Israel here in Micah is prophetic of what would befall unfaithful Christendom in the future. The poetic parallel continues here in verse nine or verse eight.

Sorry. The lament and wailing is parallel to lamentation like jackals and mourning like ostriches. The prophet here goes to great lengths and to get the people's attention about how serious the situation was. Jackals make a lot of noise, like a coyote, and in this verse, Micah's lament about making these wailing noises shows that he is mourning because of the destruction coming upon his people.

Yet the prophet Micah, in hopeless despair, laments that her wound is incurable. In verse 9 he says that her wound is incurable and it has come to Judah. It has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem. Now the reformers of the Middle Ages similarly lamented over the state of the Catholic Church for the incurable wound that had come even to the gates of the church, and looking at the trends today in many Christian circles, it appears that the knowledge of the word of the Lord is declining even further.

And here's a quote I have from a magazine that I thought was interesting.

It says evangelicals have failed to pass on to our young people an orthodox form of faith that they can take root and survive the secular onslaught. Ironically, the billions of dollars we've spent on youth ministers, Christian music publishing and media has produced a culture of young Christians who know next to nothing about their own faith except how they feel about it.

Our young people have deep beliefs about the culture war, but they don't know why they should obey scripture, the essentials of theology, or the experience of spiritual discipline in community, and this is from the Christian Science Monitor, March 10, 2009 as we continue through the first chapter here in Micah, we see that we know that many commentaries tell us about Micah's beautiful Hebraic poetry as the most beautiful amongst the prophets. Sometimes this poetry helps us to understand the context more through its repetition. But sometimes even the names or the meaning of names takes on a prophetic parallel parallelism. That's not easy to say either.

Prophetic poetic parallelism, and we see an example of that in Revelation, where the seven churches are listed as a disciple would traverse a path which would take them from city to city, sort of like the shape of a horseshoe that you see there. Prophetically, the meanings of the names of

Jeff Mezera - Micah

those churches show that the church would be in decline, as it would traverse a path of pagan philosophy mixing with a persecuting church power. We're going to see the same thing here at the end of the book of Micah.

So at the end of the first chapter, there's a similar list, and the names of the cities mentioned are the names an enemy would pass as they were on their way to Judah, and the King James translation describes it this way. Oops, I guess I have the wrong verse here. So it says. Oh, hold on one moment.

Oh, I'll read it and then I'll come back to this. Sorry about that. So the King James puts it this way. Declare ye it not a gath, weep ye not at all in the house of Aphra. Roll thyself in the dust, Pass ye away.

The inhabitant of Safir having thy shame naked, the inhabitant of Azanon came not forth in the morning of Bethesda he shall receive you of his standing. For the inhabitant of Marath waited carefully for good, but evil came down from the Lord in the gate of Jerusalem. Oh, that one happened in a Blacksheesh, and I won't even continue it. I'm sure that makes complete sense to everybody, because everybody knows what those names mean.

Not really. Right. So if we actually translated the names and put the meaning of the city names into our poetic parallelism here, it actually gives a very good description of what Mike is talking about, and I'm taking this from the Message Bible, but the meanings are the same. The Message Bible is a very liberal translation, but in this case it really brings the point across.

And so here at the end of the first chapter, the Message Bible says, don't gossip about this in Telltown. Don't waste your tears in Dustville. Roll in the dust.

You can see the parallelism in Alarm Town. The alarm is sounded. There it is again. The citizens of Exeberg will never get out alive. Lament last stand city there's nothing left in you standing.

The villagers of Bittertown wait in vain for sweet peace. Harsh judgment has come from God and entered Peace City. Oh thou inhabitant. Oh, so now I must put my slides in the wrong order. So give me one moment.

So these city names mean absolutely nothing. It makes no sense. But if we translate it, here we are. Here's the rest of it. All you, all you who live in Chariotville, get in your chariots for flight.

You led the daughter of Zion into trusting not God, but chariots. Similar sins in Israel also got their start in you. Go ahead and give your goodbye gifts to goodbye ville Marashan beckoned but disappointed Israel's kings inheritance City has lost its inheritance Glory Town has seen the last of its glory. Shave your heads in mourning over the loss of your precious towns go bald as a goose egg. They've gone into exile and they are coming back.

Though as we've seen, this first chapter is a very good illustration of this poetic parallelism and also this illustration of judgment. But the fifth chapter is a very good example and an excellent example of restoration. So here in Micah chapter 5, verse 1, it reads, now you are walled about with a wall siege is laid against us with a rod they strike upon the cheek the ruler of Israel.

On this verse, Brother Carl Hagen Sick once wrote, the first verse is open to two interpretations. Probably both are true, the one foreshadowing the other. In Micah's day, the gatherer of troops was undoubtedly Assyria, with Babylon looming in the near future, and you can see Micah 4:10 on that.

Jeff Mezera - Micah

These captivities, however, were to be of short term when compared with the siege of Roman troops between 68 to 73 AD, including the Jewish diaspora of nearly 2,000 years. Although it's tempting to lay the greater emphasis on the Roman siege because of its direct connection with the smiting the Judge of Israel, the Messiah on the cheek from Matthew 26.

The invasion of Assyria seems more likely when we consider verse 2.

Micah 4:10 is an earlier portion of the same context, and it places the interpretation of the passage in the time of Babylon. Micah 4:10 says, you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued there the Lord shall redeem you from the hand of your enemies. There's the parallelism again. We have both rescued and redeemed.

These last kings of Judah wouldn't go down so easily, but the Lord was still going to redeem Israel. Jehoiakim rebelled against the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, and Jehoiachin was placed on the throne but subsequently even he was taken into captivity. Second Kings 24, verse 15 says, and he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother and the king's wives and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Now tablets found near the Isha gate of the ancient city list rations doled out to the captives, including Yahoachim, king of the land of Yahud. This is Jehoiakim, according to A History of the Jews by Paul Johnson. So we have evidence of this event in the archaeology, which is very nice to see, and this scripture account agrees, and his allowance was for continual allowance given him of the king a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

Second Kings 25, verse 30.

Later still, King Zedekiah, who Nebuchadnezzar appointed, made the same mistakes as his predecessors. They never learned right. Then the king of Babylon made his uncle Madaniah king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah. 2nd Kings 24:17. The Old Testament parallels says that, and it's talking about the archaeology again.

The chronicle of the Chaldean king also states that he appointed a new king to his liking, and there he appointed a king of his own choice and received as heavy tribute and sent them to Babylon, and of course, 2nd Kings 25:7 agrees, he wasn't only smitten by the Babylonians, they even took out his eyes. So here the Davidic line was taken into captivity, and it's out of this line which Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus, came from. These verses here in Micah are also true of Christ, right? Matthew 27, verse 30 says that they spit on him, they took the reed, and they smote him on the head.

Ultimately it was Jesus who was the rightful king under the Davidic line, the ultimate judge of Israel, who was smitten on the cheek. So this verse looks forward from the days of Micah, the prophet who would be born in Bethlehem, whose origins would be from the days of old, just like Micah, chapter 5, verse 2 says chapters 4 and 5 of Micah are restoration chapters, chapters which detail some of the blessings to come upon Israel and the nations in the future.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days.

This is quoted both in the gospels of Matthew and John. Micah prophesied that Jesus's lineage would come from Bethlehem, and the passage also states that he would go forth for me. Not that

Jeff Mezera - Micah

God himself would do that. When Micah 4:10 spoke of Babylon, you know, we. We know that Michael 4:10 spoke of Babylon.

This one speaks of Assyria. So in Micah 5, verses 5 to 6, it reads, when the Assyrian shall come into our land, when he shall tread in our palaces, and then we shall raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men, and they shall waste the land of Assyria with a sword in the land of Nimrod, and the entrances thereof, and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our border. Both the biblical account and the Assyrian archaeological account mentions Sennacherib's invasion into Judah. Both mention Hezekiah, both mention the siege on Lachish as well as Jerusalem, and both mention Hezekiah's tribute to the Assyrian king.

Both mention Sennacherib's return to his capital city of Nineveh, and both record the death of the king by the hands of his own sons, and here in Isaiah, we have more of the story, and remember that Isaiah and Micah, they're prophets who are contemporary with each other. They're at the same time.

And so many times when you look at Micah's prophecy, you'll recognize, oh, I remember seeing that in Isaiah, or vice versa, they were given the same prophecies, very similar prophecies, because they were contemporary prophets. So when the Assyrian king came against Jerusalem and Isaiah prophesied that God would protect the city, in Isaiah 37, verses 33 to 35, it says, Therefore, thus says Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, you shall not come into this city, for I will defend the city to save it, for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake, God miraculously spared Israel in this battle with Sennacherib, and this is Lachish here, an archaeologist archaeology's depiction of how it might have looked like, and how did he miraculously save them? Well, we have the passage here in 2nd Kings 19, verse 35.

And you remember this passage. It says it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand, and then when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

So Warner Keller's the Bible is History puts it this way, and at the again at the Oriental Institute in Chicago and the British Library are a copy of this prism that Sennacherib had made, and Werner Keller's Bible is History says, and hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke. This is the translation of Sennacherib's story right him I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city, like a caged bird. Earthworks I threw up against him, and anyone coming out of his city gate I made to pay for his crime.

His cities which I had plundered, I cut off from his land, and battles of the Bible by Herzog Kaiman Gishon Mordecai says the Assyrian records try to gloss over the sudden retreat from Jerusalem. The more shameful because of the appreciation that its fall has been imminent. If this source is to be trusted, Judah didn't regain the lost districts in the plain, and Hezekiah even deemed it expedient to appease Assyria publicly, and Archaeology in the Old Testament by Merrill Unger says that in both sources Hezekiah pays a tribute of 30 talents of gold, but only 300 talents of silver in Second Kings 18:14, as compared with 800 which Sennacherib claimed to receive.

Eberhard Schroeder reconciles the two on the basis of the difference between the Babylonian light and the Palestinian heavy talent. Now the Assyrian account then passes from the description of the Jerusalem battle to this payment that they were just talking about, and it says, as for Hezekiah, the splendor of my majesty overwhelmed him. You know, he's. It's his propaganda.

Jeff Mezera - Micah

This is Sennacherib's propaganda. 30 gold talents, valuable treasures, as well as his daughters, the women of his harem, singers, both men and women, he caused to be brought after me to Nineveh to pay his tribute, and to do me homage he sent his envoys. No mention is made in the Assyrian account of any victory in Jerusalem, or why the attack would have been broken off. If the king had indeed been capturing Jerusalem, he would have mentioned it with his other conquests.

Instead, he tried to make it sound as good as possible. This is like an early example of a propaganda machine or a little political spin, right? So second kings 19, verse 34 and 35 gives us more of the story. It says, for I will defend this city, to save it for mine own sake, for my servant David's sake, and it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand.

And when they rose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. Now the Greek historian Herodotus also mentions the same story, and his account of Sennacherib's retreat adds that an army of field mice swarmed over their opponents in the night, and they gnawed through their quivers and their bows and handles of their shields, so that the following day they fled minus their arms, and a great number of them fell. Hence, this king still stands in Hephaestesta's temple with a mouse in his hand and with the following inscription, look on me and live in safety. So even in Herodotus day, this story was a very famous story, and that gives us a little more detail of how the ancients saw this story. Now, providentially, at the same time, the Egyptian pharaoh Turakhan called fresh hope from the intelligence that Sennacherib was wasting his forces in Judah, and decided that no better opportunity would be found to fall upon the weakened Assyrian rear and bring about Sennacherib's complete defeat.

When Sennacherib became aware of this imminent danger, he had no choice but to break off contact everywhere and to beat a hasty and ignominious retreat. Under the COVID of night, Sennacherib's offensive power was severely curtailed. His heirs avoided becoming entangled in a war in the Judean heartland, and Judah was able to survive for another 115 years until its conquest by Nebuchadnezzar, and that again is from the battles of the Bible. So this again is providentially at the same time that these things happen.

The Lord has everything in control, and if we continue to the next verses in Micah and verses 5 and 6, we can see that God miraculously spared Israel in this battle with Sennacherib. But the future battle mentioned in Micah 5:5 is going to be even more miraculous, and we read this verse earlier. Remember, he's going to raise against them seven shepherds and eight principal men.

Assyria was the foe most feared in Micah's day, and it's used here to typify Israel's enemies. In Isaiah 10, the Assyrian is the type of Antichrist and of Satan, including Babylon. In Isaiah 14, at the beginning of the millennial age, the seven shepherds are the completed and glorified church, and the eight principal men are the ancient worthies who are going to rule on the earth. Jesus is going to lead both groups against God's enemies.

And this is in harmony with Isaiah 1:26. Remember, we said earlier Isaiah and Micah, they're contemporary prophets. Isaiah says that I will restore thy judges as at the first and thy counselors as at the beginning. These are our ancient worthies, and the ancient worthies are going to be on the scene immediately after the church is gone. They're going to be the visible representatives and leaders of the state together.

They're going to shepherd with a sword, not to hurt the sheep, but to protect against the enemies who are after the sheep, and Micah 5:6 says, they will rule the land of Assyria with a sword and the

Jeff Mezera - Micah

land of Nimrod with a drawn sword, and they shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into the land and treads within our border. Micah 5.7 says that the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers upon the grass. Again, here's our poetic parallelism.

The dew and the showers on the grass, which tarry not for men, nor wait for the sons of men do and rain are from God, and water revives and refreshes, and this is saying that like the dew or showers that blanket, or all of the vegetation with living water, that the work of Israel, the ancient worthies, and the church in the kingdom are going to be to revive, restore, and refresh the nations, the Gentiles. Just like the dew covers the grass. I love those summer mornings when the dew is everywhere. Like the dew or the showers, Israel will be spread throughout the world, leading these Gentiles, these unbelievers, to become Israelites.

Such a beautiful promise.

Our poetic parallelism helps us to understand the meaning better. In Micah 5. 8 it says, the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of their sheep, which when it goes through, treads down and tears to pieces, and there is none to deliver. The strength of God is irresistible, and no one will be able to resist their strength working through Israel. They will become part of the kingdom, or they won't survive.

Yet at the same time everyone will be given equal opportunity. Human, just as Jeremiah 31 tells us, because Jeremiah 31 tells us, no one will say, know the Lord, because they all know him, from the least until the greatest. Like Isaiah, Micah tells us the same message of the Kingdom in Micah 4:1:2 it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills, and people shall flow to it, and many nations shall come and say, come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And again, Micah and Isaiah are saying the same thing because they're contemporary prophets.

Even the nations that fought against Jerusalem can exist as long as they recognize the new Jerusalem as the legitimate government, and we see an example of that in Zechariah 14, 16, 17 in the first couple verses of Zechariah 14, all the nations are coming against Jerusalem to battle. Well, what happens to those nations? This verse tells us, it says, then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem, they will go up from year to year to worship the king, the Lord of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths, and it will be that whichever in the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them.

The people will not learn war anymore. We know that from Micah chapter four, Isaiah chapter two. Soon we will see that the government of God is going to be established as the highest government over all the governments of the earth, and Micah 4, 3, 4 says, he shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid. For the mouth of

Jeff Mezera - Micah

the Lord of hosts has spoken. The people, even these unbelievers, are going to be asked to be taught of the ways of Jehovah of God. Showing hope.

This shows hope for those who don't believe now, and we see that in this passage in Isaiah 26:9. Remember, Isaiah and Micah are contemporaries. Isaiah 26:9 says, with my soul have I desired thee in the night yea, with my spirit within me will I seek the early. For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

God miraculously helped Israel in the time of Micah. He had his protective hand on them throughout their history and will continue this divine protection in the future. How much more does he have his hand on us? And he can help us even more than he did Israel. He will only do this if we are faithful to him.

May the Lord add His blessing.