

Micah 2:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

Analysis

Micah pronounces woe on oppressors: 'Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.' The Hebrew emphasizes premeditation: 'hosheve aven' (devisers of wickedness) lying awake plotting evil, then executing it at dawn. 'Because it is in the power of their hand' (ki yesh le-el yadam) literally means 'because it is in the might of their hand'—they do evil simply because they can, with no restraint from conscience or fear of God. This describes the powerful exploiting the weak (v. 2: coveting fields and houses, oppressing homeowners). Such calculated injustice provokes divine judgment (v. 3). Power without moral restraint produces tyranny; James 4:17 applies: 'to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.'

Historical Context

Micah addressed Judah's leadership class (landowners, judges, rulers) who exploited the poor during the 8th century BC. The covenant protected vulnerable through laws against oppression (Exodus 22:21-27, Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:14-15), but corrupt leaders ignored these, seizing property through legal manipulation and economic pressure. Amos and Isaiah contemporaneously denounced similar injustice (Amos 2:6-7, Isaiah 3:14-15, 5:8). These sins contributed to Judah's eventual exile. The principle remains: societies permitting

the powerful to exploit the weak face divine judgment. God hears the oppressed's cries (Exodus 3:7-9, James 5:4) and will vindicate them.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Do I scheme to use my power or position for self-interest regardless of who gets hurt?
2. How do I respond to systemic injustice where the powerful exploit the vulnerable with legal but immoral practices?

Interlinear Text

הוֹי	הִשְׁבִּי	אִין	וּפְעָלִי	כָּע	עַל	מִשְׁכְּבֹתָם
Woe	to them that devise	iniquity	and work	evil	H5921	upon their beds
H1945	H2803	H205	H6466	H7451		H4904
בָּאֹר	הַבֹּקֶר	יַעֲשׂוּהָ	כִּי	יֵשׁ		לֹאֵל
is light	when the morning	they practise	H3588	it because it is		in the power
H216	H1242	H6213		H3426		H410
						יָדָם:
						of their hand
						H3027

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 36:4 (Evil): He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

Isaiah 32:7 (Evil): The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.

Nahum 1:11 (Evil): There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

Genesis 31:29 (Parallel theme): It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Isaiah 59:3 (Sin): For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

Proverbs 3:27 (Parallel theme): Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

Proverbs 4:16 (Parallel theme): For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

Jeremiah 18:18 (Parallel theme): Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Romans 1:30 (Evil): Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Acts 23:12 (Parallel theme): And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.