

Micah 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

Analysis

Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy (וְאַתְמוֹל עַמִּי לְאֹיֵב יָקוּמִם, we-etmul ammi le-oyev yeqomem). אַתְמוֹל (etmul, recently/lately) indicates recent escalation. God's own עַמִּי (ammi, my people) have become לְאֹיֵב (le-oyev, an enemy)—shocking role reversal. Covenant people acting as God's enemies is profound tragedy. קוּמִם (qomem, rise up) suggests organized, aggressive hostility.

Ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely (חֲמוּל מִמּוֹל שַׁלְמָה אֶדֶר תַּפְשִׁיטוֹן מֵעֹבְרִים בֶּטָח, mimmul salmah eder tafshitun me-overim betach). The imagery depicts violent robbery—stripping שַׁלְמָה (salmah, outer cloak) and אֶדֶר (eder, inner garment, often translated "robe") from travelers passing בֶּטָח (betach, securely/safely/trustingly). These travelers aren't soldiers but peaceful citizens expecting safety in their own land. Exodus 22:26-27 commanded returning pledged cloaks before sunset because the poor needed them for warmth.

As men averse from war (שׁוּבֵי מִלְחָמָה, shuvei milchamah). שׁוּב (shuv, return) describes men returning from war—veterans expecting peacetime security. Instead, they're robbed by their own countrymen. The oppressors' cruelty extends even to those who defended the nation. This illustrates societal breakdown where covenant community becomes predatory, the vulnerable are exploited, and trust evaporates. Romans 13:10 declares: **"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."** Israel's elite failed this basic covenant obligation, preying on neighbors rather than protecting them.

Historical Context

The 8th century BC saw increasing wealth disparity and social breakdown in Israel and Judah. While elites accumulated luxury goods (Amos 3:15, 6:4-6), the poor were exploited through debt slavery (Amos 2:6), judicial corruption (Isaiah 1:23), and violent robbery. The prophets consistently condemned this covenant violation—Micah, Amos, Isaiah, and Hosea all attacked economic oppression.

The specific crime—stripping cloaks from travelers—violated explicit law. Exodus 22:26-27 required returning a pledged garment by sunset: **"For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?"** Deuteronomy 24:12-13 similarly protected debtors' basic needs. Yet Israel's elite ignored these protections, treating covenant brothers as enemy spoil. James later condemned similar oppression: **"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just"** (James 5:5-6).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God's designation of His own people as 'risen up as an enemy' underscore the severity of covenant violation?
2. What does the crime of stripping garments from peaceful travelers teach about how sin destroys community trust and safety?
3. In what ways might Christians 'rise up as enemies' against God by exploiting or harming fellow believers?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּמָה וְלֹא	עַמִּי	לְאוֹיֵב	יִקְוֶה	בְּמִי	שָׁלֵמָה	אֶדְרֹב
Even of late	my people	as an enemy	is risen up	with	the garment	the robe
H865	H5971	H341	H6965	H4136	H8008	H145
וְתִפְּשֹׁטוּ	מֵעֲבָרֵי יָם	בְּטָח	שׁוֹבֵי יָם	מִלְחָמָה:		
ye pull off	from them that pass	by securely	as men averse	from war		
H6584	H5674	H983	H7725	H4421		

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