

Micah 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

Analysis

Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; This verse unveils the leaders' moral inversion and predatory violence. **שָׁנְאֵי טֹב וְאַפְּבֵי רָע** (sone'ei tov ve-ohavei ra', "haters of good and lovers of evil") describes not occasional lapses but settled disposition—they actively hate what's good and passionately love what's evil. This complete reversal of moral categories signals depraved corruption (Isaiah 5:20; Romans 1:28-32).

The graphic imagery intensifies: **גּוֹלִי עָרָם מַעֲלֵיכֶם וְשָׁאָרָם מַעַל עַצְמוֹתֶם** (gozlei oram me'aleihem u-she'eram me'al atsmotam, "plucking their skin from off them and their flesh from off their bones"). This describes flaying victims alive—tearing skin and stripping flesh from bones. While metaphorical (depicting economic exploitation, not literal cannibalism), the imagery conveys the brutal reality: leaders treat people as prey to be skinned and devoured.

This prophetic metaphor exposes how systemic injustice dehumanizes victims. The poor aren't persons but resources to extract wealth from. Unjust leaders "eat the flesh of my people" (v. 3)—confiscating property, imposing crushing taxes, denying justice. The visceral horror of the imagery matches the moral horror of exploitation. Jesus later condemned religious leaders who "devour widows' houses" (Mark 12:40)—different language, same predatory spirit.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern treaty curses sometimes used cannibalism imagery to describe extreme suffering under siege (Deuteronomy 28:53-57; Lamentations 4:10). Micah appropriates this imagery to describe leadership's predatory treatment of subjects during peacetime. Instead of protecting the vulnerable, leaders became cannibalistic predators. Historical evidence suggests 8th century BC witnessed increasing economic disparity as the wealthy accumulated land, enslaved debtors, and controlled courts. Micah's rural background (from Moresheth-gath) gave him firsthand knowledge of how Jerusalem's elite exploited countryside populations. This pattern recurs throughout history—economic elites using legal mechanisms to devour the defenseless.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'hate good and love evil'—how does moral inversion manifest in leadership today?
2. How does economic exploitation functionally 'flay' and 'devour' vulnerable populations?
3. In what ways might religious or political leaders today be guilty of treating people as resources to exploit rather than persons to serve?

Interlinear Text

מַעֲלִיבָה	מִ	עֹרֶם	שְׁנָאֵי	בְּעֵה	וְאֶתְבִּי	טְבִיבִי	בְּזַלִּי	נְזַלִּי	מַעֲלִיבָה	מִעֲלִיבָה
Who hate	the good	and love	the evil	who pluck off	their skin					H5921
H8130	H2896	H157	H7451	H1497	H5785					
from off them and their flesh				from off their bones						
H7607		H5921		H6106						
וְשָׁאַבְתָּ	מִלְּפָנָים:	מַעֲלִיבָה	לְעֹמֶדֶת:							

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 22:27 (Parallel theme): Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

Psalms 53:4 (Parallel theme): Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God.

Proverbs 28:4 (Evil): They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.

Isaiah 3:15 (Parallel theme): What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Romans 12:9 (Love): Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

1 Kings 21:20 (Evil): And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

2 Chronicles 19:2 (Love): And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.