

Micah 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. God now turns from corrupt rulers (vv. 1-4) to false prophets. (ha-nevi'im hama'tim et-ammi, "the prophets that make my people err") indicts those who lead people astray. **תָּعַת** (ta'ah) means to wander, go astray, or be deceived. These aren't true prophets who occasionally stumble but false prophets whose ministry actively misleads.

The phrase the phrase **הַנְשִׁכִּים בְּשְׁנֵיהֶם וְקָרְאִוְ שָׁלוֹם** (ha-noshkhim be-sheneihem ve-qare'u shalom, "who bite with their teeth and cry Peace") exposes mercenary motivation. They "bite"—possibly meaning eat/chew (being well-fed) or bite like animals seeking prey. When paid, they proclaim **שָׁלוֹם** (shalom, "peace, prosperity, well-being")—false assurance that all is well. But **וְאַשְׁר לֹא יִתְּן עַל-פִּיהם וְקִדְשָׁו עַלְיִ מִלְחָמָה** (va'asher lo-yiten al-pihem ve-qidshu alav milchamah, "and he that putteth not into their mouths, they prepare war against him")—refuse to pay them, and they declare war (pronounce judgment).

This exposes prophetic prostitution: their message depends on payment, not God's word. True prophets speak God's message regardless of consequences (Jeremiah 1:17-19; Ezekiel 2:6-7). False prophets tailor messages to sponsors—prosperity to

the wealthy, judgment on the poor. Jesus warned of false prophets in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15); Paul condemned those who preach for dishonest gain (Titus 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:5).

Historical Context

Ancient Israel had professional prophets attached to royal courts and religious shrines who prophesied for fees. Legitimate prophets like Samuel and Elijah received support (1 Samuel 9:7-8; 1 Kings 17:9-16), but this degenerated into mercenary prophecy. By Micah's era, prophets functioned as hired guns—pronouncing blessing on paying clients and curses on non-payers. Jeremiah later faced these prophets who proclaimed "Peace, peace" when no peace existed (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). Ezekiel condemned prophets who "divine for money" (Ezekiel 13:19, 22:25-28). Micah 3:11 summarizes: "The prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD." They combined mercenary practice with religious pretense—a deadly combination.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How can we distinguish true prophetic ministry from mercenary religious professionals who tailor messages to donors?
2. What does it mean to 'make people err'—what responsibility do teachers/preachers bear for leading people astray?
3. In what ways might modern religious leaders proclaim 'peace' to paying supporters while declaring 'war' on those who don't contribute?

Interlinear Text

אַת	הַמְתַעַם	בְּבִיאָה	עַל	יְהִי הָעֵמֶד	יְהִי הַלְלוּ
H853	H5921	concerning the prophets	H5030	H5021	H5921
err	concerning the prophets	err	concerning the prophets	err	concerning the prophets
H8582	H5030	H5921	H5921	H5921	H5921
וְאֵשֶׁר	שֶׁל זָמָן	בְּשִׁנְיוֹנָם	עַמְּדָה	עַמְּדָה	עַמְּדָה
that make my people	that bite	with their teeth	and cry	Peace	H834
H5971	H5391	H8127	H7121	H7965	
לֹא	עַל	פִּיהָם	וְאֵת	וְאֵת	וְאֵת
H3808	and he that putteth	not into their mouths	they even prepare	H5921	H5921
H5414	H6310	H6942	H5921	H5921	H5921

מִלְּפָנָים:

war
H4421

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 6:14 (Peace): They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

Jeremiah 23:32 (Prophecy): Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

Romans 16:18 (References Lord): For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Matthew 7:15 (Prophecy): Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Matthew 15:14 (Parallel theme): Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Malachi 2:8 (References Lord): But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Micah 3:11 (Prophecy): The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

Isaiah 3:12 (Parallel theme): As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

Jeremiah 23:27 (Parallel theme): Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

Micah 2:11 (Prophecy): If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

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