

Micah 7:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

Analysis

That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. Corruption becomes systematic conspiracy. **על-הָרָע** (al-hara kapayim le-heitiv, "concerning evil, both hands to do it well"). This phrase suggests using both hands energetically—they don't do evil halfheartedly but with full commitment and skill. Evil becomes their craft, pursued with diligence and expertise.

הַשָּׁר שָׁאֵל וְהַשְׁפֵּט בְּשִׁלּוּם (ha-sar sho'el ve-ha-shophet ba-shillum, "the prince asks, and the judge for a bribe"). **שָׁר** (sar) is a prince or official; **שְׁפֵט** (shophet) is a judge. Both demand **שִׁלּוּם** (shillum)—payment, bribe, reward. **וְהַגָּדוֹל דִּבֶּר הַתְּנִשְׁאָן הָוּא** (ve-ha-gadol dover havat nafsho hu, "and the great man speaks the desire of his soul"). The influential man openly declares his corrupt desire. **וַיַּעֲבֹתָה** (vay-abtuha, "and they weave it together"). They conspire, coordinating corruption.

This depicts institutionalized injustice—not isolated corruption but systematic conspiracy. Princes, judges, and powerful men collaborate to pervert justice. They "weave together" their schemes, creating an impenetrable network of corruption. When leadership at every level conspires for evil, society becomes irredeemably corrupt. Only divine intervention can address such systemic wickedness.

Historical Context

Eighth-century BC Judah's elite formed corrupt networks that controlled courts, commerce, and governance. The law prohibited bribery (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19), but by Micah's era, it was standard practice. Officials openly demanded payment; judges sold verdicts; wealthy elites coordinated exploitation. This systemic corruption made reform nearly impossible—the entire power structure was complicit. Similar patterns appear throughout history: late Roman corruption, medieval church abuses, modern kleptocracies. When corruption becomes systemic, individual righteousness isn't enough—only comprehensive judgment can cleanse society. God's judgment through Babylon (586 BC) dismantled Judah's corrupt power structures, though at terrible cost.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does systematic corruption (weaving together evil schemes) differ from individual wrongdoing in its impact and resistance to reform?
2. What does it mean to do evil 'with both hands earnestly'—how does sin become a craft pursued with diligence?
3. How should believers respond when corruption reaches systemic levels where all power centers are complicit?

Interlinear Text

שָׁא	ל	הַשְׁ	ר	לְהִיא	תִּבְ	כַּפְ	עִמְ	בְּ	עַל
H5921	That they may do evil	with both hands	earnestly	the prince	asketh				
H7451		H3709	H3190	H8269	H7592				
וְהַשְׁפֵּט	ט	בְּשָׁל	וּמָ	וְהַגְּדֵד	וְלָ	דִּבְרָ	תְּ	הַ	
and the judge	asketh for a reward	and the great	man he uttereth	his mischievous		H1696		H1942	
H8199		H7966	H1419						
וְנִפְשֵׁת	וְנִעְבְּתָה								
desire	H1931	so they wrap it up							
H5315		H5686							

Additional Cross-References

Micah 3:11 (Judgment): 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.

Jeremiah 8:10 (Parallel theme): Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

Amos 5:12 (Parallel theme): For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.